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Insomuch as Lancaster Bible College (LBC) is a growing educational community whose reach is expanding through a thriving undergrad program and an ever-evolving iLEAD Center for adult education programs (graduate education, degree completion, and biblical enrichment), the need for a centralized marketing and communications plan for the institution is becoming necessary in order to ensure that the marketing efforts of its various departments are consistently, effectively, and confidently implemented. Without such a document and practices in place, LBC will continue to experience interdepartmental tensions and will share the burden of lost opportunities.

The vision, mission, and message of an institution are adopted and implemented from the top down. The means, then, by which these are conveyed and communicated to various audiences should likewise be developed and implemented as part of an institutional “master plan.” It is counterintuitive to allow the mission and message of the institution to be interpreted and conveyed as is deemed most appropriate by each department; such can quickly become a case of “each doing what is right in his own eyes.” Simply ensuring that the LBC brand assets are properly applied to departmental collateral does not by any means ensure institutional consistency. It is critical that LBC capitalize on the aforementioned growth and momentum the college is currently enjoying by moving to (or back to) a centralized, institution-wide marketing model with a clearly outlined communications plan.

Much of the challenge that LBC will face in marketing will be determined by the level of acceptance or resistance to its efforts to centralize marketing at an institutional level. For many years, marketing strategies have been developed and driven by separate departments, each content to pursue only its own specific target audience with its own specific message. The rationale seems logical—our prospective students vary as much in age as they do in interest. We generally don’t try to recruit the musically gifted by selling them on the quality of our athletic program, and vice versa. We don’t target adult learners without their bachelor’s degree for our grad ed programs, and we don’t target those with graduate degrees for our degree completion program. No doubt, we are an institution of multiple “product” offerings that are of interest to multiple demographics.

However, there is a tremendous opportunity lost in the isolation of marketing efforts—each department enlisting its own set of vendors, reaching out only to its own target audience, talking only to those who are interested in their own departmental offerings. That is not to say that we should approach the marketing of our multiple, varying products with a “one-size-fits-all” solution. It’s a matter of understanding who we are AND who we are not; knowing who our audience is AND who it is not; understanding what we do AND what we do not do; discerning which opportunities are beneficial AND which ones are not in line with our strategies. It’s a matter of developing process and adhering to it. It is about being intentional in all that we do.
A new marketing model requires that a new marketing mindset first be adopted which views the health and growth of the institution as a whole to be the highest priority—even if that means making sacrifices of supposed “needs” at a program- or departmental-level. In a distinct, real-life application, it will test LBC’s commitment to a servant-leadership model, requiring people to put the needs of the greater good (the mission and vision of LBC) above their own needs (the mission or vision of their own department or program). It is a matter of recognizing that a foot or hand that can do amazing things is still only as healthy as the body to which it is attached. And, more biblically, that a body is made up of many parts, and “if one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26).

The following visual illustrates the new mindset that needs to be adopted in order to successfully implement true institutional marketing strategies:

The idea should be fairly apparent; as every part of the institution makes the health and growth of the institution its highest priority, each department and program also experiences health and growth in its own efforts for having invested in serving the greater good. As the visibility of the institution is increased, so too will the visibility of all that it has to offer. This is rarely (if ever) the case in the “silo” model.
A MARKETING MODEL DECONSTRUCTED

A properly-implemented, fully-functional institutional marketing strategy will require greater commitment to the objective than one might think, given that a natural pitfall of college marketing is to have priorities directed by departments, whereby everyone is focused on the promotion of only their specific department/program. A shift to any other type of strategy may leave them feeling as though their own departmental needs are not being met, that their specific program is not getting adequate or equal attention. Especially in cases where the institutional brand needs strengthening (the college is not well-known and always dealing with the “who are you and why should I care?” questions), the goal of the program is the growth of the program with little regard to the institution. Often in such a scenario, as has even been observed at LBC on occasion, the institution as a whole is even viewed as an obstacle or detriment to the growth strategies of the individual program. This should be a tremendous red flag in the minds of administrators; LBC cannot afford to ignore such a mindset and hope to escape its fallout.

