

# AN ONLINE ANSWER FOR ADMISSION DEPARTMENTS HELD HOSTAGE BY PAPER



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Ravenna Solutions

K-12 schools and applicant parents have long suffered through a paper-based admission process, and frustration and inefficiency have remained the status quo. Now, for the first time, a proven and truly online software is revolutionizing the way admissions get done.

# An Online Answer for Admission Departments Held Hostage by Paper

## RAVENNA SOLUTIONS

### PROBLEMS: PAPER INSTEAD OF PEOPLE

While processing applications through the admission funnel, it is necessary for schools to track which forms have been received and what the status is for each individual requirement of the overall application. This undertaking is imperative, but if paper-based it is also incredibly time-consuming.

Admission offices want to spend quality time with people and focus on making the personal touches that will engage their applicant families. Having a paper-based system makes it very difficult for admission directors to strategically manage the overall work of the admission team and effectively keep the admission process on schedule. Time spent playing the paper game is time that could have been used in higher value family outreach.

### HARD TO SHARE AND HARD TO TRACK

Strategic admission departments rely on people outside their department to bring in perspective and insight, particularly so during the application reading process. Readers may include heads of school, learning specialists, teachers and coaches. When all of these people must share a single paper version of each application, the physical file must be constantly tracked down and passed from person to person.

*"The fact that you can have 5 people reading the same file at the same time - I can't underestimate that . . . it's huge. You're not trying to track down the one missing file that someone hasn't read yet. It's completely changed the efficiency of the process."*

- Lauren Formo, Director of Admission  
Eastside Prep

Admission departments must either require that all files be kept in their office or run the risk of lost files. One reader at a time is also a painfully slow process during a period when time is of the essence. These concerns are true for all paper

files, whether the applications are submitted as paper or whether they are submitted online and then printed by the school.

## STOP THE MADNESS!

Schools throughout the country have experienced the frustration, limitation and inefficiency of the paper-based admission process. Finally, in 2012, a group of private schools in Seattle, Washington decided to explore a better way. They worked with the team at Ravenna Solutions to expand an existing private school electronic file repository into an online reading system, which became Ravenna (formerly known as ORCAS Mosaic).

Ravenna has continued to evolve into a sophisticated and game-changing technology solution that enables every step in the admission process, from inquiry to acceptance, to be entirely paperless and online.

Most importantly, Ravenna Solutions recognizes that different participants in the admission process would have different comfort levels with a transition to an online process and so built the system to accommodate both paper and electronic submission. This fluidity allows each participant of the admission community to evolve from paper to online at their own pace. Now, Ravenna is adopted widely by the private schools across the country and continues to grow.

## MORE THAN JUST AN ONLINE APP

Unlike all other online application solutions, Ravenna enables a school to manage the entire admission process online. This comprehensive online admission system is possible because of

*"Ravenna is a huge organizational tool that has streamlined the process for parents applying to schools in our market. Having all the information in one place online has also freed me up to spend time on my real work - talking with prospective parents about my school and who we are. I also really love the data and the comparative analysis this tool makes available to me. Lastly, I've never worked with a vendor that's been so responsive and supportive. All in all, I'm a big fan."*

- Pam Lauritzen, Director of Admission and Financial Aid, Bertschi School

three innovative components: an application submission portal for parents, a central repository for all application documents and online application review and decision management capabilities. The result is a proven and effective system that empowers and elevates admission departments to collaborate, connect and be strategically managed.

Ravenna is far more than the stand-alone online application offered by other admission database software systems. For the first time, it enables collaboration among private schools in order to

build significant efficiencies in admission processes for both parents and schools. At the same time, each individual school retains its own independent admission process and identity – no school is forced into or limited by a common or generic application process.

An applicant's core information (basic student and family data) is collected once and then shared with all participating schools in the area, substantially saving time for schools and parents.

Beyond that core information, schools are afforded full flexibility to build their own application forms or pull from and customize a library of existing shared forms.

For any paper that still exists in a school's admission process, Ravenna offers an innovative and intelligent scanning technology which allows fast and accurate placement of scanned documents into a student's online application file.

## PEOPLE INSTEAD OF PAPER

Admission departments utilizing Ravenna have found their offices transformed. They are no longer buried under a stack of files, frantically shuffling papers and fielding process calls from parents. Instead, they can process applications with the click of a button and can focus on connecting with people.

