FILL YOUR ADMISSIONS FUNNEL:

How to Create an Irresistible
LEAD MAGNET
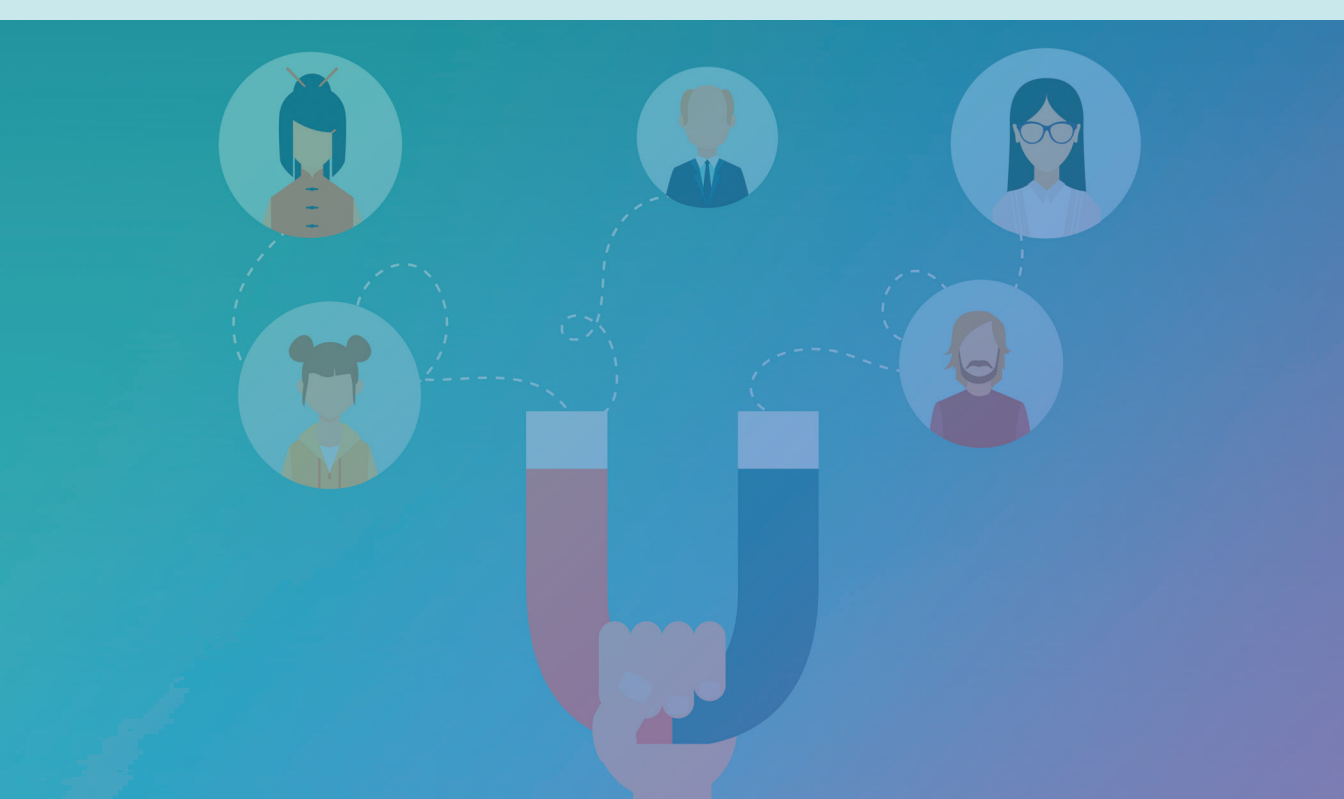## in 5 Easy Steps

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For each student currently attending your school, there was a moment in which their family chose to enroll — but enrollment is not a single point in time. Behind each decision are dozens of engagement points, including conversations with your team, emails, campus visits, and open houses.

And it all starts with an inquiry.

