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[Nour Barazi]

Hi, everyone. Thank you for the warm welcome. I also would like to thank Nathan and macmillan for this opportunity. I'm really happy to be here and seeing so many people from around the world. We have so far, oh, 650 people.

So that's amazing. I'm from Damascus, which is the capital of Syria. It's one of the oldest cities in the world. But I live in sunny Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. I also work here.

I've worked as a CELTA Center Manager and a CELTA tutor. I'm the head of the English Language Program at Jeddah International College. I'm an ELT consultant and I work in the Learning and Development Unit, working on developing staff and faculty. I did the Cambridge Delta, an MA in TESOL, and also the Associate CIPT, CIPD Level 5 for learning and Development. Now let's see what we are going to discuss today.

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We're going to see how we can attract and retain students effectively increase visibility and trust, strengthen institutional value, and improve enrollment and retention. Now we have a short poll. Let's see. Don't be afraid to ask the hardest questions. Question.

If you were a student or parent today, would you choose your school or institution? Yes. No. Or maybe. Let's see if we can answer in the poll.

You don't have to answer in the chat because you don't want your colleagues to see that. Okay. You can answer in the poll because it's anonymous. Thank you. Okay.

Awesome. So much positivity. Okay.

I'm so glad to see so many yeses. That's amazing. Now I'd like to talk about this decision fatigue. Give me a thumbs up if you've scrolled more than you've watched on your streaming device or streaming app.

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See how many thumbs up? That's cool. Now parents, or modern parents, face the same decision fatigue that we face or experience with streaming devices or services. Endless options, limited time and information overload. In this crowded landscape, families don't necessarily choose the best school.

They choose the one they can trust and notice first.

So let's talk about building trust in the chat type one thing that parents or students usually worry about before trusting a school. And when I say school here, I mean it's in a broad perspective. Maybe it's a language school. Maybe it's an elementary school, a college. A language institute.

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Yes. Safety. Yes. Parents. What do they worry about? Quality. Good one. Yes. Results. Great.

So here's my list and it looks like you've prepared it with me because most of your answers are on my slide. Let's see. So Parents worry or students worry about outcomes, safety, yes. Fees, quality, college readiness or future readiness. And teachers, I'd like you to notice how none of these are marketing issues.

They are trust issues. If schools try to sell before answering these questions or dealing with these concerns clearly and visibly, parents or students hesitate. So trust comes first and enrollment follows. In other words, you don't lose students because of weak marketing. You lose them because.

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Because of trust gaps, they go unanswered now. So these are the things to reduce spending parents or students fear. Explain your placement test or your admission criteria or your application criteria. Explain progression and outcomes clearly to your students. Train staff to give this the same message.

So you don't want. You want your staff as an admin and faculty to give the same message that you're giving on your website or that you're giving on your Instagram. So set realistic expectations because clarity builds trust. Do not over promise results and say, oh, if your student or if your child studies with us, they can be admitted into Harvard. If you take our course, you'll score six on ielts unless you can actually deliver that result.

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So avoid changing rules midway, because when you do change people you know, you lose your. You lose their trust. And also avoid vague answers to direct questions. So if be prepared if they have a question to have an actual clear answer to one to their concerns or fears. So because confused students don't enroll and skeptical parents don't return now.

Building visibility. Attention last, not first. So how come attention is last? Because parents or students don't wake up thinking, oh, which school has the flashiest post today? They wake up thinking, who can I trust with my child?

Or if it's an adult student, who can I trust with my future? So attention is important, but it's not first.

So if someone asked you, or sorry, if someone asked one of your current students about your school, what one word you hope they'd say.

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So that you're kind. Oh, nice, safe, friendly, caring.

Great answers. Thank you for participating. Fun. Safe. Oh, I see a lot of yes.

So I want you to notice all these answers. You guys notice how none of you said affordable or convenient? Trust is emotional before it's transactional. And most of your answers are about, you know, emotional safety, happiness, fun, kind.

So your reputation as a school before parents or students ever speak to you, what speaks for you? So can you in the chat, type what speaks for you?

I'll give you a hint.

What speaks for you before parents or students speak for you?

Previous students. That's a good one.

The community. Yes. Word of mouth, good one.

Your achievements. Nice. So the first thing that could speak about you or for you is your first Google result. If I search for the name of your school, what, what's the first Google result that appears? Or maybe now nowadays chatgpt result.

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But anyways, now what's the social what's what? And the second thing that you know speaks for you is your social media posts. As Nico said, the third thing is the word of mouth which you guys also mentioned. We also then have the teachers and finally the students. So when your teachers speak about you, do they speak?

Do they tell people, oh I work in a great place, we do this, we do that, Are they proud to work in this place? And then your students, are they happy? Do they see their results? So all of this speaks for you.

