

Embrace resistance

Learning from people who are not supportive

“Embracing resistance is a lot about respecting other people’s perspectives.”

Joseph Michelli, Author
*The Starbucks Experience:
Five Principles for Turning Ordinary Into Extraordinary*

This week’s Marketing Corner is the fourth in a series on customer service. With school starting later this week or next (depending on your calendar), this is likely your last chance to work with your staff during pre-session and before the day-to-day busy-ness swamps you. The quotes below come from *The Starbucks Experience*, in which “embrace resistance” is the fourth principle.

Embracing resistance is a little different from addressing the concerns or frustrations of individual parents. I’d like you to focus on how your team can learn from people who are actively detractors—which in most cases means they are not sending students.

Ask your staff to help you list your school’s detractors.

For Adventist schools detractors can often fall into four categories:

- People who had a poor experience as a child with Adventist schools,
- People who had a poor experience sending their child(ren) to an Adventist school (which may or may not have been yours),
- People who believe your school is too liberal, and
- People who believe your school is too conservative.

These will often be members of your constituent church(es), but not parents with children currently enrolled.

Brainstorm how you can connect with these people and get their input.

“While it’s natural to avoid contact with detractors, much can be gained by welcoming them into the early stages of problem-focused discussions.” (p. 150)

Answer questions like:

- Are there several people on our list who we think may have similar views?
- Would they be willing to talk with us as a group? If so, who would be the most effective facilitator?
- How can we best convey our interest in their opinions?

Outline the *process* your school will use to evaluate and integrate the input you get.

1. Know what you will and will not negotiate on. (It will help if you've already articulated your mission—your non-negotiables.)

“As long as the core product stays true to its quality and principles, other elements of the offer can adapt to local market needs.” (p. 120)

2. For everything else, ask your team to adopt the attitude: How can we make it work?

“Rather than believe the skeptics, the leadership at Starbucks seems to ask the question, ‘Why wouldn’t it work?’” (p. 135)

Final thought...

“Successful leaders do not hide from difficult challenges. They approach complex and controversial issues with a willingness to benefit from the concerns raised by commentators and adversaries. In the end, they take the course of action that not only quells criticism, but on occasion actually turns critics into company champions.” (p. 119)

If you are the only teacher at your school: Work with your board chairman or the pastor(s) of your constituent church(es) on the first two projects. And while you can do the third step on your own, they may still be a good sounding board for your ideas.

Binder tab: August

School size: All