

Market Your School

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Look at some of your school's recent marketing pieces.

My guess is that at least some of them look and feel a lot like other ads you have seen or heard through the years. For example, is the first thing you see on your ad your school's name or logo? Does your ad use platitudes like "Christ-centered education" or "distinctively Christian?"

If so, your ads unwittingly may imitate the world's ads. Let's be *classical* by taking a few minutes to understand how we got here and what we can do about it today.

How We Got Here

In the early days of advertising, most companies competed fiercely on a local or regional basis. They used classical rhetoric to build cases for their respective products. After the advent of TV, however, everything changed. In 1945, less than 7,000 TVs existed, but by 1952, the number jumped to 20 million.

TV changed the face of marketing forever. It gave birth to the era of "brand builders." National companies had a new medium to reach the entire country, but because of a limited supply of time, the time to advertise shrunk, while the costs spiked. Because advertisers had less time to get their job done, they turned from building cases for their products to using shortcuts like *slogans* (e.g., "ring around the collar"), *logos* (e.g., McDonald's golden arches), and *jingles* (e.g. Coke's "it's the real thing").

Advertisers focused on getting attention and basically made up for deficiencies in their messages with repetition over time. When you have a lot of money to spend, you can afford to be less effective on an ad-by-ad basis be-

cause of how often you get your message out to your market. To prove the point, can you remember a single ad from each of these giants in the last month—McDonald's, Proctor & Gamble, or GM? But here's what they spent

getting their word out in just one recent year—McDonald's (\$1.13B), P&G (\$2.61B), and GM (\$4.04B). That's a lot of money, and it goes a long way to make up for deficient messages.

Because this is the marketing we see and hear most of the time, we are conditioned by it and unwittingly end up resorting to it ourselves (witness your own slogans, logos, and platitudes).

What You Can Do Today

Now that we know how we got here, we can do something about it. The whole goal of effective marketing is to *inform and persuade* parents to enroll their kids in your school, with your ultimate goal being to glorify Christ and have a greater impact for Him in your community. And because you don't have billions of dollars to spend, you have to be even more effective than advertising giants.

To be effective in this way, you need to know the values that are truly important to prospective student families. Then you need to use biblical principles and the same classical rhetoric you teach to tap into those values to get the attention of prospective student families, educate them by telling them why your school is one of their best choices as

Christians, and offer valuable materials to give them a reason to continue to step toward your school over time.

At the heart of effective marketing is the case you present for your school. Like an attorney during closing argument, you need to build a case for your school that gives prospective student families all of the reasons why they should send their children to your school as opposed to any other school in your community.

After you build your case, you need to build an entire marketing strategy around it to ensure that your school is communicating the same message to the outside world—from your website content to your receptionist's greeting to your parents' night presentation and everything in between.

Just for the fun of it, compare what your school currently says in its marketing pieces to some of our samples online at <http://www.preceptoutreach.org/Samples.pdf>. Since most parents decide where their kids will go to school next fall between December and May, you need to start marketing your school today. So say *no* to imitating the world, and say *yes* to marketing your classical Christian school in a classical Christian way today.

David Hagopian is Co-Founder of Precept Outreach & Development, which offers turnkey, classical Christian marketing solutions for classical Christian schools. For a FREE CD of Precept's ACCS Conference Workshop, *What Classical Schools Need to Know to Grow*, call 714.384.4117 or send an email to dhagopian@preceptoutreach.org.

WHY MOST CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS UNWITTINGLY IMITATE THE WORLD'S MARKETING

And What Classical Schools Can Do About It Today