So you need to ask yourself, what do we communicate? Well, what is unclear for students and parents and where do we over promise?

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Now trust starts before the visit, before a student or parent contact you, they see, let's see if you can, let's see if you can type it. So before they contact you, they see your website clarity, your tone on social media, your response speed. Someone mentioned, you know, responding to emails. So are you responding to questions? Are you responding to emails?

Are you responding to comments on social media, your staff consistency. Is your staff speaking the same language as you? Are your post on social media reflected in your staff as well? Are your teachers and admins speaking the same language and then what others say about you or the word of mouth? So visibility or what influences our choice is the first digital impression.

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Community reputation, website clarity, student and parent voice, campus experience and follow up communication. These are all very important. We're going to talk about the last two in more details.

Now Jeff Bezos says your brand is what other people say about you when you're not in the room. So your reputation is your brand. You need to reflect if your reputation is strong enough. Now let's take a look at the student enrollment funnel. It's adapted from the marketing funnel of Kotler and Fox 1995.

I adapted it for the ELT context. Now visibility. Are you visible to others? Are you raising interests? Are you matching their interest and are you relevant to them?

Consideration.

00:12:08

So do people consider you enrollment? Do they register with you? Retention? After they register and take a course, do they return and then a value? Do they advocate for your place?

So what students ask is who are you? Is this for me? Can I trust you? Is this worth it? If I register, am I going to learn?

Am I progressing After I registered. Do I see my progress? Do I know that I improved my level? And would I recommend you to others? Now what you should do is be visible and consistent.

If people have to search hard for you, you're not visible. Show relevance. People don't ask is this a good school? But they ask is this good for me or my child?

Build confidence. Confidence grows when expectations are clear. When people know what to expect, they feel safe moving forward. Prove your value. Value isn't a promise, it's evidence, outcomes, skills, progress and real examples.

Make progress visible. Progress must be shown, not assumed. You know some slogans that you know colleges or schools or institutions. Institutions use like we're the best, we're the top. But progress must be shown.

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You know, show them that your students are reaching the CFR level needed or they are passing standardized exams. Capture voices. The last one which is advocacy. When. When students advocate for you, use their.

Use real students with real experience.

Now make your customer the hero of your story. I know that it's controversial to call students customers and we feel like oh no, they're not. But if you're giving a service and they're paying for it, they're in somehow customers. But when you use your students in your social media, as in use them as the hero representing your school, try to show stories that are emotional, real

student led, honest and outcome focused. Make sure that your students are the ones appearing on your social media because they are your hero.

So visibility is not ads, it's presence. Show real students, not staged photos or photos of people who are not in your school. Avoid we are the best language. Share learning moments, not slogans. And post consistently, even once a week if it's possible.

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Like post a lot on Instagram or whatever social media is famous in your country. But avoid empty mission statements and avoid silent social media accounts because silent social media accounts means you're not visible.

So if people can't see you, they can't choose you. And people trust people, not institutions.

Building value. People ask what's in it for me If I register in your school or institution, I'd like you to type yes if parents or students can understand your school value in under 30 seconds online and no if not yet. So if I google or search for your school, can I understand your value in under 30 seconds? That's amazing. Wow, so many yeses and some no's.

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It's good to reflect, so maybe you can. There's a takeaway from this session. Don't feel bad about, you know if it's a no because there's always room for progress.

Okay, so now your, your Gen z is between 14 and 29. So you could have Gen Z students or Gen Z parents. So it depends on what age group are you targeting. But Gen Z are not evaluators. Sorry, Gen Z are evaluators.

They are not followers. They research silently. They compare before contacting you. They test consistency like website versus Instagram versus WhatsApp. If there's a mismatch, it's a red flag to them.

They trust reviews, comments and posts. They decide before filling the form. So Gen Z, By the time they contact you, they have already made their made up their mind. They have already decided. And your job is not to persuade them because your website did the job for you, or your Instagram or your Google reviews did that for you.

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Your job is to confirm. And how do we confirm? We're going to see in a minute.

So what parents or students, what are they looking for these days? If you could tell me, what are they looking for?

They want schools that prepare students for university pathways, careers that don't exist yet. Real world tasks. So they want future readiness. Very good. Yes.

Real life. Exactly. You guys. Future. Yes, the future of their, of the students.

Whether it's an adult, they're thinking of their future, or if it's a parent, they're thinking of their child's future. So could you tell me one skill your school actively develops beyond academics?

Let's see in the chat.

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So think beyond academics. Very good. Yes. So many. It's like you prepared the slide with me, guys.

Actually you have more than I've prepared, so that's awesome. We're learning from each other. Let's take a look at my list. We have confidence, communication, digital literacy, leadership, problem solving, collaboration, decision making, and career readiness. All like 21st century skill skills.

