



ADVANCING BRANDS THAT ADVANCE EDUCATION

# chasing mission fit.



crafting resonant marketing for enrollment



“the illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.”

— Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock*, 1970



# challenges. +





# headwinds.

## Strains that will be felt:

- Public Perception of Higher Ed
- Enrollment Cliff
- Search Cliff
- Financial Challenges
- Outside Competition
- Attention Fragmentation
- GenZ to GenAlpha Transition
- Multi-Generational Marketing
- Disruption from Generative AI
- Challenges in Change Management will Result in Leadership Vacancies



**Apollo 13**  
**1995 Universal Pictures**



“The people upstairs handed us this one and we have to come through. We gotta find a way to make this, fit into the hole for this, using nothing but that.”

— Apollo 13



“God gave us the stewardship of our institutions and we have to come through. We gotta find a way market our schools, hitting goals, using nothing but what we have.”

— Bart Caylor’s Interpretation of Apollo 13



# myths.



Enrollment marketing carries with it a number of myths about how to engage prospective students and the means of doing so.



- “You need big budgets to succeed.”
- “Good marketing relies on large teams.”
- “Serving internal requests are the top priority.”
- “Marketing is about reaching anyone and everyone.”
- “‘We are the best kept secret.’ change that.”
- “We don’t need to market, because...”
- “Social media is for promotion.”
- “Marketing needs to be fresh and ever-changing.”
- “Effective marketing is out of reach for our school.”
- “Play it safe.”
- “The \_\_\_\_\_ takes care of our digital marketing.”



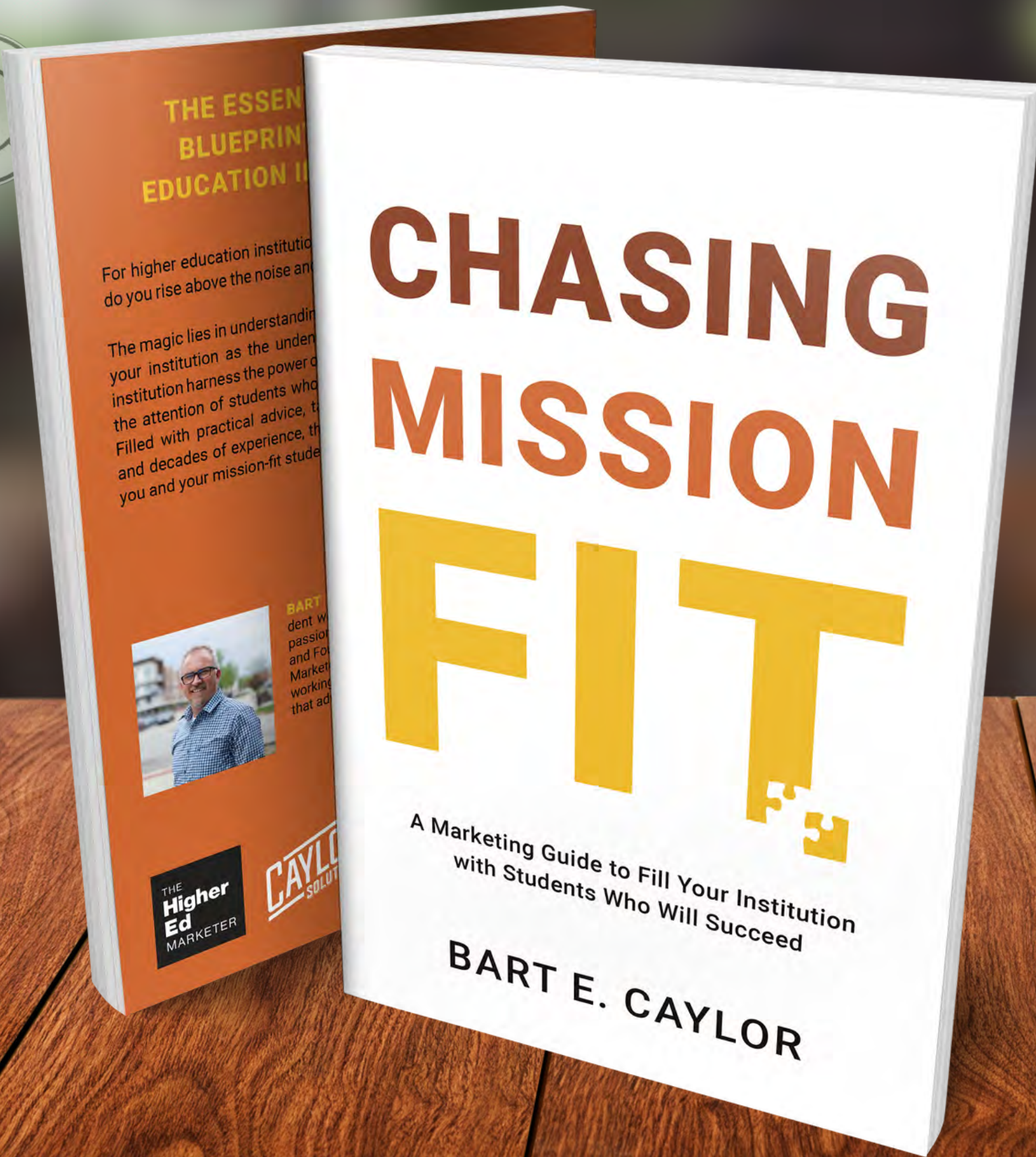
# truths.



