Building K-12 Consumer Confidence in EdTech

A CoSN (Consortium for School Networking) Roundtable
with Veracity Verification Solutions

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Introduction

In partnership with CoSN (Consortium for School Networking), a recent roundtable of experienced educators, edtech strategists, and industry thought leaders gathered to discuss the greatest disconnect in edtech and K-12 today. Members from various backgrounds shared insights and recommendations for building trust and instilling confidence with buyers to improve the overall impact of edtech.

The roundtable was sponsored by Veracity Verification Solutions and moderated by Veracity CRO Amy Robertson and COO Crystal Wilson.

Summary

Educators and edtech providers alike agree there are considerable obstacles impeding the success of implementing and maximizing value of education technology investments in school districts today. Many of these hurdles are fundamentally rooted in the lack of access, trust, and accountability between the two. Participants share their observations and expertise to guide others on the path to building stronger relationships and partnerships.
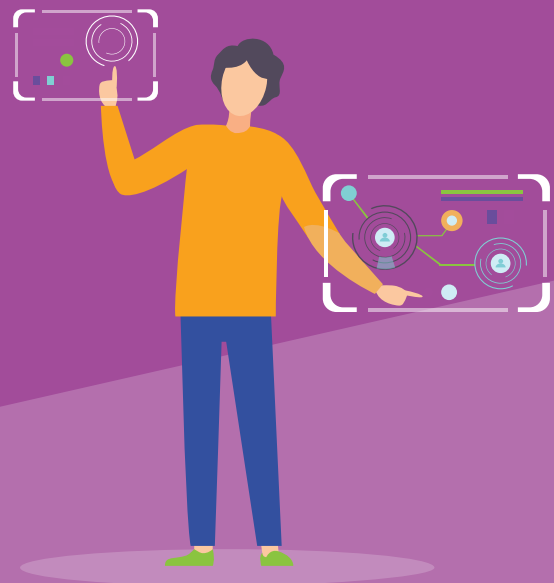
The Discussion

What are the biggest challenges selling into K-12 today and what recommendations would you share?

Communication, Trust, and Relationship Building

Chad Stevens, Chief Strategy Officer, ParentSquare
"The universe of K-12 is so diverse. You have to decide who you want to be, and it takes time to build trust. Communication is tough; especially when others are being super aggressive. There is often too much communication and not enough seeking candid conversation."

Jeff Rothenberg, Strategic Educational Consultant, Rosen Publishing
"It's about relationships, taking a personal approach, and building a network. The RFP 'game' is a difficult one – keeping up and competing is a full-time job in itself. Greater success can be found with those districts in which you've built a true relationship."

Roger Rosen, CEO, Rosen Publishing
"To add to Jeff's comment, it's really about solution selling and listening intently to the needs of the school or district. We learned a lot during COVID, and the big takeaway is...it's about more than promoting a product, it's providing a thoughtful discourse about the issues and around those issues-and sharing how you can positively impact."

Rod Houpe, Director of Business Development, Education Networks of America (ENA)
"I agree with Roger. Active listening skills are the most critical thing. Sometimes it may not be your own solution; you're discussing what's in the best interest of that technology leader, educator, community, or board member. It's about the thought leadership you can bring to the table. That's how you build trust. Establish an open relationship and focus on broadening and strengthening the community."

Partnering for Success

Lisa Schmucki, Founder and CEO, edWeb.net
"Be a partner, not a vendor. The expectation of really knowing the district is high. Know district priorities and demographics. Know underlying issues and how your company can help."

Chad Stevens, Chief Strategy Officer, ParentSquare
"It's going to become very important for small edtech start-ups to focus on partner-to-partner networking (with other edtech) and building trusted relationships to refer customers."

Monica Cougan, Manager Strategic Relationships and Initiatives, Education Networks of America (ENA)
"Get a seat at the table (focus groups, for example) and participate side by side. Emails don't work."

Lisa Schmucki, Founder and CEO, edWeb.net
"For the long game, you have to be in there nurturing the teachers, the parents, the librarians – the whole community has to know you. If the opportunity arises, the community is going to be familiar and welcome it. They need to trust the solution too. It's not just the buyer trusting you for a successful implementation; the users have to trust you too."

Roger Rosen, CEO, Rosen Publishing
Echoing Lisa, "You need buy-in from all constituents."

