

The Experts' Guide to the K-12 School Market

SECOND EDITION



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Preface

Carol Ann Waugh
President, Xcellent Marketing

The genesis of the first edition of this guide was the realization that the traditional K-12 school market was undergoing major shifts and attracting new players and yet, there wasn't a single resource people could turn to that documented successful practices for providing and marketing products and services to educators. Many of my colleagues who were involved in the early planning of this guide had been involved in the education industry in one way or another for more than 25 years and our combined network of "experts" spanned many types of companies, many types of products and many types of distribution systems.

The first edition, published in 2002, contained articles from 72 of these experts, who freely gave their time and expertise to contribute their thoughtful advice on a full range of topics – from understanding how trends and funding create market opportunities to how to create a product that educators can use to help students learn.

Because the K-12 school market is so complex, and the No child Left Behind (NCLB) law has had a major impact on how the schools are funded and measured, the last six years have brought some major changes in what products are needed and which marketing strategies and sales channels are producing better results. Because this guide is still the only guide that covers this market, the decision was made to create a second edition.

This new edition contains articles from 63 experts, some of whom contributed articles to the first edition and have updated their topic with the latest trends and information. The other experts in this edition are new contributors who have expertise in new topics that are emerging in our changing market.

Some of the important new topics that are covered in this edition are:

- ▶ Funding and implications of NCLB and what might be in store for the future.
- ▶ New marketing strategies such as partnering with associations.
- ▶ New information about niche markets such as special education and English language learning products.
- ▶ Updates on the changing landscape of selling to districts, the sales cycle and sales training requirements.
- ▶ And, the ever changing scope and strategies of internet marketing including blogs, emails, webinars and websites.

I would like to personally thank Emily Perkins who took over as the editor of this second edition. I know how much work it is to communicate with and support 63 different contributors and she did a fantastic job.

I'd also like to personally thank everyone who wrote or updated an article for this edition. It is truly a reflection of the generosity and expertise of so many people who have spent their careers in developing and selling products and services to help students learn. We are a close knit, caring group and hopefully, we've made a positive difference in students' lives.

Foreword

Karen Billings, Vice President, Education Division,
Software & Information Industry Association

Companies that sell products and services to the U.S. K-12 Education market agree that it can be often be a challenging process. We know that the K-12 system spends millions of dollars on instructional materials, but we don't always know who the decision-makers are, let alone how we get them to make a decision in our favor.

At SIIA, we are often asked about this market so we have a number of resources that provide information about the opportunities in the K-12 market. However, in the decades that I've been in this business, I've never seen another resource like The Experts' Guide, that put 'everything you wanted to know about the K-12 market' into one book, let alone do it by combining the forces of the experts within the industry.

Years after the transition of The Experts' Guide to SIIA, we continued to see strong sales of the book. Much of its content and advice from the authors has remained relevant and interesting. But things do change in education – some very little but some a lot more. So we took on the task of revising the book and producing this Second Edition.

In updating the book, we found that in some cases, the material simply needed to be refreshed, some needed a major update to include the drastic changes resulting from the influence of technology on the industry, and some material changes to rapidly that book publication would date it beyond its worth. However the general structure remains the same. Some of the original authors have moved out of the K-12 market and so we sought out new experts to lend their advice. We were so pleased to find that most authors wanted to be included in this new edition and have kept up with the trends that have transitioned our industry into the 21st century.

The shift from print to digital resources within K-12 and the growth of the Internet have in turn shifted the development, marketing and sales processes. You'll see that our second edition includes a chapter on the education technology market and you'll see some reorganization of the sales and marketing chapters.

We believe that the Second Edition of the book will be useful and inspirational to those starting out in the industry as well as those mentoring a 'newbie' in their company. So we're proud to publish the new Experts' Guide and believe that it will meet the needs of those who want to be successful in the K12 market.

While I'm honored to be an author this time around, sharing information along with my colleagues, I'm so appreciative of the work of all contributors to this book – certainly that of each and every author, members of the SIIA staff, as well as those at Bill Smith Studio, the designers of this Second Edition of The Experts' Guide.



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