If you are chasing your mission fit student, things are different.  
You have more options and your yield will increase.



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provide a  
solution.

- this presentation based on book.
- my philosophy of enrollment marketing for institutions of all sizes.
- study guide now available.

# goal.

Walk away with an understanding of the myths that are holding our institutions back and the truth of how we market to mission fit students.



# enrollment marketing.





# enrollment marketing basics

- enrollment-focused website
- content that answers questions
- strategies for lead-generation





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# pathways.



# 3 pathways to enrollment

- Legacy Family
- Influencer
- Discovery





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# legacy family.

- Familial connections to the institution.
- Pre-existing positive perception.
- Importance in carrying traditions.
- Need for targeted, affirming content.
- Leveraging alumni networks for engagement.



# influencers.

- Guided by mentors or pastors.
- Often “gatekeepers” for churches.
- Depend on trusted advice and recommendations.
- Often involve community or group decisions.
- May include relationships built with your recruiters and admissions teams.

# discovery.

- Originates from independent online searches, social media, or other discovery methods.
- The prospect lacks prior personal connections to your institution.
- Driven by website content and online presence.
- Usually discovered from answers to questions.



# defined.





defined:  
a mission-fit  
student  
embodies and  
enhances  
institutional  
values.



## mission-fit students:

- They are the ones who will retain, succeed, and become evangelists for your institution upon graduation.
- They are looking for an institution exactly like yours!
- The challenge: they might not know your school, nor do you know them.
- There are more ways to find them than just purchased lists.

# 5 keys

Five keys for marketing to mission fit students.