As an experienced admissions and enrollment professional, you know meeting your enrollment goals takes more than merely nurturing the prospective families already in your pipeline. To continue and grow your success, you must be perpetually re-filling the admissions funnel with new inquiries. And that's where lead magnets come in.

A high-quality, actionable lead magnet will help you...

- Generate interest in your school from a broader audience
- Appeal to a new generation of digital native parents
- Stand out from competing schools
- Earn enough new leads to reach (and maintain) maximum enrollment

It sounds like magic, but thousands of schools and organizations across nearly every industry use lead magnets with wild success. And it's something you can achieve too.

In this guide, we're delving into the five essential steps to creating an irresistible lead magnet. And, by the end, you'll be armed with all the knowledge you need to create a resource that keeps your admissions pipeline chock-full.

But first, let's tackle the basics.

What is a Lead Magnet?

A lead magnet is a free piece of content given away in exchange for contact information, such as a website visitor's name, email address, and other relevant details. Usually, they're developed in one of the following formats:

Whitepapers

Ebooks

How-to guides

Educational videos

Webinars

Infographics

As a cornerstone of inbound marketing, lead magnets serve to attract prospective families (rather than interrupting them with outbound methods like cold calls).

Typically, it works like this: A parent visits your school's website to learn more about your institution. As they scroll down your homepage, they see an appealing content offer. For example, while browsing a website for a Montessori school, they might see an offer for a free whitepaper about the principles of Montessori education and how it differs from traditional or public school education.

Because this content is relevant and useful to the parent, they immediately click on the offer, enter their name and email address, and download the whitepaper to read at their convenience.

Meanwhile, their contact details are delivered to the school CRM so the admissions team can connect with the parent and begin nurturing an authentic, meaningful relationship that ideally leads to enrollment.
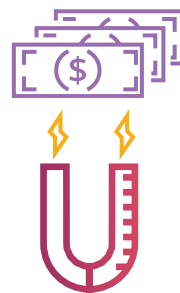
Of course, the key here is that the content has both a perceived and real value. In the above example, the admissions and enrollment team knows a parent considering a Montessori school would be curious about the benefits of this learning environment. And the whitepaper they've downloaded may be the first impression they have of the school, save for a brief interaction with the website.

If the content is subpar or doesn't deliver on its promised value, it may leave the audience with a negative first impression. But if your content is relevant, helpful, well-written, well-designed, and enjoyable to consume, you'll leave a positive first impression and open the door for future meaningful conversations.

Unfortunately for many schools (but perhaps fortunately for you), lead magnets are still a largely untapped opportunity.

20% **Only 20% of schools currently have a content offer, according to survey data from Finalsite.**

80% **Of the 80% of schools without a content offer, one-fourth aren't sure where to begin.**

To make sure you're not part of the latter group, we're sharing exactly how you can produce your own lead magnet.

Five Essential Steps to Creating a Successful Lead Magnet

❝ *Schools need content offers because they allow you an opportunity to provide something of value during that drawn-out 'research' phase. Providing something of value gives you an opportunity to get personal information from a prospect, to begin nurturing them down your admissions funnel.*

Without a content offer, there's a chance your school will never have the opportunity to communicate with a large portion of your website visitors — and that's a scary thought! ❞

- Mia Major, Director of Demand Generation, Finalsite

At first, the idea of creating a lead magnet can seem overwhelming — especially if you're working with a small team already strapped for resources. But, if done well, these resources can manage a lot of heavy lifting for months and years into the future. Plus, when you break the process down into smaller chunks, it becomes much more manageable.

Here's how to get started: ↓

Identify a Need

The first thing you'll need to do is determine a topic for your content. Start by asking yourself: What's something my audience is seeking in which our school leaders have a great deal of expertise? What common questions do families have that my team and I can answer, or what challenges do we often help them overcome? Creating helpful and educational content allows you to share your knowledge and highlight your school's key differentiators.

