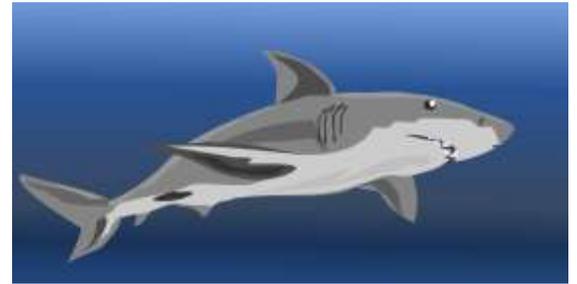


GREAT WHITE MARKETING

Ken Van Meter, Van Lunen Fellow 2013-2014

Superintendent, Milpitas Christian School

Consultant: Courtney Lampen



What I did:

Like many schools across North America, Milpitas Christian School has endured a steady decline in enrollment over the last 5 years. Seeking to sift through the ocean of advice regarding the effectiveness of many different practices of marketing and promotion, my goal was to survey the current cohort of Van Lunen Fellows for their thoughts.

Following encouragement from my consultant, I constructed a nine-question survey with opportunity for some open-ended responses. I received 19 out of 23 replies, enough to be statistically reliable. The results, while not astonishing, were surprisingly consistent across size of school and percent of budget spent on marketing.

What did I learn?

Print is all but dead. Promoting word of mouth (WOM) and having a robust online presence are vastly more important in their effectiveness at producing new inquiries and enrollments in Christian schools. The ranking of effective digital/online revealed that having an easy to navigate website that includes student and parent testimonials, either written or in video, is critical. Additionally, having a robust online presence beyond the school website is beneficial. This means using social media, blogging, paid advertising and designing your website with the search engine algorithms in mind.

What difference did it make?

So far, it is uncertain what the outcome of the changes we have made will be on enrollment. We reallocated dollars from one form of SEO to another and there has been a noticeable increase in website visits and phone inquiries for information and tours. We also eliminated nearly all print materials and have invested more staff time in developing relationships with local churches/pastors and preschools. We have seen an increase in applications for our Kindergarten classes.

Other issues appear to have overshadowed these changes and the retention rate appears to be negatively impacted, leading to a continuing decrease in overall enrollment.