

# How District-level strategic partnerships best support education

*With more than 70 years of history in the exclusive business of school photography, Lifetouch National School Studios Inc. has seen the industry evolve through many stages.*

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When most of us were in school ourselves, we saw our parents write checks each year for school pictures and we exchanged wallet-size pictures with our friends, and our mothers relied on the pictures for distribution in Holiday cards as gifts. It was an annual ritual; no one questioned it.

Today, with increasing pressure on schools to educate our students while funding is being squeezed from every direction, school administrators have less time to spend on the topic of school pictures. Parents are no longer automatically buying school portrait packages, however research indicates they still value bi-annual photographs of

their child if they can be assured of good quality at a competitive price.

As the industry leader, Lifetouch has committed significant time and resources to improving our school picture processes and product offerings, and working with schools and districts to find creative ways to support their efforts to provide better education for our youth.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number of school districts seeking an exclusive photography partnership in order to further their district's objectives.

Lifetouch is the market leader in this

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process. Creative solutions such as financial sponsorships, student recognition materials that foster self-esteem, and parent communication technology have significantly improved the ability of schools across the country to offer more and better services to their students and families.

This white paper offers an overview of several key factors that make Lifetouch National School Studios Inc. the industry leader in school photography, and which serve as the catalyst for the trend we have seen in school districts desiring an exclusive, strategic partnership for all photography products and services.

## **THE ART AND SCIENCE OF SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHY**

First and foremost, Lifetouch provides the absolute best Picture Day process, experience and results. We don't leave it up to chance. Through Time/Motion Studies, we painstakingly scrutinize every step in every pose category to create the optimum environment, lighting and student-photographer interaction. We constantly improve our processes, reduce retakes, and produce greater student and family satisfaction ratings. The better the results and customer satisfaction, the less school personnel have to deal with problems or complaints.

Second, we thoroughly test photography concepts with consumers before offering them on a wide scale. Poses and products desired by parents and students can vary in every region and district in the country, and we build our package offerings based on this research. We can state, with confidence, that we are offering competitive prices for the highest-quality products in the industry, in absolutely every market we serve.

Third, we regularly ask school district administrators and school personnel about their specific needs and work to accommodate those needs. We have developed partnerships with districts that have resulted in tens of thousands of dollars worth of value-added products and services. When these partnerships have spanned multiple years, the totals have reached into the millions.

## **FOCUS ON NEEDS**

We know how important our relationship is with school principals, yearbook advisers and parents. That's why we conduct research with a nationally representative sample of hundreds of school principals and yearbook advisers, and nearly 1,000 parents of children in pre-kindergarten through 11<sup>th</sup> grade.

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Our research identified the following service products as essential to principals:

- A supply of mini pictures for administrative use such as student folders, emergency cards and classroom projects (in elementary schools)
- Student ID cards (in secondary schools)
- CD of images of all students and staff for administrative purposes
- CD of individual student images for the yearbook publisher

These products are some of a broad selection of complimentary offerings built into most contracts we execute. We continually ask about priorities and desires and modify our offerings. In addition to providing the best photography services in the industry, which is your minimal expectation, we design a custom program to support your district where you need it most.

## **COMMITMENT TO SECURITY**

A factor that truly differentiates Lifetouch, and in which we are quite proud, is our commitment and contributions to security. Here are two examples:

### **Employee Background Checks—**

Personal safety, especially for children, is on the forefront of everyone's minds. Most, but not all states require background checks for employees, vendors included, who interact with students and staff. Lifetouch conducts employee background checks in all states, even those which don't require them. The Lifetouch "We Care Enough to Check" program requires each new field employee to pass an extensive background check which is conducted through Verifications Inc. The check includes a search of criminal records in all counties across the United States where the individual lived during the previous seven years or additional addresses found through the social security number trace, a search of sex offender registries in states where available, and a driving record search.

### **SmileSafe Kids® (Child Safety**

**Program)** is a partnership between Lifetouch, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), and thousands of schools nationwide to provide families with complimentary tools to help children stay safer and to respond quickly if a child is missing. Lifetouch provides

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two cards per child photographed, regardless of whether the family purchases a portrait package. We contribute hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to this incredible program, which has assisted in the successful search-and-return of missing children.

### **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE GREATEST WIN-WIN**

Schools and districts have asked us over the years to provide a photography services bid, submit a proposal in response to an RFP, apply for status as a preferred vendor, or enter into an exclusive partnership as their sole provider of photography products and services.

Whenever we have had the opportunity to meet with school districts and form a strategic partnership, we have experienced the greatest win-win relationships in support of education. There are benefits to being the market leader and having the financial wherewithal to tailor our products and services to your specific needs. We welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the many ways we have partnered with districts throughout North America.

If you are interested in hearing more about strategic partnership opportunities and what Lifetouch can do for your school district, please contact David Crandall, National Accounts Manager, at 615-861-0756 or [dcrandall@lifetouch.com](mailto:dcrandall@lifetouch.com).