Anna Hughes, Director of User Experience Research, Promethean
"There's nothing like having your customers speak for you in today's increasingly competitive market. Our competitors are creating unrealistic expectations and creating tons of downward price pressure. The importance of reputation, backed by high-quality, reliable products and attention to customer service is more important than ever."

Rod Houpe, Director of Business Development, Education Networks of America (ENA)

"Demonstrate your experiences. Know the K-12 lifecycle – the business of education- understanding when they buy and when they can't buy - the busy times of the year. Know when to push and when not to. When to enter into a sales cycle versus a support cycle."

Jeff Rothenberg, Strategic Educational Consultant, Rosen Publishing

"Last year was a wash. Many districts are not going to implement anything new…too much on their plate. Moving forward will be interesting."

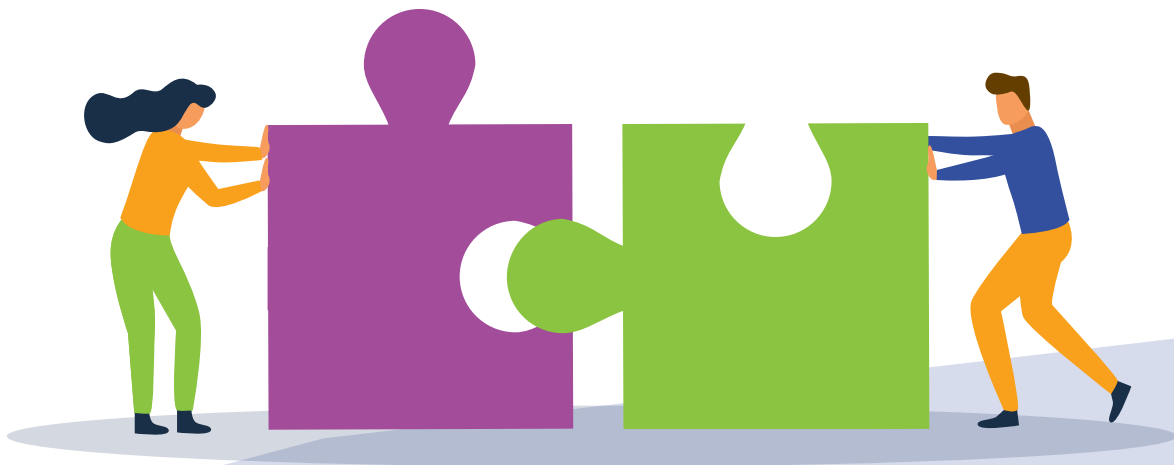**Roger Rosen, CEO, Rosen Publishing**

"The single biggest issue is time. We have to be very respectful of their time."

Conclusion

The edtech space is crowded and often noisy; however, many organizations are working diligently to break through the noise to build valuable relationships with schools and districts in the pursuit of furthering their mission towards educator and student success. The best edtech providers are focusing on improving communications, building trust, and partnering for success.

The Panel

Amy Robertson
CRO, Veracity Verification Solutions
[in]

Crystal Wilson
COO, Veracity Verification Solutions
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Roger Rosen
CEO & President, Rosen Publishing
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Jeff Rothenberg
Strategic Educational Consultant, Rosen Publishing
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Lisa Schmucki
Founder & CEO, edWeb.net
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Chad Stevens
Chief Strategy Officer, ParentSquare
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Rod Houpe
Director of Business Development,
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Monica Cougan
Manager Strategic Relationships and Initiatives,
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ABOUT CoSN
CoSN (the Consortium for School Networking) is the premier professional association for school system technology leaders. CoSN provides thought leadership resources, community, best practices, and advocacy tools to help leaders succeed in the digital transformation. CoSN represents over 13 million students in school districts nationwide and continues to grow as a powerful and influential voice in K-12 education.

www.cosn.org

ABOUT VERACITY
As the only product verification company in K-12 education, Veracity was founded on the principle that every educator deserves technology that truly enables desired outcomes in student achievement. We built our verification process, alongside experienced educators, to deliver the most rigorous, unbiased, third-party assessment to modernize the edtech purchasing process and enable educators to influence the roadmap of K-12 SaaS solutions. We bridge the gap between K-12 and edtech, connecting the needs of school districts with a verified truth of product delivery, to better the mission of us all.

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