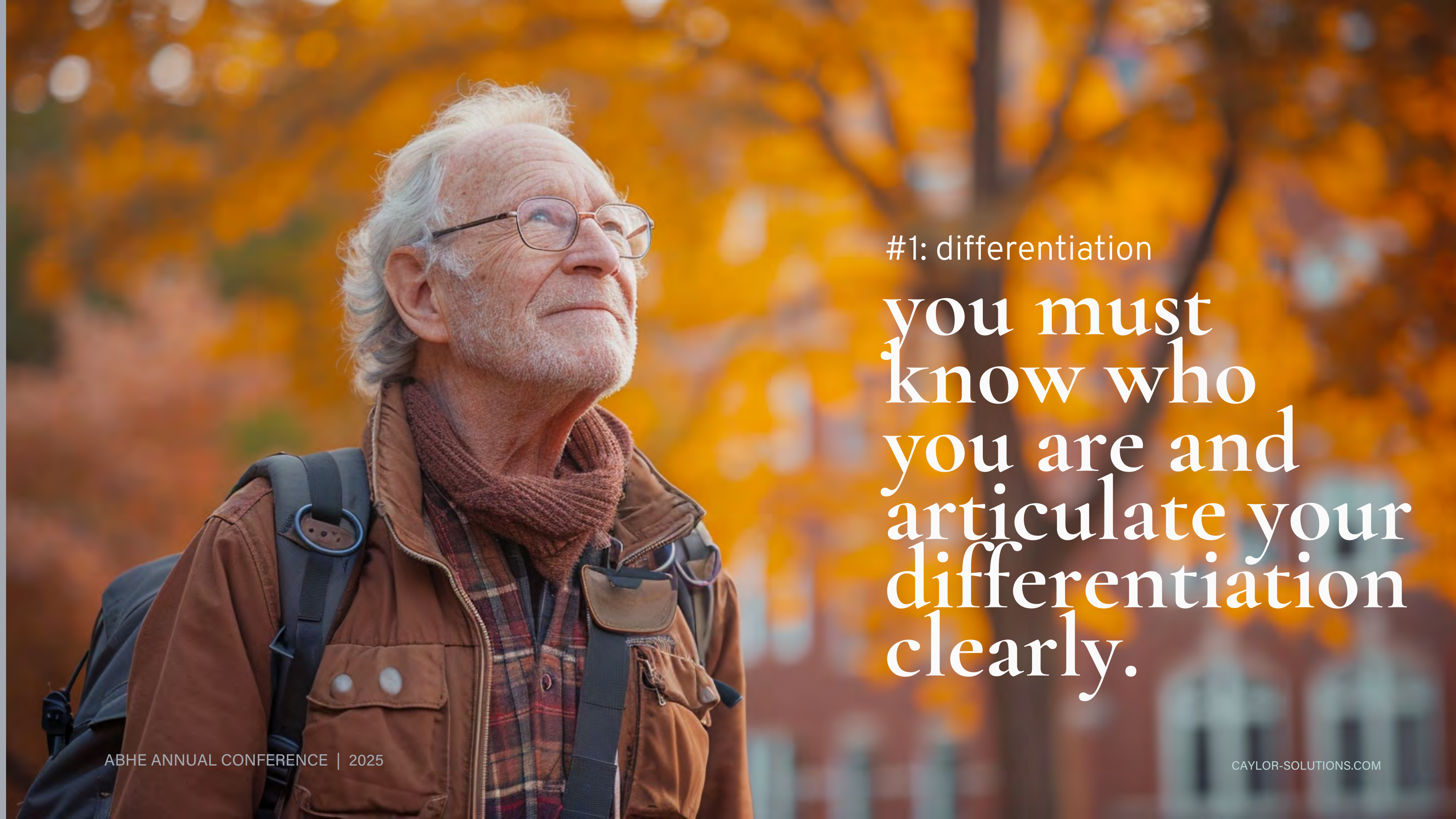


- Differentiation
- Watering Holes
- Goldilocks Efforts
- Focus & Strategy
- Think Differently



# differentiation.





#1: differentiation

you must  
know who  
you are and  
articulate your  
differentiation  
clearly.



## differentiation:

- Understanding what truly sets your institution apart from others is crucial for effective marketing.
- Generic claims like “small classes” or “close-knit community” should be avoided; instead, focus on unique attributes.
- Use detailed personas of your ideal students helps tailor marketing messages that resonate with their specific needs and interests.



## key truths:

- You need to understand and articulate what truly sets your institution apart.
- Identify the specific attributes that resonate with your ideal students, avoiding generic claims.
- Once identified, tailor your marketing messages to highlight these unique attributes, making it easier for mission-fit students to connect with your institution.



practical exercises:

- do a deep dive understanding of what makes your institution unique and distinctive among everyone.
- take time to create specific personas of your ideal student.
- test it with your best students.



# watering holes.





#2: watering holes  
a watering  
hole is a  
target-rich  
engagement  
environment.



## watering holes:

- These are the places where your target audience naturally gathers for information, inspiration, and community.
- They are looking for content that resonates with their needs and interests.
- For lead generation, the challenge: you must position your marketing efforts where they already are, not where you (or your board) think they should be (e.g. billboards, traditional media, etc.).



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## key truths:

- You need to understand your audience's preferred platforms and channels.
- Identify the specific watering holes that align with your audience's demographics and psychographics.
- Once identified, you can tailor your content to fit seamlessly into these spaces, making it easier for your mission-fit students to discover and engage with your institution.



practical exercises:

- identify where your mission-fit student spends time. youth groups? academic clubs? social media – youtube?
- test with your current students for more understanding.
- look for creative, non-competitive areas.