For example, if your school has adopted a fully online or hybrid learning system, you might create content about helping children thrive in a digital environment. If your school is known for its fine arts or athletic program, you might share content about helping students discover their interests and hone their talents. Or, if your school prides itself on its college acceptance rate, you might produce content about helping students prepare for and choose the right post-secondary path.

Perform Your Research

After you've identified a critical audience need and chosen an angle, the next step is to conduct research. Including qualitative and/or quantitative research will help maximize the value of your content and further position your school's faculty and staff as leading experts.

There are several sources you can use for your research. For example, you might leverage interviews with internal educational leaders and other subject matter experts from your faculty and staff. Additionally, you might pull aggregated data from your enrollment management platform and other school systems or turn to trusted external sources. Depending on the subject matter and goals, you could even survey existing students' families.

For example, if you're creating a guide to help parents reduce students' summer learning loss, you might survey current students' parents to learn about their summer habits. Additionally, you might include internal data that shows students who participate in summer programming are less likely to experience learning loss and more likely to outperform peers.

Choose a Format

Once you've gathered the information, the next step is to determine the best way to share it. If you've gathered a significant amount of data, you might consider creating a long-form infographic or compiling your findings into a webinar presentation. If you've taken a more story-driven angle, then it may make sense to write an ebook. If you're sharing how-to advice — such as how to select the right private school — then you may consider preparing a guide or educational video.

Whatever the case, make sure the medium fits the message. The best format is the one that conveys the information in a way that's easy to consume.

Whitepapers

Ebooks

How-to guides

Educational videos

Webinars

Infographics

The Power of Repurposing

As you consider which format is best for your lead magnet, it's also an excellent time to think about how else you might repurpose your new content. For example, you can use concepts, ideas, or elements of your lead magnet as fodder for blog posts, podcast episodes, and more. This is especially helpful when you put significant effort into interviewing subject matter experts or compiling data.

Repurposing helps you get more mileage out of your content and cuts down on the amount of time spent developing new assets. Additionally, you can use repurposed bits of your lead magnet to promote it too. For example, you can pull a compelling statistic to use in a digital ad or share a few key learnings as a blog post.

Think of repurposed promotional content as delicious hors d'oeuvres — it gives your audience a taste of what they can expect and whets their appetite for the larger piece of content.

STEP 4:

Create Your Content

Next, it's time to produce your content. Depending on the format, you may need to bring in outside resources. For example, if you're writing a whitepaper or ebook, you may need to contract a writer and a designer. If you're creating an educational video, you may need to hire an illustrator and/or a videographer.

In some cases, you may be able to handle the work internally. But keep in mind the ultimate goal is to create a top-quality lead magnet. If you and your staff are already spread too thin to do the resource justice, it's best to hire outside professionals.

Whatever you decide, be sure you set aside plenty of time for content creation, as you may need multiple rounds of edits and revisions before it's ready for your audience.

Launch and Promote

After you've put the finishing touches on your content offer, the final step is to publish your lead magnet on your site and begin bringing in new traffic.

Here are three critical elements to include as part of your launch and promotional efforts:

