



Program Marketing Through School Activation

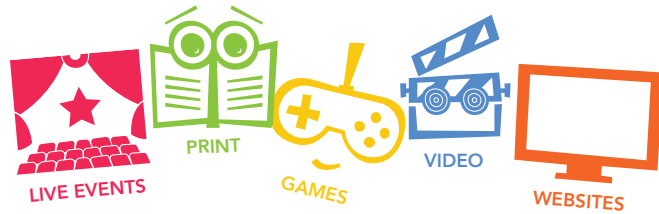
by MaryLynn Mennicke

NTC
Ed Talks





MaryLynn Mennicke,
Director of School
Communications, oversees
school relations, school
scheduling and activation
programs.



By connecting clients with schools, schools with students and students with knowledge that empowers and inspires,

NTC helps students and parents learn beneficial habits and create meaningful change in their lives and communities. I work directly between schools and clients to promote beneficial behaviors and life skills to students in grades K-12 on a local, regional or national level.



NTC is unique in our field because we offer our programs, on behalf of our clients, to schools at a very large scale. We are routinely asked to visit thousands of schools and deliver a cross section of curriculum subjects in any given school year. So, over my eight years at NTC, I have learned a thing or two about marketing programs to schools.

HOW DO WE DO IT?

I am asked time and again, "How do you get thousands and thousands of schools to participate in your programs?"

"How do you actually get into schools?"

Unique Offer

So, you've got a program you want to offer to the schools. The first thing you want to consider is whether your offer is unique. Educators are bombarded with offers of curriculum, posters, employee visits, contests and downloads. I have learned that whatever is offered must be unique and not available anywhere else.

Second, analyze: Is your offer valuable to educators? I appraise value in multiple ways. Most importantly, can I prove, with data, that my program teaches something important? I define importance by whether or not my offer will align with local, state and national curriculum standards. This is crucial.

A program can be even more valuable if it both aligns with standards and teaches 21st Century Skills (four C's): collaboration, critical thinking, communications and creativity.

A final question to consider: Is the offer easy for educators to use in their classrooms? The ease of use and turnkey logistics are directly correlated with the perceived value of that program. The more difficult it is for educators to participate in your program or use your materials, the less prone they will be to take the time for it – unless your program comes with a high perceived value.



Who is Your Customer?

Unfortunately, every school is unique. Who facilitates an outside program and implements it within a school will vary from building to building. I can even have many different customers for the exact same education program depending how each school is structured. The principal buyers can be:

- Principals and administrators
- Classroom teachers
- Parent-Teacher Organization leaders
- Curriculum facilitators
- Gym teachers
- Counselors

Depending on the buyer, your marketing and communication strategy will need to be distinctive. Each customer has their own perspective on their school building and a unique interest in your program. Don't communicate to a classroom teacher in the same way you do a guidance counselor.

The Right Tool for the Job

Accessible communications are the difference between success and failure. Accessibility means matching the best marketing techniques, from digital content to snail-mail hard-copy materials, to the way your prospects consume information. One of our most important tools is our online scheduling portal where teachers can access information about our programs and schedule it right on the spot. A few years ago, our scheduling website application appealed to only 17% of our school customers. Today, more

than 50% opt in to our scheduling portal.

Email communication has changed as well. Communications with schools, like most B2B marketing, has turned away from phone and print toward customized email.



“At NTC, our programs combine standards-based live theatre, e-books and digital games. Unique, valuable and easy to use.”



In fact, most communication these days needs to be personal. It can be very tempting to send out mass mailers, mass emails, mass information to schools, but if you want to get into the school building and have your program utilized successfully, it's important to establish a relationship with the prospect at the school. Relationship development takes time and multiple touch points including phone calls, emails and even face-to-face meetings in the school building to make eye contact and engage your potential buyer.



I have found that mass communication, although necessary, is only effective once a relationship has been established and somebody recognizes the offer in their inbox.

If you have something valuable to offer schools, target the right customer and use savvy communication tools with a mixture of personal and automated marketing communication to convince them that your program is worth their time during the busy school calendar.



NTC is a premium provider of educational programming with operations in the U.S., Australia and New Zealand. We work directly between schools and clients to promote beneficial behaviors and life skills to students in grades K-12 on a local, regional and national level.

Since 1978, we have formed connections and helped develop relationships between thousands of schools and corporations, nonprofits and governmental organizations. Our value is not just in the impact we create; our turnkey services also change the lives and trajectories of students, mobilize parents and entire families with beneficial messages, and cultivate community-wide goodwill for clients.

Our award-winning educational programs are provided free for schools and are customizable to accommodate specific messages and goals for clients. Through formats including live performance, in-class discussion, graphic novels, print curriculum, and digital games and activities, we present topics such as energy conservation, safety, financial literacy, STEM, water and environmental stewardship, and health and social responsibility in ways that engage and empower students. In doing so, we are helping our clients to be forces of change for students, parents and communities.

