

## REIMAGINING MARKETING & ENROLLMENT

Van Lunen Project, Maroon Platoon, 2016-2017

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### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Christ Community Lutheran School in Kirkwood, Missouri, is a thriving Lutheran school in the first-ring suburbs of St. Louis. CCLS enrolls more than 630 students, an all-time peak enrollment. It was named a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence by the U.S. Department of Education as well as an Exemplary School by the National Lutheran School Accreditation commission. The sense of school community is strong, the faculty is excellent, a culture of continuous improvement exists, the students are involved outside of the classroom, they are connecting kids and families to Christ and His church, and the school is known and well-respected in the communities it serves.



However, the educational landscape is constantly changing. Enrollment in private and parochial schools across the country is declining, particularly in conservative Christian schools such as Lutheran schools. Families face many reasonable choices of where they can send their children. Seemingly, gone are the days of Lutheran families choosing to enroll their students in the local Lutheran school simply because it exists.

Despite being armed with this knowledge, it is easy for Lutheran schools to get stuck doing things the same way they have always done them. While the saving message of the Gospel will never fade or lose significance, intentional efforts must be made in order to attract and retain families. Therefore, marketing and enrollment strategies, customer service approaches, and the methods that a school employs to get appropriate messaging to its greater community must continuously evolve and improve. Parochial schools must realize that they are obliged to continuously innovate to meet the needs of their prospective families if they are to remain relevant in a highly competitive market.

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Despite recent success at CCLS, we realize that we can easily slip into a rut, rest on our laurels, and simply serve families who happen to choose our school. Thanks in part to Jim McKenzie's presentation at Van Lunen, I was motivated to ensure that our Lutheran school remains relevant, engaging, attractive, and effective. I was able to motivate our Leadership Team to agree that while things were going well for us, it doesn't mean that it will continue to go well nor does it mean that we are currently doing things in the most effective way. Therefore, we agreed to invest in bringing Jim McKenzie to our campus to facilitate a two-day workshop for our team. He led us on a deep dive through a number of topics, including:

- Visioning
- Messaging
- Customer Service
- Online Marketing
- Word of Mouth Marketing
- Enrollment & Retention

Our initial goal was to begin to implement new strategies prior to peak enrollment season in February of this year, such as creating a new website focused on recruitment, a drip campaign to grow our database of contacts, better closure on enrollment leads, have fresh ideas for advertising outlets, and create more active promoters within our school community. Then, we hoped that by the end of the school year, we will have added at least one new strategy in each of the areas to improve our current efforts. What we were reminded of is that change can be a process that takes time. While we did not meet resistance on any new best practices that we wanted to implement, many things just took much longer than we expected. We had to go through a triage process of sorts, and figure out just how much we could do and how quickly we could do it. We have been successful in a number of areas and have already reaped some benefits; other improvements are still in the developing stage as of the end of the school year. The good news is that the school year will start all over in August, giving us another chance to implement new ideas!