



Education Institutions' Silver Linings Playbook For Emerging From the Pandemic

Insights

5.03.21

Our firm just published a “[Silver Linings Playbook](#)” gleaned from our various practice groups and industry teams highlighting the various ways that businesses can emerge for the better after the pandemic. While educational institutions may find the article useful as you navigate the new world with your workforce, you deserve your own separate publication focusing on concepts unique to schools.

Recognizing that the pandemic continues to take a devastating toll on the health, well-being, and economic security of tens of millions of Americans, your school should continue to do your best to provide a safe environment for your educators, staff, and students. However, you now also have an opportunity to better your institution by examining some of the positive outcomes that have come from the COVID-19 crisis. Here are the top concepts you should consider to take advantage of these many opportunities.

- Most obviously, students and employees now realize they can participate in school activities on a remote basis in an effective manner. This shift in thinking will make it easier to accommodate students in the future.
- Schools were forced to invest in technology as a necessity over the past year – with many meeting IT goals years ahead of schedule. Now, as we emerge from the pandemic, schools can take the time to harness the benefits and possibilities from their technological investments and think about how these investments can continue to benefit the school into the future. As they say, necessity is the mother of invention, and this past year has provided ample opportunity to explore creative options.
- Correspondingly, schools realize that the ease of remote learning can impact their disaster response. If a campus is physically damaged by a natural disaster or fire, class may be able to resume more quickly in a remote learning mode.
- Thanks to current technology, schools now realize that they can have effective training sessions – for both large and small programs – utilizing Zoom and other remote platforms.
- Schools across the country are finding that their employees are collaborating with other schools – both near and far – more easily. They don’t have to wait for industry conferences to share ideas, information, and lessons learned. By holding more regular video conferences and brainstorming

via other digital means, your educators are collaborating with peers from schools around the globe. By encouraging and supporting these opportunities, your school will be the better for it.

- Although professional development opportunities have become cheaper (given reduced travel expenses) and more accessible for all via Zoom, schools should nevertheless recognize that it is harder for employees to meaningfully attend such sessions when they are on campus. You expect them to attend to primary matters and other issues of urgency, which can lead to distractions. Be realistic about your expectations of your educators and flexible about their continued in person attendance.
- Community engagement has become more accessible and expansive in some ways, especially with grandparents and international students' parents who can "attend" meetings and activities (athletics, fine arts performances, etc.). This increased engagement can also result in broader and deeper fundraising opportunities.
- Interviewing employment candidates who are not local has become easier and more thorough. It also allows you to narrow the pool of candidates for whom you pay expenses to visit campus for final interviews. While international schools have done this for years, we are now seeing schools of all stripes adopting this technique.
- Similarly, students can "visit" schools even if they don't live nearby. Whether we are talking about prospective students, full-time attendees, or individuals seeking to dabble in special programs (summer camps, auditing courses, community education, etc.), they aren't limited to on-campus activity being their only access point. They can sit in on a class or an activity and tour the campus without actually being on campus.
- Finally, schools that received PPP loans are unfortunately realizing the consequences of accepting financial assistance from the federal government. We are seeing more claims and aggressive parent demands under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Title IX. This experience for many will reinforce that schools should think long and hard before accepting funds that may cause them headaches for years.

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