Using the popular “silo” analogy circulating around campus, and using various LBC components to help illustrate the example, the danger of continuing in this mindset might be visualized as follows:

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Using the popular “silo” analogy circulating around campus, and using various LBC components to help illustrate the example, the danger of continuing in this mindset might be visualized as follows:

Naturally, this is not a very flattering overview of an institution, but few people see the bigger picture because the view within the silo reveals only what is of primary concern to them. This mindset can also foster unhealthy rivalry among the silos, each vying for their share of the available marketing budget and, in doing so, further isolating themselves from one another. They will argue that the institution is the ground, the foundation upon which their programs, their silos, are built. Soon, however, they view that ground as the foundation to which they are tethered, an anchor that is preventing them from reaching higher heights.
OVERVIEW

The purpose of this document is to serve as an initial framework by which an institutional “master plan” for marketing strategies and communications processes can be drafted, revised, finalized, and implemented throughout the institution. This document is intended only as a starting point for discussion, through which a final version can be refined and ultimately put into policy and practice.

The primary outcomes sought by the creation and implementation of this plan should be evident: a consistent institutional message that is effectively and appropriately communicated through various means to various audiences; better management and control of marketing spending for all areas of the institution; reliability in setting and meeting deadlines; creative collaboration to arrive at the best possible solution(s) to every marketing challenge; and consistently dependable and innovative deliverables, on time and on budget.

It is important to note that even in its final form, this document will serve only as a general guideline of strategies and communications and will remain flexible to accommodate evolving strategies, opportunities, and technologies. Ultimately, the document serves as a lens through which to view and evaluate how LBC messages (both institutional and departmental) are being conveyed and by which results can be measured and methods can be adjusted toward ever-improving outcomes.

Before developing the master plan, we must determine a process that ensures the effectiveness of the plan. If we want to make sure we’re addressing the right issues, we have to make sure we are asking the right questions. Those questions and their respective answers provide the framework by which we create the process for developing an effective institutional marketing strategy.

Specifically, the foundation of the process, which will be discussed in the following section, is built from the following markers:

- Identifying the Need: Who is LBC and What Are its Objectives?
- Identifying the Target Audience: Who Are We Trying to Reach?
- Determining the Message(s): What Do We Want to Convey?
- Determining the Methods: Where Do We Find Our Audience?
- Developing the Strategy: Seeing the Big Picture
- Developing an Institutional Communications Plan
IDENTIFY THE NEED: WHO IS LBC AND WHAT ARE ITS OBJECTIVES?

Who is LBC? One needs to look no further than our vision statements to find the answer: “Lancaster Bible College will be a premier learning community that intentionally develops the head, hands, and heart of servant ministry leaders for global impact.” And our objective is found in our mission statement: “[LBC] exists to educate Christian students to think and live a biblical worldview and to proclaim Christ by serving Him in the Church and society.”

Obviously, providing a Bible education is not just something we do; it is something we believe in. The value of a solid biblical foundation is something that will serve well any believer in any profession or pursuit. The better we understand the Bible, the better we can apply its truths, live in accordance with God’s word, deepen our relationship with God, glorify Him in all we do, and influence those around us to do the same.

Our objectives, then, should be not only to provide this solid biblical foundation (through various forms of delivery) but also to encourage believers to likewise understand the value of gaining biblical knowledge. It must be more than a matter of “if you build it, they will come.” We cannot be content to merely provide the venue for those who see the value in a strong biblical foundation; we must also target believers who identify with this need in themselves and stir in their hearts a desire to respond. This should not be viewed as manipulative or self-serving; growing in the Word is a biblical mandate (Col. 1:10; 3:16; 2 Tim 2:15; 3:16-17; 4:2,16; 1 Peter 2:2; Titus 2:1) and if we truly believe we are a premier learning community, then our goal should be twofold: 1) encourage believers to pursue a biblical education in some form (not from guilt but opportunity), and 2) demonstrate that LBC provides the best option through which they can pursue it.

IDENTIFY THE TARGET AUDIENCE: WHO ARE WE TRYING TO REACH?

We are a Bible College, not a Christian liberal arts college. The two are certainly not the same, and neither are our students. Our students differ primarily by life direction and calling, not by age, race, denomination, or any other more distinguishable trait. Our most obvious qualifier, then—our common denominator—is a professed faith in Christ, and the same is certainly true of most Christian liberal arts colleges. And yet, while it may be true to say that our primary audience is believers, it is more accurate to say that our target audience is found among believers. If a believer is looking for Pre-Law or Pre-Med or Mechanical Engineering, they are not for us and we are not for them. And that’s okay. So, in a sense, while we are all fishing from the same pond and are all fishing for, of course, fish, we are not all looking to catch the same type of fish.