And the four Cs and all of very good so far. Yes, the four Cs. So parents and students want school that build skills. These are skills parents talk about, not course titles. Right.

So how can your school develop those skills? Let's see. Your hidden engine is your people. And by, by your people, I mean your teachers. They are the heroes in your school.

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Hiring the right people and developing them is key. So it leads to better quality and better outcomes and stronger trust.

Staff development equals enrollment growth. So professional development boosts students performance, parent satisfaction, reputation, retention and school image. Give a clap if your school invests in professional development.

Wow. So many claps. You're very lucky because that means your school is on the right track. If it's A no. Maybe you can.

Being here means you care about your own professional development. So I will give you a clap. Okay? Now, after talking about, you know, your staff, which is very important, let's talk about after Gen Z researches you and decides to join you, there's step two, which is they come to your campus. So their on campus experience is the deciding moment.

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You could be so flashy online or on social media, but then when they come and visit you, this could shape their decision. So the visit confirms everything families believe online. So the key visit factors, warmth, how people greet you, smile, eye contact, tone before any explanation. And then we have your organization as a school or an institute. Are there clear schedules?

Are you organized? Is there a smooth flow, no confusion? Are you sending people from one office to the next and are they running around on your campus to find answers? Or is everything organized and clear because chaos kills confidence.

Next one student voice. Do students speak naturally about their experience without scripting? I don't know if you guys arrange for students to speak on on visits, but if you do, make sure they sound natural and they're not scripting their answers or sorry, their answers are not scripted. Now the next one is visual appeal. Is the place clean?

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It doesn't have to be the fanciest, but is it clean and purposeful? Is are all like, is it easy to navigate? The spaces need to feel alive, not just nice.

And then the tour guide quality. Can people or can your staff answer questions that the students or the parents have? Can they answer real questions or just recite facts? So think of those things.

Now follow up. So they visited you. They're so happy. Now let's talk about the follow up. Generic follow up loses momentum and personal follow up builds confidence.

If you have a strong follow up, it should be short, personal, specific and memorable.

Give me a thumbs up if you've seen a boring follow up email before. That is not personal, it is long or it's not specific or memorable. Right? It doesn't, you know, like. So follow up is really important.

00:24:11

Look at this statement. Thank you for visiting our school. Can you please rewrite this in the chat using human, human language. Make it personal, warm, memorable.

Let's see. Give you a minute to type. Because people remember how you make them feel, especially after they leave.

Nice. Yes, but don't use caps because then it seems like shouting. I'm just kidding. Very nice answers everyone.

Yes. So here are some. You, you have some really good like oh, your presence. I, you know, good job. Everyone has really good statements.

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I'll show you Mine, they're not better than yours, but you know, those are the ones I prepared. So we hope you felt the energy of our students today. Or something like thank you for spending time with us today. We hope today gave you a real feel of who we are. And if you could mention their names, that would be great.

Like make it more personal. And if you can remember something about their child or about them, also mention that.

So value is where enrollment is won or lost. Let's see. Make students progress visible. Show people your students skills, their milestones and pathways. Make sure that's clear on your social media.

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Invest in teacher development. I know that some institutes treat teacher development as optional or invisible. Please invest in it. The retention is affected by it and ensure the visit confirms the promise. So don't rely on the visit to sell the school, but be prepared before the visit with your social media, during the visit and after the visit with the follow up.

And so make the follow up quick. Don't make people wait and personal. So don't send generic or delayed follow ups.

And now, finally, I have a goodie bag for you guys. Let's fill it in with some information that we've discussed. We have the word enrollment and I would like you to give me one letter for each of these. Oh, sorry. One word for each of these letters that reflects what we've discussed.

00:27:02

Let's start with E. Effort. I love that energy. Nice.

Of course, all of these are excellent answers. Mine could be different. Let's see.

Experience. Design every touch point intentionally. First click, first call, first visit and first follow up. Make sure it's intentional.

Narrative. Yes, Nico. Got it. Tell real student and parent stories. Yes.

Let's see. R. I have reputation. But real is good. Deliver consistent quality. So families recommend you without being asked.

If your quality speaks for you, you've reached the top. Okay. Oh, outcomes. Who got it? Yes.

00:28:12

You guys could help. Now show progress clearly. The skills gained, confidence built and pathways achieved. All of that should be clear on your social media and during the visit. L. Learning.

Yes. Leadership. Loyalty. You guys got it. Learning, Learning.

Culture. Hire carefully. Make sure you hire the right people. Develop continuously and make teaching quality visible.

Yeah. Measurable mentorship. Nice. Meaning Answer the Gen Z questions directly. How does this benefit my child or benefit me as an adult student?

How does it benefit our future? E? Some of you already mentioned it earlier when we mentioned the first E. It's engagement. Communicate like humans, not institutions. Talk to your students or have your students talk to your audience.

