



Do Not Get Lost in the Crowd!

Baltimore Lutheran School – Marketing from the Inside Out!

Baltimore Lutheran School is focused on building a stronger brand with a broader appeal to students and families throughout the Baltimore region. Baltimore Lutheran School has been in existence for forty-eight years and for all forty-eight years we have been consistently inconsistent in how we have marketed and branded the school. Baltimore Lutheran School has very little name recognition and is an unknown entity in its surrounding community, let alone the community at-large. For Baltimore Lutheran School to continue as ministry this must change! We must be a known entity and this will only be achieved through a comprehensive marketing and branding campaign.

As part of this new branding initiative, the school is also examining adding grades to become a Pre-K-12 campus. In addition, the school is considering a name change that will provide better marketing to the community as currently many believe that you must be Lutheran to attend.

Baltimore Lutheran School has engaged a strategic marketing and branding company, BMWW, to help develop an integrated image and positioning program to develop and launch our new brand. BMWW will be responsible for research and assessment to include interviews with key school stakeholders and to develop a core message. We have worked to develop a four phase plan to consist of: Research and Assessment, Identity Design and Design Applications, Visual Standards Development, and Implementation.

In developing an institutional visual identity, our goal is to gather an understanding of Baltimore Lutheran School's institutional personality. We must also identify the constituencies we desire to reach and influence, our key competitors, our funding, and our current/potential students. To set a clear path and direction we must identify our internal dreams of aspirations we have for Baltimore Lutheran School while considering the external forces affecting our goals.

To start the research process we have been gathering data on current and prospective students, alumni, fundraising information, and a thorough examination of our strategic/long-range planning. The information gathering in the past has often been drawn from anecdotal evidence, emotional responses, perceptions, and other soft data. By engaging with BMWW we will be able to have a more comprehensive examination of the public's of Baltimore Lutheran School and one that relies on hard data. The hard data will allow a more precise data-driven decision making process for the school.

So what information are we hoping to mine? We have developed the following questions that will be tweaked to fit the constituent group to guide our thinking:

- What challenges/obstacles must be overcome to achieve the strategic objectives?
- What are BLS's strengths? What are its weaknesses?
- How is BLS different from its competitors? What schools does BLS hope to compete with in the future?
- From their viewpoint, what factors influence BLS's recruiting and general awareness? How do they see any successes translating to a broader audience?
- What perceptions are held internally and externally?
- What distinguishes BLS from other institutions?
- Are there regional education trends that have an impact on BLS's future?
- What broader societal trends may have an impact on BLS's future?
- Where do BLS students come from?
- How/where has BLS promoted itself in the past? What efforts have been successful or unsuccessful?

One central discussion that I have had with our Board, Administrators, and Faculty/Staff has been the need for an elevator speech about Baltimore Lutheran School. We have approximately forty employees and if you were to ask each one about Baltimore Lutheran School you may get some of the same highlights, however, there would be no consistent informative succinct message. We must develop a concise message that leaves people wanting to know more.

Currently we are working with BMWW to develop an "elevator speech"/positioning statement.

Our elevator speech will come from the attributes highlighted by interviews held with the various

stakeholders of Baltimore Lutheran School. Once the “elevator speech” has been written, it will be printed on cards that can be carried by our various constituent groups. We will hold a meeting with the board, faculty/staff, alumni, parents and all others interested in telling the story of Baltimore Lutheran School and provide the cards and as well as discussing how to tell the story and invite people to come to Baltimore Lutheran School. Our constituent “salespeople” will know our core messages/selling points and provide a consistent, succinct, enticing message to others. This will help Baltimore Lutheran School differentiate itself from the competition and create the much important and needed brand identification. Currently Baltimore Lutheran School is not on the radar screen and is truly lost in a crowd; we must become a school of choice!

A major component of our branding is creating consistency. We are formalizing the applications, colors, paper stocks, and other requirements for all Baltimore Lutheran School communications in a formalized style guide and graphics standard manual. Included as well will be the logy, typography for the logo, placement of the logo on all documents and when to use the seal instead of the logo. The style guide will be placed on the school’s internal shared drive and a presentation on the style guide and its mandatory use will be given at the beginning of the year faculty meetings.

Baltimore Lutheran School has worked with BMWW on a schedule that will allow for our marketing and branding plan to be accomplished in a prudent, expedient manner while also creating a timeline that meets our funding. We have established a four-part plan that will be executed from February 2014-July 2014 with the implementation to take place in August 2014 prior to the beginning of the new school year. The plan consists of:

1. Strategic Research and Assessment
 - Receive, review and evaluate existing communications, audit
 - Analysis of existing data
 - On-campus interviews of staff and faculty

- Analysis of the data collected
 - Findings and interpretation of the data
 - Development of a messaging and positioning
2. Identity Design and Applications
 - Initial logo design concepts
 - Second level logo design development
 - Design approval and full application development
 - Tagline development and elevator speech
 3. Visual Standards
 - Prepare graphic standards manual
 - Internal brand identity presentation
 4. Implementation
 - Website design and development
 - Design Recruitment publication – including new view books
 - Creation of Ads: direct mail campaign, online, click-through, radio spots
 - On-Campus Photography
 - Social media strategy – new website, Facebook, Twitter

At this point we are fully involved in the process and have already experienced the fruits of our labor. The feedback from BMWW has confirmed much of what we thought: Baltimore Lutheran School has no community awareness and we lack branding. For forty-eight years we have failed to create community awareness even in our own neighborhood. All however is not lost; the feedback received from our constituent groups has given us much on which to build. Our foundation to build on includes – relationship building between faculty and students is seen as exceptional, students have the opportunity to be involved in a multitude of activities and can go to the college of their choice, academic offerings are varied and provide students with the college preparedness they need, facilities have been substantially upgraded for academics and athletics.

For the 2012-2013 school year we hired a new Director of Admissions, Mr. John Tucker. Mr. Tucker has served at as Athletic Director, Director of Admissions and a Lacrosse coach at

several area private schools. In addition, he is well-known in the world of lacrosse and currently is the head coach of the Boston Cannons, a major league lacrosse team. As Director of Admissions, Mr. Tucker has brought in new families and given the school credibility in the community. Our Fall and Winter Open House Events had a 40% increase in attendance over last year. In addition to Mr. Tucker, we have hired coaches who have recreational league connections and have a professional playing background. One of our best difference makers has been our new soccer coach, who plays major league soccer for the Baltimore Blast, as he has developed a summer camp that averages 300 attendees most of whom are in grades 4-5. We have experienced an influx of student applications as a direct result of our new coaches and their connections to recreational league programs and because of their coaching abilities.

While historically we have been consistently inconsistent with our marketing and recruitment efforts, what we have been doing recently is working. The interviews that BMWW has conducted tells us that Baltimore Lutheran School has parents that are happy, students that are happy, and as BMWW states, there is a great energy around the school and gives something substantial to build on. Baltimore Lutheran School is marketing from the inside out and we are now establishing ourselves so we do not get lost in the crowd!