We could readily acknowledge, then, that we need to focus our efforts in channels that are targeted primarily (if not exclusively) to believers. Our challenge is to target our type of student by clearly conveying who we are and what we’re about. Delivering on our promise of being a premier learning community depends on getting and keeping the right kind of student. It’s not enough to make people aware of LBC; nor to get them to express interest in LBC; nor to get them to apply or to enroll; nor to get them to attend. Our success stories are found in our graduates.

This being said, we cannot ignore the community and greater general public as a secondary audience. Surely, we want to be viewed as open, friendly, even welcoming to the general public. There are enough faulty misconceptions that we (and other Christian institutions) are in our own world inside walls, judging and condemning those around us, and concerned only with our own agendas. More than a marketing strategy, we have a responsibility and, with a higher level of visibility as an institution, an opportunity to be that city on a hill that cannot be hidden and to “let [our] light so shine before men” (Matt. 5:14-16).
Generally, the discussion of method is one that takes place on a more campaign-specific level. The methods used to reach the tech-savvy high school student for our undergraduate program won’t necessarily be the same as those used to reach the 40-year-old adult learner wanting to complete his undergrad studies. There may be some commonality to the methods used to deliver the messages of each, but there are likely to be some wide-diverences as well. Methods vary based on a number of other varying factors, including audience, message, available technologies, timelines (recurrences), and budgets.

A recent article from the *Washington Post* cites trends forecasting that by 2015, only 46% of web traffic will be generated by computers. Technology is reaching new milestones every day, which means that if LBC is going to stay “in the game,” we need to be pacing ahead of the tech curve not only in our active methods to disseminate our message (how we reach our audience) but also in our passive methods (where and how our audience finds us). The technology discussion, however, cannot take place without consideration of other forecast trends—regardless of which methods they use to find us, how do people prefer to be contacted by us? Method will likely be the most fluid component of our strategy.

**DETERMINE THE METHODS: WHERE DO WE FIND OUR AUDIENCE?**

Obviously, not all colleges are alike. Further, no two Bible colleges are alike. So what sets us apart from other options a prospective student (on any level) may have? It’s not enough to illustrate the difference between a Bible college and a Christian liberal arts college. We have to likewise convey and convince our audience that LBC provides that unique community to which they feel called to participate at some level, whether undergrad student, grad ed student, alumni, or financial supporter. Whatever that difference is, whatever that thing (or things) that makes us special, makes us unique...THAT is what our message needs to be.

“Well, aside from the obvious difference in the money they could commit to marketing, it’s not because the new vehicle is necessarily fantastic and innovative in and of itself but because it was introduced by Toyota, a name that carries the weight of quality, loyalty, and confidence. Yes, they have specific ads for specific vehicles, but many of the obstacles related to marketing their products are less formidable because they have already established Toyota as a name people know and trust.

Whether we are promoting an athletic event or a musical performance, hosting grad ed classes in Gettysburg or Degree Completion info sessions on campus—no matter the excellence of any specific campaign, if we fail to answer the question “Who is LBC and why should I care?” at an institutional level, it will be far more challenging for any of our programs to stand on the merit of the program alone.

**DETERMINE THE MESSAGE: WHAT DO WE WANT TO CONVEY?**

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“Your Journey. Our Focus.” “Premier Learning Community.”

Just as we must keep our greater audience in mind though our specific audience may vary, so too these foundational messages/ideas need to be conveyed at every opportunity regardless of the specific message or theme of any campaign. Regardless of what particular program or department of the college we may be promoting, we need to focus equally on building the leverage of the LBC name.

For instance, a start-up auto company could design and build a fantastic and innovative sports car, but in the end, they are likely doomed not because they didn’t create and offer a great product but because people weren’t familiar with the manufacturer’s name. Toyota, on the other hand, could introduce the exact same vehicle for the exact same price and would likely outsell the start-up company at least 20-to-1. Why? Well, aside from the obvious difference in the money they could commit to marketing, it’s not because the new vehicle is necessarily fantastic and innovative in and of itself but because it was introduced by Toyota, a name that carries the weight of quality, loyalty, and confidence. Yes, they have specific ads for specific vehicles, but many of the obstacles related to marketing their products are less formidable because they have already established Toyota as a name people know and trust.