*"The hours spent 'chasing files' that are now eliminated made all the difference in the quality and type of communication we were able to have with prospective families allowing us the chance to build relationships as opposed to monitoring paperwork . . . All in all, it allowed a small school like ours to provide a high touch experience to our prospective parents, while also giving them more ownership but less anguish over the process."*

*- Jeanette James, Director of Admission and Advancement, Seattle Girls' School*

## TRANSFORMING ADMISSION READING

Having all of the application folders online through Ravenna brings unparalleled benefits for the admission department and thereby the school. Multiple people can be securely reading the same application online at the same time, vastly increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the reading process. The need to hunt down files or manage a separate status-tracking spreadsheet is entirely eliminated.

Completed applications can be grouped and assigned to readers, who can then review, comment on, score and rank applicants, all online. The comments and scores readers are asked to

*"Using Ravenna has reduced overtime from my office this year by about 200 hours as well as streamlining our admission committee reading and selection processes. This time savings has allowed our team to spend our time focusing on the families and improving our events and programs."*

*- Eric Barber, Director of Admission and Enrollment Management, The Evergreen School*

complete for applications can be customized by the individual school. In addition, readers can easily cut and paste relevant content from forms, such as quotes from parents or teachers, into their reader comments. Schools can choose to keep reader comments private or have them be visible to other readers.

Schools report gaining not only significant efficiencies in the application reading process,

but quality improvements as well. Since readers have more convenient access to files, they can spend more time in thoughtful reflection on the applicants. Ravenna enables easy expansion of

the community of readers, which allows a more collaborative experience since more voices within the school can contribute to the decision making process.

## GAME-CHANGING IMPACTS ON DECISION MAKING

*"It used to take us 4-5 days to complete three independent reviews of each application. Now it only takes about 24 hours. What's surprised us even more was the qualitative difference in using Ravenna; our readers are more thorough and are providing better insight to the committee. It's faster, and it's better."*

*- Booth Kyle, Assistant Head of School and Director of Admissions, Lakeside School*

During the decision making process, reader comments and scores are summarized and made easily available to decision committee members, along with all the original application forms and documents. Decision committees gain incredible visibility into the reading process and can quickly access decision management capabilities made possible through the data collected in the applications.

The customized assessment metrics and additional meta-data, such as gender or current school, can be dynamically sorted and filtered immediately; right as the decision making process is happening. Schools have found this to result in a profound increase in the effectiveness of committee meetings.

## EMPOWERED PARENTS ARE HAPPY PARENTS

It's not just the schools who benefit – the parent community benefits as well. A goal of any school is to connect with parents as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Through this revolutionary software, parents can now easily and quickly connect with and apply to multiple schools in one place online. No longer do they have to navigate through various school websites and submission processes, desperately trying to manage all the different requirements and due dates. For the first time, this software gives parents access to all this information consolidated in a single place.

*"As a parent, having one place to manage all of my child's applications was vital, and Ravenna did that. Ease of navigation was critical. The ability to see real time updates helped me monitor the steps of each school application. From inquiry to acceptance, it is head and shoulders above other systems. I was grateful the schools we applied to made this process so efficient."*

*- Russell Regan, Parent User*

## FEEDER SCHOOLS SEE BENEFITS AS WELL

Feeder schools, public or private, are important players in the paper-to-online movement as well. Teachers at feeder schools are often called upon to submit teacher evaluations for their students. Ravenna provides teachers with the ability to fill out these forms online and, if desired, the ability to create an account to manage those forms. In regions where schools use shared teacher

evaluations, teachers need only fill out their forms once and they are then automatically submitted to all the schools to which a family chooses to apply.

Report cards have long been the biggest paper burden in the application process. Now, feeder schools can request a free Ravenna account which allows them to easily upload report cards, transcripts, or other admission-related documents. The feeder schools also benefit from the efficiencies of an online process, including not having to print and mail large numbers of paper reports.

## CONCLUSION: ELEVATED ADMISSIONS AND EMPOWERED PARENTS

The successes and benefits schools and parents have experienced through Ravenna have proven that the frustrating admission paper process can be a thing of the past. What began as an effort to enable online application reading has grown to lift the burden of paper from the private school admission community. Schools have found that the synergies introduced by implementing an entirely online process has solved far more of the admission problems than they could have imagined, and has empowered them to do admissions better.



## ABOUT RAVENNA SOLUTIONS

Ravenna is transforming K-12 admissions by enabling a totally paperless process - from inquiry to decision. We free your admission team from manual processes and streamline the experience for your applicant families. Because your applications are accessible anytime from anyplace we elevate the decision making processes resulting in better, more thoughtful decisions.

SALES INQUIRIES: 866-491-1571    INQUIRIES@RAVENNASOLUTIONS.COM