

## CLASSIS

For those just beginning their research on classical Christian education, here are some resources available to you:

**Canon Press**  
P.O. Box 8741  
Moscow, ID 83843  
(800) 488-2034  
www.canonpress.org

**Logos School Materials**  
110 Baker Street  
Moscow, ID 83843  
(866) 562-2174 (toll free)  
www.logosschool@turbonet.com

**Standfast Books**  
P.O. Box 985  
Franklin, TN 37065  
(615) 794-5003  
Standgrey@aol.com

**Tree of Life School and Book Service**  
106 Main Street #518  
Houlton, ME 04730  
(506) 328-6781  
www.treeoflifeathome.com

**Veritas Press**  
1829 William Penn Way  
Lancaster, PA 17601  
(800) 922-5082  
www.veritaspress.com

## Quid Novi?

## School Marketing: What Works...and What Doesn't

by David Hagopian

Last week, I received a postcard from a traditional Christian school in our community we will call ABC Christian School. Here's what it says:

ABC Christian School  
Academic Excellence – Distinctively Christian  
Now Enrolling  
Pre-Kindergarten through Seventh Grade

- Affordable Tuition!
- Superior, Bible-based Education!
- Safe, Wholesome Christian Environment!
- Morning & Afternoon Daycare – Great Rates!
- Loving, Qualified Faculty!

Call 111.111.1111 to schedule an appointment or visit our beautiful park-like campus today!

Aside from overusing exclamation points, what do you think of ABC's postcard? Is the message truly effective? Deep down you know the answer to this question because all classical schools teach rhetoric. So let's ask the question another way: *Is the postcard for ABC Christian school rhetorically effective?*

Well, it has some virtues. ABC is doing something to reach its community, telling its community some of its strengths, and focusing on *some* of the primary concerns prospective families have when making their schooling decisions.

But let's dig below the surface. There are at least four problems with the postcard. First, ABC uses its name as its headline. Did you know that the average reader of an advertisement decides whether to continue reading the advertisement *in about one second*? The headline is the "ad for the ad." A good headline make readers *want* to read your whole advertisement. The way to capture attention (and hold it) is to tap into the core values of your readers based on market research and analysis. Your job is to know what animates your readers and to **interrupt** them with a message that dials in to what is truly important to them.

Second, notice that the sub-headline of ABC's postcard—"Academic Excellence—Distinctively Christian"—fails to continue to engage readers. After interrupting readers by tapping into their value system, you also need to **engage** them by promising them that if they continue to read the rest of what you have written, they will learn something that will help them make the right decision for their children. By contrast, ABC resorts to platitudes and generalities that amount to meaningless gibberish. What, after all, is "academic excellence," and what does "distinctively Christian" really mean anyway? These values are important to parents, but ABC doesn't explain why or how ABC is academically excellent or offers a distinctively Christian education. By contrast, effective marketing engages readers by motivating them to keep reading.

Third, the ABC postcard goes from bad to worse in its use of meaningless platitudes and generalities by devolving into what we call a "menu board" advertisement, simply listing features as though they were items on a menu board at a street café, without explaining what

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they mean, why they are important to families, and what really makes ABC different from other Christian schools with respect to them. How “affordable” is ABC’s tuition? Why is ABC’s education “superior” or “Bible-based”? ABC has a lot of space on its over-sized postcard. It simply doesn’t use its space wisely. For marketing to be truly effective, it must **educate** parents by giving reasons why your school is the most biblical education for their children.

Fourth, ABC’s postcard does not offer prospective student families a no-risk or low-risk way of finding out more about ABC. Instead, ABC puts prospective families in the unenviable position of calling and facing a sales pitch. ABC also assumes that parents make schooling decisions the same way people decide to buy a \$20 broom at Home Depot, even though schooling costs several thousand dollars per year, and parents make their school “buying” decision only once each year. Instead of making these kinds of unwarranted assumptions and putting all the pressure on prospective families, an effective postcard should **offer** something of value to parents to give them a reason to take a baby step toward your school as opposed to any another—like our 50-minute, highlight CD entitled, *Why Christian Kids Need Classical Christian Schools*. You obtain valuable contact information and permission to continue to educate and nurture parents so that when they are ready to make their decision, they make it in favor of your school. You now have leveraged a single postcard into a 50-minute education for parents about the virtues of a classical Christian education.

We call this process of **interrupting—engaging—educating—offering** the **Marketing Equation**, and it sets the benchmark for effective marketing. We have created these modern labels, but by now, you should recognize them as simply the hallmarks of persuasive rhetoric:

#### The Marketing Equation

Interrupt  
Engage  
Educate  
Offer

#### Classical Rhetorical Paradigm

Introduction  
Statement of Fact  
Confirmation-Refutation  
Conclusion

By **interrupting** readers, you introduce yourself to them in a way that captures their attention. **Engaging** readers is nothing more than stating the issue your marketing piece presents. To **educate** your readers is to confirm your case (prove your point) and, if necessary, to refute contrary points (with gentleness). When you **offer** something of value, you are concluding your piece in a way that motivates readers to want to step toward your school. Focus on what makes your school truly unique as a classical Christian school since you can say things no traditional Christian school can say in your community.

For the fun of it, compare what the ABC postcard says to the most recent marketing piece you have generated. Then compare both to some of our samples online at <http://www.preceptoutreach.org/Samples.pdf>. We have done our market research. We are passionate about the biblical case for classical Christian schools. And, by the grace of God, we put it all together using the Marketing Equation. We are here to serve you, and we look forward to presenting our *What You Need to Know to Grow* workshop and participating in the development Q&A at this year’s ACCS Conference in Memphis.

David Hagopian is the Co-Founder of Precept Outreach & Development, an ACCS Business Affiliate specializing in outreach and development materials for classical Christian schools. See Precept’s classified in this issue of *Classis*.

## NUNTIATA

### ACCS Accredited Schools

Ad Fontes Academy  
Fairfax Station, VA  
*since May 2002*

Cary Christian School  
Apex, NC  
*since May 2002*

Logos School  
Moscow, ID  
*since January 2000*

Providence Classical  
Christian School  
Lynnwood, WA  
*since June 2004*

Regents School of Austin  
Austin, TX  
*since April 2002*

Rockbridge Academy  
Millersville, MD  
*since January 2004*

Veritas Academy  
Leola, PA  
*since December 2002*

Westminster Academy  
Memphis, TN  
*since April 2002*