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DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY: SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

As explained earlier, the key to any successful ongoing marketing strategy, regardless of how it may evolve over time, is largely affected if not determined by how well one keeps an eye on the big picture. Every independent program- or department- or major-specific marketing effort, no matter how small an ad or how large a campaign, should serve not only its own interests but the greater interests of the institution. While prospective students are influenced by the strength of certain programs or departments, they are ultimately making a decision about which college to attend, not which program to attend.

As will be discussed later, the key to developing an effective marketing strategy is determined by the foundation of a marketing philosophy. The strategies are the what and the how, but the philosophy is the why. Having addressed all of the aforementioned questions, we have laid the groundwork for a marketing philosophy, and we are better prepared to develop and implement marketing strategies that will keep us focused on our goals and objectives and, more importantly, to strengthen our position as a premier learning community in the minds of others.

DEVELOPING AN INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

For the sake of organization, fit, and flow, the Institutional Communications Plan will be presented in greater detail in a later section (7) to follow.
A marketing strategy is not a blueprint; it is not a formulaic recipe by which the perfect amount of just the right ingredients will result in a predictable and desirable outcome. Because outcomes are determined by the end-user, marketing strategies seem at times to amount to little more than an educated guess.

True, developing an effective marketing strategy can be an intimidating goal in an age where the information available is nearly limitless, especially when access to that information is both instantaneous and free. How do we separate ourselves from the millions of other messages targeted to the hundreds of millions of consumers out “there” somewhere? Simple: We don’t. We can’t. And LBC cannot lose focus by allowing itself to view the unknown masses as prospective students. Using our previous illustration, it is akin to walking past smaller lakes and ponds where we know a certain type of fish live—the type of fish we are looking for—in order to fish in a vast ocean simply because we know there are so many more fish in there...somewhere. Keeping our larger audience in mind does not require us to fish in larger bodies of water.

The overriding philosophy presented herein is: 1) understand who we are as an institution; 2) build the strength of the institution as a whole; 3) develop better profiles of who our prospective students are in each of our undergraduate and graduate programs; 4) focus our efforts on identifying key vehicles through which we can best convey our message to audiences that represent the highest concentration of prospective students based upon our profile types.

While “marketing” can mean many different things to many different people, for the purposes of this document we are going to separate the terms marketing and recruiting—marketing serving the function of promoting LBC to multiple audiences and encouraging prospective students to express interest in LBC in some form; and, recruiting serving the functions of communicating with prospective students once they have been identified.

In this general sense, then, marketing is about making people aware of you, your service(s), or your product(s); it’s about explaining all the things that make you, your service(s), or your product(s) special, unique, and (in so much as possible) better.

Effective marketing begins with being able to connect with your target audience by helping them understand how their lives would be positively impacted by responding to you, your service(s), or your product(s). Sounds like simple salesmanship, perhaps. However, one of the golden rules of marketing is: You need to deliver on your promise. In other words, don’t sell what you don’t have.

For LBC, fortunately, we’ve got “it” in spades. Our conversion rate for prospective students who visit the campus proves that. When people come on campus, when they get a taste of what it means to be a part of this community, they get it; they want to be a part of it. But how do we convey the intangible “it” through countless channels available to people who are not familiar with LBC and have never stepped foot on our campus? This is where it boils down to the specific components of our institutional marketing strategies.
The marketing strategies herein include multiple aspects of inbound and outbound components, most of which are presented in an end-game scenario. The transition from where LBC currently is to where this plan proposes it operates from will be determined by the buy-in from administration and department heads as well as the budget dollars that remain from expenses incurred by previous department-led campaigns. The overall plan, therefore, will be implemented in multiple phases, and a proposed marketing budget for the scope of the project (both marketing and recruiting strategies) will be presented for the upcoming fiscal year in early 2012 for cabinet consideration, modification, and approval.

