



Developing a Marketing Strategy

Christian Heritage *Academy*

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Introduction

Christian Heritage Academy (CHA) is a PK-12 Christian school serving 590 students in Del City, Oklahoma. During the 2009-10 school year the school reached a record enrollment level of 665 students. In the last three years that number has decreased to 590. The school has never done any significant marketing at all while trusting that prospective families will find out about the school via word-of-mouth and/or our school website.

During the Van Lunen leadership sessions last summer it became clear to me that we need to develop a marketing plan, so that has been the focus of my attention and work. I first needed a little more understanding of what *marketing* is. The American Marketing Association defines it as follows: “Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.”¹ The core of that definition that is pertinent to CHA is “Marketing is the activity and processes for communicating offerings that have value for customers.” We had very little activity and very few processes for communicating to prospective parents the value of a CHA education for their children. Following are the steps we have taken and things we have done to institute activities and processes to better communicate with prospective parents.

Facilitate Word-of-Mouth Marketing

At the recommendation of and with help from our consultant, Bob Rogalski, we started what he called a “Promoters Program.” A committee helped me discuss this possibility and

formulate a plan. It was decided that what we really want to do is help parents communicate the “heart of CHA” with prospective parents, and a good way to do that is to invite parents to CHA events. We gave this program the name “Share the Heart.”

The heart of CHA is to train American Christian leaders for every sphere of society. Each of



The Heart of CHA

Leader - One who influences others;
One who follows in advance of others

Christian - One who influences others for and toward Christ

American - One who understands America's gospel purpose - to propagate the gospel

get to know the heart of our school

"Training American Christian Leaders for every sphere of society."

the pictures is a slide from the presentation that I used at our orientation sessions with parents. The entire PowerPoint presentation is available for download at my DropBox <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/hzs5gk0opcv320c/hexVYlj6pT> The heart of the school is part of what makes each school distinctive.

The primary way that families find out about our schools is word-of-mouth. We knew this but we were not doing anything to help our families have a way to talk about CHA or to invite them to CHA events.



Christian Heritage *25th Anniversary*

How did you find out about CHA?

Statistics indicate that Christian schools typically achieve **70% or MORE** of their enrollment through an introduction by someone they know.

The best schools have over 90% enrollment through word of mouth!

"Training American Christian Leaders..."

We also know from our record-keeping in our admission department that there is a significant different in percentage based upon whether or not they ever it is not the building that matters so inside our building. Parents who to meet our teachers and our a little bit of a sense of what God is students through the lives of



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Less than **10%** enroll - If a parent talks to someone at CHA on the phone and/or receives an admissions packet in the mail.

About **80%** enroll - If a parent comes to the building.

get to know the heart of our school

"Training American Christian Leaders..."

of families who enroll visit our building – and much as what goes on come to the school get students and get at least doing in the lives of teachers.

So we designated and promoted many of our school events as “Share the Heart Events.”

Parents were encouraged to invite their friends to these events in order to consider whether or not the Lord might want them to have their children as a part of CHA and to experience what God is doing in and through our school.



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"Share the heart" events

Choir Dinner (Dec. 4) Christmas Program
Welcome Back PreK & Kdg
Heritage Banquet Presidential Tea
Author's Tea Sixth Grade Graduation
High School Graduation

"Training American Christian Leaders..."

Our efforts were successful in that we saw many more families invite their friends to these events. We did not experience as much as we hoped and thought that we would, but certainly

more than in years past. We do not yet know what effect this program will have on our enrollment for the 2013-14 school year. It appears that it will be minimal – perhaps 5-10

students. We believe it is good program and worth continuing for the upcoming school year, but it will take continued effort and energy in order to promote it to our current families.

Launch a Website “Landing Page”

The second most common way that families find out about CHA is through the internet. Our school has a nice-looking, user-friendly, thoroughly informative website, but it is difficult for a prospective parent to navigate it quickly in order to find the information that is pertinent to making an enrollment decision: school mission and vision, academic information, educational philosophy, curriculum, activities, etc. We are currently working with Tom McClintock, NSIpartners, on the development of a landing page. Tom is also initiating for us a Google pay-per-click ad campaign in conjunction with the launching of that landing page. We will offer a free educational consultation in order to assist parents in making an appropriate decision for their child(ren). The goal of those consultations will be to help the parents in their decision-making process and to investigate whether or not CHA is a good choice to assist them with the education of their children.