# goldilocks efforts.



A young man with light brown hair, wearing a green jacket over a grey hoodie and a backpack, stands in the foreground, smiling slightly. He is surrounded by a crowd of people, mostly out of focus, in an outdoor setting during sunset. The warm, golden light of the setting sun creates a soft glow and lens flare effects across the scene.

#3: goldilocks efforts

your  
marketing  
has to fit your  
institution and  
your goals.



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## goldilocks efforts:

- Ensure your marketing efforts are the right fit—not too ambitious or too minimal, but just right for your institution's goals and resources.
- Aligning marketing activities with institutional goals and available resources maximizes efficiency and impact.
- Regularly review and optimize your marketing efforts to stay aligned with changing institutional goals and market conditions.



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## key truths:

- You have limited budgets and resources. Use them wisely and effectively.
- Educate and gain literacy in various marketing channels and methods. Understand the basics so you can better manage and ask appropriate questions of those implementing campaigns and external resources.
- Focus on your goals and efforts and not necessarily the desires of various stakeholders on campus.



practical exercises:

- meet with marketing teams to get up to speed on digital campaigns and start learning the terminology.
- take basic classes on digital marketing to gain a working vocabulary of terms.



# focus & strategy +





#4: focus & strategy  
is your  
marketing  
effort and  
team driven  
or are they  
drivers?



## focus & strategy

- Assess whether your marketing effort and team are proactive drivers of strategy or merely reactive to external pressures.
- Focus on revenue-enhancing activities rather than functioning as an "institutional Kinkos" handling miscellaneous tasks.
- Align your marketing strategy with broader institutional objectives, prioritizing activities that directly contribute to enrollment and revenue growth.



## key truths:

- Relationships matter. Build awareness and trust between internal teams such as marketing and enrollment.
- Marketing team members don't know what they don't know. Bring them along to a college fair. Have them shadow a counselor at a local high school visit. Bring them into the work you want them to impact.
- Educate them to help serve the institution better.



practical exercises:

- look for ways to build partnerships between marketing and enrollment.
- educate marketing teams on enrollment so that they can better serve you and your teams.
- ask questions and never stop learning.



# think differently.



A man and a woman are sitting at a wooden table in a library or cafe. The man, wearing glasses and a brown sweater, is looking at a laptop screen. The woman, with her hair in a ponytail, is looking at the screen and smiling. There are coffee cups on the table. In the background, there are bookshelves and other people. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

#5: think differently  
is your  
marketing  
effort truly  
creative or a  
me too?



## innovative marketing:

- These are designed to “break out of the noise” and demonstrate distinctiveness.
- Designed to captivate and resonate with your target audience.
- The challenge: standing out in a crowded market with limited resources.



## key truths:

- Embrace guerrilla tactics using unconventional methods to make a memorable impact.
- Adapt to modern trends and tools to capture attention and drive engagement.
- Craft campaigns that emotionally resonate with your audience's values and aspirations.
- Utilize AI tools like ChatGPT for cost-effective and innovative solutions.



practical exercises:

- brainstorm unconventional, low-cost marketing tactics with big impact (guerilla techniques)
- use Instagram reels, TikTok challenges, and YouTube.
- create campaigns connecting emotionally with your audience's values with social proof.



# final thoughts.



“Students will pick your school because you resonated with them on a personal level. The value of differentiation is in understanding the needs of your audience and how you can best support them. Do this, and mission-fit students—students that truly resonate with your message and find the most success at your institution—will come knocking at your doors.”

— *Chasing Mission Fit*





# use new AI tools.

- This entire presentation was created in collaboration with ChatGPT and Claude.ai (uploaded my book manuscript and the overview of the session).
- Created all images with Midjourney using a few different prompts.
- Assembled in Canva and added a few elements via their AI tools.







**CHASING  
MISSION  
FIT**

A Marketing Guide to Fill Your Institution  
with Students Who Will Succeed

BART E. CAYLOR

# book & study guide:

- bulk order discounts available
- scan QR code to order (paperback, hardback, ebook)
- order through your campus bookstore
- order anywhere you get your books





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# questions?



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