In consideration of all of the aforementioned, the primary objectives of this institutional campaign are as follows:

1. Build the LBC brand, expanding the institution’s visibility and establishing top-of-mind awareness of LBC as a premier learning community;
2. Diminish “Bible college” stereotypes that view us as similar to a seminary or as being only for those who are going into full-time ministry; in doing so, we must intentionally and consistently communicate that we are a college:
   • that solidifies a biblical foundation and equips our graduates to live out a biblical worldview every day of their lives
   • whose staff cares as much about who our students will become as what they will become
   • who students are passionate about Christ and about pursuing His will for their lives, whatever that may be
3. Clearly communicate who we are in such as way as to help our target audience identify in themselves those qualities and characteristics that make them a fit within the LBC community (whether on-campus or online); and,
4. Leverage the institution’s credibility and integrity for greater effectiveness throughout all department and program-level sub-campaigns.

The first institutional marketing campaign we are proposing, which we believe addresses each one of these key objectives, is “My Journey.”
INSTITUTIONAL MARKETING STRATEGY

There are multiple perspectives from which one can launch a marketing strategy—the most common is to spotlight your best “features,” your strengths. When selling a house, it’s talking about square footage, number of bedrooms, year built, condition of the kitchen, and “move-in condition.” But who buys a house because it has three bedrooms? That’s not a selling point; it’s a qualifier. Similarly, colleges boast about the number of majors, the national rankings of their sports teams, the esteem of their traditions, etc. But what makes LBC so...well...LBC is not our majors, buildings and grounds, or national recognition; it is, in my opinion, our people—our students, our staff and faculty, our alumni. To best communicate what makes us unique, what sets us apart from others, we must spotlight not features but people.

The rationale behind this first campaign is simple: We will paint a picture of our institution by focusing on the individuals that make us who we are and by tying that to our tagline Your journey. Our focus. Every media component will feature someone from the LBC community (most often students, but also staff, faculty, and alumni) and a statement that begins with the recurring phrase: “I’m on a journey to...” followed by something specific about that featured person, which will in turn convey something more about the quality of the institution (programs, faculty, etc.).

The campaign will specifically address the above objectives in the following ways:

1. It will build the LBC brand and help establish LBC as a premier learning community by showing the world the quality of our students, staff, and faculty. How better to clearly convey who we are and what we are about than through the lives of those in the LBC community?

2. It will help diminish “Bible college” stereotypes that view us as identical to a seminary or as being only for those who are going into full-time ministry through multiple testimonies from adult students who are not in full-time ministry and traditional undergraduate students who are not planning on entering into full-time ministry. Even better, through the use of these testimonies, we are demonstrating the many effective and real-life ways that people can (and do) live out a biblical worldview in various non-ministry occupations, endeavors, and life-callings.

3. It will help the “right” people among our target audience connect with our message and examine their potential “fit” within the LBC community. Something they hear or see in the stories and the lives of our featured students will hopefully resonate with them and will cause them to consider their own journeys and whether those journeys also lead them to and ultimately from LBC.

4. It will enable us to strengthen the impact of the promotional efforts of Worship and Performing Arts, Athletics, Degree Completion, Traditional Undergraduate, Master’s programs, and PhD programs by answering the question “Who is LBC, and why should I care?” In working to remove the additional challenge of “selling” the institution, every recruiter (of both official and unofficial capacities) will better be able to focus on the merit of their individual programs and/or departments.

For the duration of this initial campaign, our institutional strategy will be video-focused but driven by print, mobile, and online channels. The reason for video is fairly obvious—we can more effectively engage emotion through watching and listening than through reading. Print, mobile, and web channels will all employ “stacked” marketing components; that is, no one marketing effort stands on its own. Every component will contain element(s) intended to funnel traffic through additional channels, to further engage viewers, and to increase exposure to the LBC experience. The following pages contain samples of the campaign conveyed at various levels as well as the flow of stacked marketing components.

THE KICK-OFF CAMPAIGN: “MY JOURNEY”
EXAMPLES OF CAMPAIGN THEME APPLIED AT VARIOUS LEVELS

The use of the “I’m on a journey...” phrase will be connected strategically on multiple levels—whether (per sample to the left) for traditional undergraduate as a whole, or more specifically (per below) with an athletics focus or (per right) featuring staff and faculty—to indirectly underscore the message that we are all on journeys and, more importantly, LBC helps equip people for their journeys regardless of where they are on that journey.
MORE EXAMPLES OF CAMPAIGN THEME APPLIED AT VARIOUS LEVELS

