



Marketing and Branding of St. Paul Lutheran School

Michael Yurk – Principal

The purpose of this project was to create new marketing materials for St. Paul Lutheran School and develop a long-term marketing plan with the goal of sharing with the community the benefits of a faith-based Christian education from our institution. Marketing has been a minor part of the administrators' responsibilities at St. Paul, however there wasn't any consistency in what was created. Brochures are ten years old. Pictures are ten to fifteen years old. Most things are printed in black and white. There isn't a "wow" that would say to a prospective family that this is where they should send their child to school.

Our first goal was to create a marketing team made up of stakeholders in our school that could bring to the table marketing experience, graphic design talents, business ownership, and realtor knowledge. Ten people were asked to join this committee and all ten quickly said yes. Through initial meetings, a comprehensive timeline was developed detailing items that needed to be completed throughout the year and responsibilities for committee members, principal, faculty and staff, and Board of Christian Day School were developed. Completion goals by the end of the school year included: development of Statement of Purpose and tag-line, Classroom Overview pages, website updates, new letterhead, business cards and tri-fold brochure, and a redesigned school logo. All these things were accomplished plus more.

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The Project's Focus

St. Paul Lutheran School has been in existence since 1851. We are a traditional, faith based school located 15 miles north of downtown Milwaukee, teaching under the practices of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). St. Paul saw a peak in enrollment in the late 1990's when enrollment was over 450 students. During the years of 2002-2008 the school saw a steady decline in enrollment, as low as 250 students, due partially to the lack of consistency in the position of principal (six administrators in those six years). In July of 2008 I came on board as principal and since we've seen a slight increase of enrollment to 275.

During my first two years, the marketing used was put together by myself or fellow staff members. Techniques that were tried to attract new families included a mailing before our January Open House, advertisements in the local newspaper and "word of mouth" from our current families. New strategies needed to be developed because as a school we knew we had a great product to offer, just never communicated it well to the public.

The need for marketing became more apparent in recent years as our community started seeing a wide variety of expansion. Grafton, which has a population of 10,000 people, has recently seen major businesses move into town including Costco, Best Buy, Home Depot, Target, and a new grocery store. Along with this, a new 800+ bed hospital opened up in November of 2010. These new expansion projects means an increase in population, including families that are looking for educational excellence. Many of these people that have moved into the Grafton area or will soon be coming are from large metropolitan areas that are accustomed to quality schools with marketing materials that portray that superiority. Our job is

to get ahead of the competition and the Van Lunen Fellowship started to put these pieces into place.

The Process To Complete The Project

The first need was to get approval from the Board of Christian Day School to create a sub-committee of the Board that would work solely on marketing. This committee would work in cooperation with the principal, giving periodic updates of progress to the Board. A budget was made available to the committee along with autonomy to develop new marketing procedures and materials. The marketing team was then formed.

At an initial meeting of the marketing team, we looked at the positive and negative aspects of our current materials. Under the direction of Mr. Bob Rogalski of Developing Christian Schools, the team then created a checklist of items that needed to either be created or redeveloped during this first year. This list included (in order of completion):

- Define what sets us apart from other schools in our community and concretely disseminate facts that prove our student's success
- Create a Statement of Purpose for St. Paul School
- Develop a Tag line
- Redesign the Panther logo
- Create universal color schemes, font styles and font sizes
- Create a St. Paul School Facebook account that has daily updates on school happenings
- Have professional photos taken of students engaged in learning, faculty/student interaction, and co-curricular activities
- Develop Classroom and Co-curricular Overview Pages
- Website improvements including use of professional photos
- Produce a targeted marketing postcard that was mailed to families within 15 miles of the school with children between the ages of 2-10 promoting our January Open House. Use same postcard as a handout at our community Christmas Parade and other functions during Dec. /Jan.
- Create Welcome Folders for potential new families
- Redesign school letterhead and business cards to match new color scheme, etc.
- Create new tri-fold brochure that promoted school-wide initiatives

Report on Project's Results

Through the involvement of many different groups, including the marketing team, Board of Christian Day School, faculty and staff, and parent volunteers all of these initiatives were completed and rolled out to the community during the 2010-2011 school year.

As of the end of May, we've seen an increase in enrolled students of 7% for the 2011-12 school year. We've closed off enrollment in five of eight PreK classrooms, Full Day Kindergarten and 1st Grade. Waiting lists have been started for each of these classes. Our new marketing materials showcase the quality of education we provide by having a consistent look and by being professionally written and printed. Our focus on very specific items for each individual class and activity benefits families that ask for materials to be mailed to them or are comparison shopping for schools.

There are a few more steps that need to be taken in the coming months. I intend to meet with local congregations that do not have their own school and request an opportunity to hold an Open House at their church, promoting faith-based education at St. Paul. It is my goal that St. Paul becomes their school of choice, while allowing these families to hold onto their current denominations and churches. I also intend to meet with local real estate agents and equip them with Welcome Folders that they can share with new clients that request information on schools in the area. Finally, the marketing team is focused on launching a new website for the school. The new website needs to be easily navigated through, match the "new look" of the marketing materials, allow for

improved photo galleries and video opportunities, and showcase various aspects of our school.

Conclusion

Development of a marketing plan has been discussed for many years at St. Paul, especially during the early 2000's as enrollment continued to decrease and administrators continually changed hands. Through the Van Lunen Center Executive Management of Christian Schools Fellows Program a much needed forcing of the hand took place. One of the first pieces of advice that came from my advisor, Mr. Bob Rogalski, was to go find those that are the "promoters" of our school that have marketing talent and create your team. Utilize their knowledge and abilities and redefine St. Paul. This is exactly what we've done this first year. This process has brought together our faculty and staff, Board, marketing team, and congregation – all by the Grace of God and the exciting future that He has planned for St. Paul Lutheran School.