An enticing call-to-action

A call-to-action (CTA) is a short string of copy written to captivate visitors, coupled with a button that leads to the landing page. Ideally, you'd place your CTA on your website homepage and strategically throughout your website, like at the end of a related blog post.
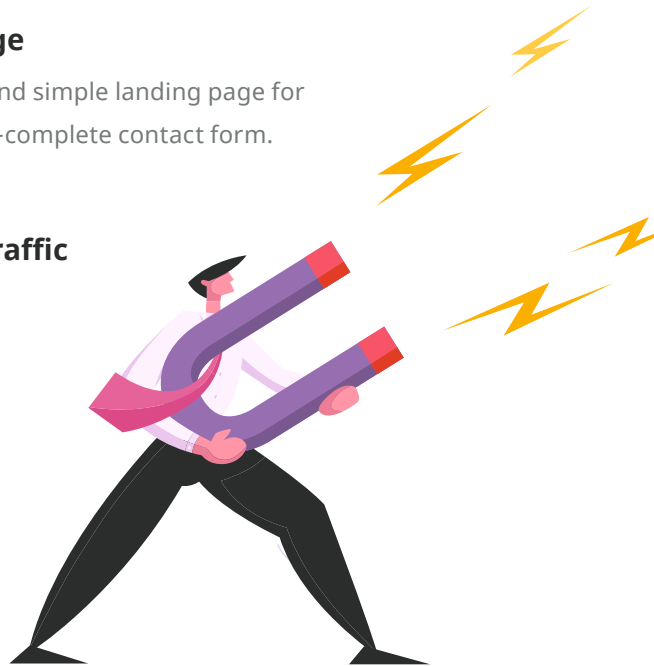
A user-friendly landing page

Your CTA should point to a clean and simple landing page for your content with a short, easy-to-complete contact form.

A campaign to drive new traffic to your resource

It's crucial you promote your lead magnet across multiple channels, including social media, email, and paid ads.

Remember: Promotion is critical to your resource's success, so it's important you don't skip this step.

6 Ways to Promote Your Lead Magnet

There are many ways you can promote your new content asset.
Here are a few:

→ **Create a social media post**
Prepare a social media post that shares an interesting stat, fact, or
key learning from your lead magnet and link to the landing page.

→ **Set up a retargeting campaign**
This ad format allows you to target previous website visitors as
they browse the web.

→ **Send an email to your contact base**
Often, the goal of a lead magnet is to gather new email addresses,
but existing contacts may also find the content useful. In some
cases, it may help re-engage families who have gone silent.

→ **Mention it during events**
Look for relevant opportunities to discuss the lead magnet and let
your audience know where to find it.

→ **Reference it in blog posts, podcasts, and videos**
Cite data or other findings throughout other content, and link back
to your lead magnet.

→ **Print copies to give away**
Consider printing your content and sending it out as part of a
direct mail campaign, or give it to families as a takeaway after
in-person events.

Best Practices to Guarantee Your Success

After creating, launching, and analyzing several lead magnets over the years, we've identified a few strategies most likely to boost inquiries and foster long-term engagement.

Here's what we recommend:

Identify a real need

When you begin brainstorming possible content topics, make sure you're basing ideas on legitimate, known audience needs — not just assumptions. Consider common questions families ask early in their admissions journey, or the challenges and experiences that ignited their decision to select an independent school.

Don't ask for too much

Several factors impact a visitor's decision to fill out a submission form, and marketers have studied these web form conversions ad nauseam. The general consensus is, the longer and more complicated the landing page experience, the less likely people are to convert. Be sure to use concise copy and simple design. Reduce the number of form fields to the minimum amount of information you need to begin engaging prospective families.

Deliver concrete value

At some point, you've probably experienced "clickbait" content — an article or downloadable content piece that lures you in with a catchy headline, but fails to provide the information it promises. When people encounter clickbait, they usually feel duped or scammed, and for a good reason. On the flip side, when content delivers on its promise, it leaves audiences with a positive impression and fosters trust.

Create clear next steps

Before you create your content, make sure you've determined precisely what you want your audience to do next. Just as you've developed a straightforward CTA to drive website visitors to your content in the first place, you also need a clear CTA that guides them toward the next step of the admissions journey. For example, you might finish your ebook by asking readers to schedule a virtual or in-person campus visit.

Never compromise on quality

Remember: a lead magnet may be a prospect's first experience with your school, so you want to make sure it's a positive reflection of your institution. Compromising on quality can jeopardize the ROI of your content piece and deter families from engaging further. If you're outsourcing the work, keep in mind that you get what you pay for.

Don't come on too strong

While you should use your lead magnet to start a conversation, you don't want to come on too strong too early. For example, instead of following a lead magnet download with an email urging them to apply immediately, share other relevant assets or invite them to attend an upcoming virtual or in-person event.