The message should also be conveyed in audience-appropriate context—sometimes (per the DC sample to the left) lightheartedly, sometimes (per PhD sample below) with more gravity, and even sometimes (per WPA sample to the right) as a group—to speak in words and ideas that will most likely connect with our target market.
EXAMPLE 1 OF STACKED MARKETING COMPONENTS

QR code and web address link to online video testimony

At conclusion of 60 - 90 sec video, screen defaults to a “My Journey” page on site, where visitors will see a number of thumbnails for other video testimonials or can browse other areas of lbc.edu.
EXAMPLE 2 OF STACKED MARKETING COMPONENTS

Banner ad on partner site with direct link to program landing page

QR code and web address in print ad link directly to program landing page
Website design, whether that of a college or any other organization, is far more important than many realize. Over 90% of curious fact-finders search the web first (and often only) when wanting to find out more about the subject of their inquiries. Long gone are the days of people reaching for a phone book. To that end, homepage presentation is of the utmost importance. In a majority of cases, it is the potential customers’ (in this case, potential students’) first impression of an organization. What does our site tell visitors about Lancaster Bible College? Furthermore, how easily a site visitor can locate what they are looking for will determine how long they stay on our site and whether or not they will decide to browse further into our site’s subpages. With a current home page bounce rate of 85%, this is something LBC must continue to evaluate and be willing to modify as needed.

In regard to any campaign for the institution as a whole as well as for every and any specific department or program, success or failure will depend greatly on our web presence. Without exception, our greatest priorities in this area are and must remain: 1) Website Content, and 2) Search Engine Optimization. Regardless of our outbound efforts, our number one marketing and recruiting tool is our website, and every effort must be made to make it as “findable” as possible. While embedded keywords and meta tags are the easiest way to potentially increase our SEO, it is only one of the methods that search engine “web crawlers” use to prioritize query results. LBC is currently in partnership with YDOP to explore all reasonable methods to maximize our website’s SEO.

An August 4, 2010 article called “No Laughing Matter,” (published online at insiderhighered.com) goes a long way in highlighting some of the common problems college websites face. The most telling quote of the article, by Martin Ringle, CIO of Reed College, says: “College website design typically focuses on what an institution wants to say, not necessarily what prospective students (and others) want to know.”

The now familiar adage is as true as ever: "Content is King." While the LBC website has a vast amount of content (which will only continue to grow), we must make every effort to present our content in a way that is not overwhelming but, rather, maximizes a visitor’s ability to find what they are looking for. Excessive information, if not orderly and sensible, can become an obvious detriment to user-friendliness. The more information provided, the more challenging it will be for our visitors to find the information they are actually most often searching for.

Analytics will play a huge role in the strength of our website. We should make every effort to maximize the analytics available through Percussion. Is each and every page trackable, and if so, to what degree? The best way to know what parts of our site most people are visiting is to track page hits and click-thrus. Find out where they are going most and make those areas of our site the easiest to access.

Finally, links to LBC subsites (WPA, Athletics, iLEAD) must likewise be easy to find and the sites themselves must retain a strong presence of Lancaster Bible College brand assets. Successful brand management lives and dies upon consistency. Currently, WPA and Athletics have their own domains and host their own websites completely independent from lbc.edu, and iLEAD is hosting a SquareSpace subsite. Each of these has direct links from and to the lbc.edu website, so every effort must be made to maintain brand integrity while allowing these departments to continue to express their own creative flair into the design and to feed their site with relevant content. Yet while these sites run independent from lbc.edu, it is commonly understood that they fully represent Lancaster Bible College. As such, it will be worthwhile to explore the feasibility of bringing these department sites “in-house,” residing as official subdomains/microsites of lbc.edu (established domain names can stay intact). Samples of what these related subsite themes might look like follow.
EXAMPLES OF RELATED SUBSITE THEMES (SITE HEADERS)
ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF RELATED SUBSITE THEMES
PRINT COLLATERAL

Print collateral consists of LBC printed assets that reside at LBC until sent to various audience for various purposes. For the sake of better understanding which pieces of our print collateral aligns with which audiences, we categorize it and assign it into three tiers.

Tier one collateral is intended for those who are not familiar with our college. They offer a bird’s-eye view of general information about LBC—a brief history, our mission and vision statements, and a broad overview of our offerings at both traditional and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate education levels as well as biblical enrichment. A sample of these would include our 8.5” x 11” overview brochures for the institution and iLEAD.