Form a Marketing Team

As I continued this process it became evident to me that this needs to be a team approach. I began discussions with our headmasters and our director of business and began formulating a plan to form a marketing team. The team will consist of the following “players”:

- *Director of Programs and Productions.* This individual will coordinate all school programs (Christmas program, Easter program, school play, end-of-year awards assemblies, etc.) so that each is done in a professional manner, is consistent with and demonstrative of our school mission/vision, and is enjoyable for the families and friends of the students involved in each program.
- *Publications Director.* This individual will be responsible for the consistency of (logo, colors, fonts) all print materials that are produced by the school: brochures, programs for all school events, school newsletter, yearbook, etc. We have made significant progress in the past two years, but there is still work to be done.
- *Web Master.* The director of IT is currently our web master, but he will work with the team in bringing the style and “look” of our website into concert with our print materials.
- *Headmaster, Elementary Headmaster, Secondary Headmaster, and Development Director.* These individuals have the most contact with our current parents, alumni,

and alumni parents. Their input will be valuable in knowing what kinds of information need to be communicated with which groups of individuals.

- *Director of Business.* The director of business will direct the functions of the group and oversee the responsibilities of each of the team members.

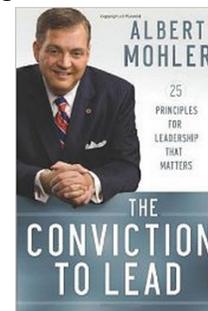
Develop a CHA Style Book

Over the 41 years of the school we have not been consistent with the logos, fonts, colors, and mascot pictures that we have used. We sought some help from a sister Christian school in this area, and they shared with us their style guide. We have standardized our fonts, colors, and logos and have drawn our own *Crusader* (in the past we have used a variety of clip art images off the internet). While we have made significant progress in the past few years, we have not yet gathered all of the necessary information into a style guide in order to communicate and standardize the use of these elements in our publications. With the help of the model that we were given, we believe that this can be done in the upcoming school year.



Use of Social Media

One of the things that I learned from the Van Lunen training sessions is the power and value of social media. Prior to working on this project I had Facebook account, Twitter account, or any other type of account. I was convicted and convinced when I read Dr. Albert Mohler's book entitled *The Conviction to Lead* in which he states



never had a social media Al Mohler's the following:

If the leader is not leading in the digital world, his leadership is, by definition, limited to those who also ignore or neglect that world. That population is shrinking every minute. The clock is ticking.²

The CHA Facebook page has proven to be a tremendous tool for connecting with a much larger audience than we have previously parents, alumni, alumni parents, and school are enjoying being informed Lord is doing in and through the school. helping us reach our marketing goal of glory to the Lord by communicating how Christian Heritage Academy students “communicating value,” the definition of



had. Current friends of the regarding what the Social media is bringing honor and He is blessing and teachers – marketing.

Although I do now have a Twitter account, I have not yet figured out how to use it to accomplish the goal as stated above. I have used it sparingly and will continue to experiment and learn and grow in my effectiveness in using that social media tool as well.

Conclusion

More families are hearing about CHA. Inquiries regarding enrollment have increased (I do not have reliable numbers from years past that allow me to quantify the increase, but from amount of activity and numbers of applications received and tours given, it does appear, at least, that there has been an increase). We are still trusting the Lord to grow us in our ability to communicate the value of a CHA education to prospective families, and we are praying that the Lord will use all of our efforts toward that end.

I am thankful to the Van Lunen Center for this privilege and opportunity to grow in my ability and understanding as a head of school and for making the resources available with which to pursue this valuable project.

¹<http://www.marketingpower.com/aboutama/pages/definitionofmarketing.aspx>

²R. Albert Mohler Jr., *The Conviction to Lead* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2012), 176.