Focus on your audience, NOT your school

At first, it can seem counterintuitive to publish content for prospective families that isn't centered around your school — especially since your ultimate goal is to drive enrollment. But your first engagement should be more about them and less about you. While it's fine to highlight your school when appropriate, steer clear of "salesy" speak.

For example, if you're publishing a how-to guide for choosing the right independent school and your school has a renowned soccer program, you might discuss the merits of sending a child to a school where they can fulfill their athletic potential rather than rattling off your teams' various awards and achievements. (Save those impressive facts and stats for one-on-one conversations further along in the family's decision process.)

As an experienced independent school professional, you know what it takes to win over prospective families and retain them long-term. You and your team are gifted at fostering authentic and meaningful relationships, and your tireless efforts keep your school funded and successful.

But to hit your enrollment goals (and build a lengthy waitlist), you need a steady stream of new inquiries. And in an environment that's becoming increasingly competitive, maintaining a full pipeline isn't always easy.

However, by using these five essential steps and key best practices, you can create a lead magnet that helps you overcome this challenge, engage prospective families earlier in their decision-making process, and fill your admissions funnel.
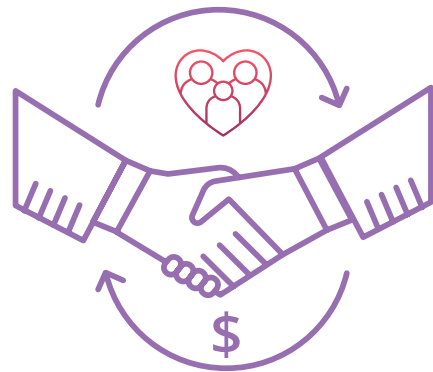
Make filling your funnel and wowing your families easy with SchoolAdmin's enrollment management platform.

LEARN MORE →

About Finalsite + SchoolAdmin

SchoolAdmin, now part of Finalsite's suite of award-winning website, marketing, and communications solutions for schools, is a strategic enrollment management system for private K-12 schools. Finalsite + SchoolAdmin will help you woo your prospects, wow your families, and elevate your school.

Whether your goal is to attract prospects, enroll students, retain families, or convert alumni to lifetime advocates — the powerful combination of our products will give you a complete suite of tools and services to help your school crush your goals.

Headquartered in Austin, TX and Glastonbury, CT, and trusted by more than 2,500 successful schools, our team is dedicated to empowering schools around the world and helping them meet their goals.

SchoolAdmin
Now part of **FINALSITE**

Learn more at
www.schooladmin.com

How to Create an Irresistible
LEAD MAGNET

☐ **Identify a need**

What do families interested in your school want to know more about? What questions do they have?

☐ **Determine your target audience**

Who are you making the lead magnet for? All parents? Families interested in a specific program?

☐ **Create a strong call to action (CTA)**

What should families do after reading your content offer? Who should they contact for more information?

☐ **Research the topic and become an expert**

Make sure you have adequate knowledge on the topic you will cover and figure out how to position yourself in the space to stand out.

☐ **Survey your families, faculty, or experts in the field to gather data**

If it's relevant to your topic, you can survey people in your community to add data to your content.

☐ **Select a format for your lead magnet**

Will you create an infographic, handout, or ebook?

☐ **Complete a first draft of the content offer**

You can do this internally or hire a writer externally if you're strapped for time.

☐ **Edits + revisions**

Read through your first draft carefully and make any edits or changes.

☐ **Send your lead magnet to design**

You can do this step internally or hire a designer to help with this stage.

☐ **Go live with your content offer**

Push your content offer live on your website and other channels.

☐ **Promote your lead magnet**

- *Send out an email*
- *Create social media posts*
- *Include it in your upcoming newsletter*
- *Print copies to hand out at events*
- *Run paid ads to get more eyes on your content offer*
- *Repurpose the content into a blog post*

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