Tier two pieces are provided to those who are at least somewhat familiar with LBC and may be more interested in one or more of our specific offerings. Tier two pieces would include such items as our Degree Completion, Undergraduate (traditional), and Graduate Education tri-folds.

Tier three collateral consists of material that is much more specific in nature, either for an audience that has expressed an interest to know more about a particular program or as a unique offer to a targeted group. It can include such things as fact sheets or syllabus or more specific pieces that support recruiting efforts within existing or desired partnerships, such as our ABHE or NCCAA promo cards.

It is important to understand that what makes any particular piece belong to a particular tier is not just the type or amount of information provided within the piece but also the audience that is receiving it. The goal is not just to provide appropriate information at the right time but also to engage the recipient to want to learn more. As much as anything else, a tiered approach to providing information is a strategy of psychology. For instance, when a high school student learns about LBC (through any number of possible vehicles), if our initial response is to send them a fact sheet, a catalog, and financial aid information, one could argue we’ve given them everything they’ll ever need to make an informed decision. What we’ve just done is inundated them with copy—overwhelming amounts of information, data, and facts. But how have we engaged them emotionally?

In a tiered approach, when a prospective student expresses interest, we might instead send them a picture-heavy and copy-moderate view book that includes a DVD or interactive CD that contains “My Journey”-type videos and LBC extras, like desktop backgrounds and helpful articles like “Choosing a College That’s Right for You.” Instead of throwing everything at them including the kitchen sink, we instead engage them with (I’m reluctant to say it) “cool” stuff that creates top-of-mind awareness and a desire to find out more. Then, after they’ve received it and have had enough time to look through it (though not so long as to let the impact fade), an admissions counselor follows up with a call. Based on the prospective student’s response, the counselor can either send another tier two piece or may opt to send a catalog at that time.

The mentality behind a tiered strategy is to start the fire slowly, as with kindling, then stoke the fire purposely, fanning the flame as needed, to create a blaze that endures. The alternative is akin to pouring gasoline on the ground and igniting it; the result is a fast and furious inferno that burns out quickly.
Opinions about the effectiveness of print advertising remain diverse. While the trend of shifting more and more budget dollars from what are considered more “traditional marketing” vehicles to internet advertising continues (and will continue in the foreseeable future), the benefits of a strong print ad campaign to either drive or support the overall marketing campaign remain intact.

On the upside, print advertising offers an audience with at least some of your target market, and logic dictates that they could be considered among the more committed of your audience since they’ve identified themselves as such simply by being willing to pay a subscription rate. This is why Coleman advertises in outdoor-themed magazines, Nike advertises in sports-themed magazines, and yes, Christian colleges advertise in Christian-themed magazines, where, if not the students themselves, at least decision makers (moms and dads) and key influencers (pastors and youth pastors) are learning more and forming opinions. Whereas it wouldn’t necessarily be senseless for Nike to advertise in, say, *Camping Life* magazine nor for Coleman to advertise in *Sports Illustrated* (especially since both companies have cross-over products and ridiculous marketing budgets), when your budget is limited, you aim where the target is most clearly defined.

On the downside, print advertising is still one of the more expensive advertising vehicles and one whose effectiveness remains, by and large, difficult to track. The recent introduction of the QR code had many marketers hoping to change that; unfortunately, while the use of QR codes in print ads is on the rise, the long-term impact in tracing an ad’s effectiveness is questionable. Some statistics show that fewer than 10% of smart-phone owners actually use their phones to scan QR codes. Even for those who do take advantage of this free form of “hard-linking,” the prevalence of QR codes nearly everywhere you look requires all the more that the distinction of your print ad is such that those who view it are swayed to scan your QR code among the many others that bombard them.

Print advertising will play a critical role in the LBC marketing strategy but its use will be very calculated. In an effort to build brand strength (name awareness for the right reasons), we propose an ad campaign on a national level, through magazines that are subscription-based, audience appropriate, and aligned with LBC’s purposes.