Make your communication timely, warm and personal. And now. And next Teach today's skills. Today's skills are really important while preparing for what comes next. 21st century skills, college and career readiness.

00:29:43

Those are really important. And the last 20. Liliana. Got it. Very good.

And I can't catch your names, you're typing so quickly. But it's trust. Be transparent, reliable and consistent. Trust converts interests into enrollment. Good job, everyone.

Thank you so much. Okay, thank you so much. I'm ready for the questions. Please follow me on LinkedIn and I would love to connect with you. Thank you so much for your time.

Thank you, everyone. It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

I'm just going to give it a second and allow the, well, the chat and the hearts just kind of flow. Let them go for a minute. We've got time.

I'm happy to answer any questions.

Thank you so much, everyone.

00:30:57

[Nathan Waller]

I thought there actually wasn't a lot of questions, to be honest. Just following. I think they were just, they were, you were their shepherd and you were just kind of guiding them seamlessly, I think, through the, through the webinar.

[Nour Barazi]

Yes. And I, I really loved your participating, your participation, everyone, all your comments.

Thank you for sending all those answers. Really great contribution. Thank you.

[Nathan Waller]

Yeah, I think a lot of. And just so much engagement. People just like really sharing their ideas, really getting involved. I agree. I like the little task at the end where you, you play this little word game with, with everybody.

00:31:40

It's really nice.

[Nour Barazi]

Someone is, is asking to explain again the now and next in for enrollment. And I just want to say that what I mean is you work on the skills that are needed in the present time. Maybe like, you know, you'll be surprised. I have students who don't know how to type because they're used to using their phones, so they don't know how to type on a keyboard.

And we're actually teaching those skills. So the now skills and also maybe skills for the future that they might need in their jobs that don't exist yet.

[Nathan Waller]

Yeah, that's important.

[Nour Barazi]

I hope that answers your question, Janina.

[Nathan Waller]

I think, I think so. Yeah. And I mean, somebody's asking about, I guess, measurement.

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So are there any management. I don't know, I want to say, to measure. Yeah, that kind of measure the efficacy, I guess, of some of these.

[Nour Barazi]

To measure enrollment, do you mean.

[Nathan Waller]

No, I guess the enrollment would speak for itself, right?

I guess if, if, if they're happy, they will tell you that. And the enrollment figures would hopefully go up or you would.

[Nour Barazi]

If your registration is increasing, that gives you a good sign.

[Nathan Waller]

Retention patterns. This Type of thing, I guess would speak for itself.

But I guess maybe some of the other softer stuff, like maybe maybe like strategies that you've used to help. Because one of the nice things I meant that you've mentioned is this idea of consistency across the teams. I think that that came across really strong and it's a really nice point. You know, teachers not working in different ways and having different ways to communicate with students that leadership oversees the kind of unity of that, the kind of clarity of that, the consistency of that. So I don't know whether or not you've, when you, when you've done the work with schools in this particular region, whether you've got kind of strategies that you use to kind of help them, help leaders to get teachers on board with that.

00:33:42

There might be a bit of resistance. Right, to that.

[Nour Barazi]

Yes. Anything that includes change management needs, you know, needs. You need to involve the all stakeholders.

So teachers, students, you need to hear the voices of everyone involved to be able to. Better to implement any change.

[Nathan Waller]

Yeah.

[Nour Barazi]

And also Ty is asking how long to wait for a follow up. I don't think you should wait. As soon as they leave the school, prepare that text or that email and send it. Definitely be timely and quick.

[Nathan Waller]

I'm wondering whether that question relates to the certificate or whether that question.

00:34:25

[Nour Barazi]

Oh, okay.

[Nathan Waller]

I'm not sure.

[Nour Barazi]

How long did you say to wait for the follow up?

[Nathan Waller]

If it's the follow up to the student immediately. If it's the follow up to the webinar, it's two weeks or maybe they.

[Nour Barazi]

Want to start the next one or two are waiting.

[Nathan Waller]

Yeah. No. Two different answers.

Yeah, I mean, I, I, you, I love some of your, I'm going to use some of your quotes. I'm going to steal them. I think I love chaos kills confidence. I'm gonna, I'm gonna definitely use that in the future. And I like that.

I think the main one, the key one was people trust people, not institutions. I like this one as well. But yeah, future facing leadership is, and it's such a nice, it was a really nicely flowing session and kind of led us through all of the. These ideas about why it's important to think about your school as a little family, part of a community that you're all working together, you're all on the same page, that it's in the interests of what students see as valuable for their futures, which is fantastic. Noor, thank you so much.

00:35:30

I'm so glad I got to see you here today. It's been such a pleasure as always.

[Nour Barazi]

Thank you so much. Thank you. It's been my pleasure.

And thank you for the opportunity. And thank. I would like to thank the audience for all the participation. Thank you so much.