As with a tiered strategy in print collateral, our print ads will be light on copy but strong on message. Insomuch as is possible, the ads should engage emotionally rather than intellectually. And no ad should ever be a stand alone piece—one that implies “this is who we are…take it or leave it.” Rather, they should serve as an introductory level of (as previously described) stacked marketing components, containing calls-to-action related to finding out more about the particular message or story, not simply leading people directly to the LBC home page to let them find out more on their own. Again, it’s never a matter of “if you build it, they will come” (if we simply let them know). It’s a matter of weaving a good story that will engage them on an emotional level, then walking them hand-in-hand as far along the storyboard as they will allow.
One of the most undervalued marketing tools that should be given more strategic consideration than often it does is the formation and leverage of simple and/or co-venture strategic partnerships. Especially in Christianity, where our goals should be more unified perhaps than in any other arena, joining efforts with other like-minded organizations to achieve a common purpose should seem a simple and logical idea. Yet, even for the most well-intentioned organizations, the pull of pride and protection can be strong. We don’t mind others scratching our backs, but...

Simple partnerships

In many cases, we can accomplish more by working together than on our own, especially if we are heading in the same direction. In this area more than any other, LBC must maintain a true heart for ministry. My feeling (based on conversations and comments at several levels) is that LBC still suffers from a stigma created many years ago that it is out only for its own interests. My understanding is that there are churches still who will not partner nor assist LBC in any way because it is their experience (right or wrong) that LBC takes far better than it gives. I know that is not who we are, and we must find new ways to demonstrate that. In many cases, such as with churches, the partnership should look more one-sided—LBC giving while expecting nothing in return. We should search and discover new ways to minister to our surrounding churches and communities. The return may be in students, in reputation, or in simple words of appreciation. But that’s not why we should do it; we do it because it’s the right thing to do. We don’t wait to be asked; we look at our resources (people, manpower, books, buildings, etc) and we ask ourselves, “How can we use these to further God’s kingdom?” Then we do it.

Co-venture strategic partnerships

These are partnerships usually solidified through written agreements outlining more specifically how you will scratch my back and how I will scratch yours. It doesn’t necessarily mean that they are more about business and less about ministry; it simply means it is a strategic relationship through which, while there may be many interrelated interests, each party is receiving from the other a value that furthers their own efforts and advances their own goals. The parties are not inevitably working together on the same project or endeavor. Each is continuing to pursue their own objectives, but some area of that objective can be better or more easily or more effectively accomplished by some service provided by the other party.

In various forms, LBC already has a number of each of these relationships in force. “Project Restoration” is a great example of a simple partnership, while different types of co-venture partnerships are represented at iLEAD, in their relationship with ABHE and the planned remote iLEAD locations in Florida and Texas.

OTHER COMPONENTS

Many other marketing components exist and could be discussed, but their roles in the institutional strategy are either local in nature, serve a purpose independent of the primary strategy, or will be explored as the individual opportunity arises. Some of these components include conventions/sponsorships, television, radio, newspapers and local/regional periodicals, and info sessions (which in themselves may incorporate several of these components). And, lest we think that the online world beyond our own website has been overlooked, we’ll now delve into the ever-fluid world of Digital Components.
There's one good reason not to over-assess the world of online marketing opportunities: One year ago, someone somewhere was finalizing an obscure, seemingly insignificant online program that is presently snowballing with buzz and momentum in the online world (even though we've never heard of it) and in 2012 will become the next Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, or Twitter. Even as I write this, someone else somewhere else is prototyping another online technological masterpiece that will make the program before it pale in comparison when it takes the world by storm by early 2013.

Welcome to the world of digital, where the best online strategy is only as good as the latest-greatest online must-have included in the strategy, and the worst online strategy is the one that is still operating from last year’s assessments. Much could be written about what display ads should or shouldn’t look like, and where they should or shouldn’t be located, and what current trends are dictating what actions through what vehicles. With the assistance of local, all-things-digital vendor YDOP, our current digital strategy is presented in the following pages, beginning with the role of digital in the marketing plan.
TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE DIGITAL STRATEGY
DEGREE COMPLETION DIGITAL STRATEGY

**ORGANIC SEARCH**

**PAID SEARCH**

(Public Relations)

(Traditional Advertising)

(these actions stimulate search activity)

Mini-site with duplicate content, but with a tighter user experience for greater conversion. It would have great info and sample interface.

Much content is duplicated with `<rel=canonical>` for SEO or by blocking search bots.

A dedicated section within the website that would have great info and sample interface (See Full Sail University).

**APPLICATION**

Call to action (choose):
- Request Info
- Live Chat
- Call Now
- Apply Now