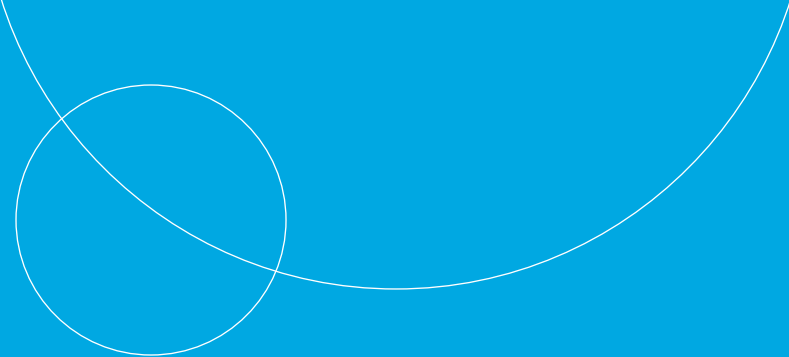rnl national conference
leading ai innovation
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From Silos to Synergy:
Unifying a Fragmented Online Division for Recruitment Success

Cory Brown – Vice President of Online Operations, Marketing, and Outreach; Waldorf University
Ali Egan – Director of Online Marketing; Waldorf University
Ron Spradling – Director of Online Outreach; Waldorf University

Agenda: From Silos to Synergy

1. Marketing, Outreach, and Operations Plan History

2. The Strategic Objectives – 6 Defined Strategies

3. Outcomes

Waldorf Overview

Serving Students since 1903

- Founded in 1903 in Forest City, IA

- Started offering online classes in 2010 while continuing to serve traditional students on campus

- Student-focused, guided by their needs

- Tradition, Passion, Community, Success – our Pillars for our students

- The "and" and its importance to our mission of educating the whole student

The Marketing, Outreach, and Operations Plan

1

The Plan

History of the plan & reasons behind its formalization

Post-pandemic enrollment decline

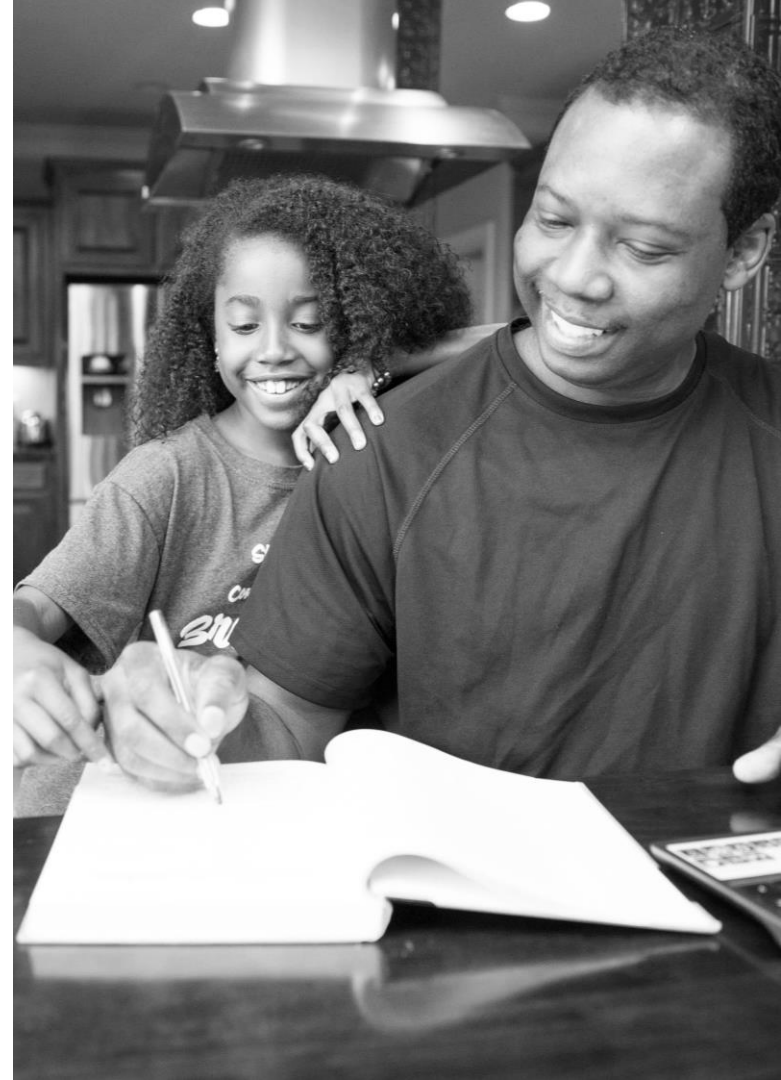Increased competition from traditional universities introducing online programs

Inflated costs of doing business

Attitude Shifts

Solution:

Generate a comprehensive, cross-departmental plan to establish measurable goals and creative strategies

Strategic Departments

Marketing, Outreach, and Operations

- The three major departments for Online:

  - **Marketing** – focuses on advertising and marketing strategies to drive growth by prioritizing prospective student sources for highest conversion from Lead to Enroll as well as lowest CPE

  - **Outreach** – focuses on in-person and regional (local to rep) communication and brand awareness by attending conferences, sponsoring events, and developing niche partnerships

  - **Operations** – internal department including Admissions, Student Affairs (Student Services & Academic Advising), and the Online Registrar's Office.

Strategic Objectives

2

Strategic Objective 1

Make Data-Driven Decisions

- Increase transparency, communication, and collaboration between departments to make more consistent data-driven decisions

  - Enhance our understanding of enrollment conversion by analyzing by lead source

  - Track ROI (annual & student lifetime) for each campaign and event

  - Maintain and routinely review student and prospect data by program

Strategic Objective 2

Enhance Organic Growth

- Focus on brand awareness in identified regions

- Enhance social media

- Search Engine Optimization

- Monitor organic leads against paid sources to understand trends/relationships

Strategic Objective 3

Target Niche Industries and Groups

- Leverage existing partnerships and focus on adding new partners where we can serve their population

- Create advisory councils for specific programs or demographic groups

- Focus on niche conferences

- Find and provide opportunities for faculty to publish articles

Strategic Objective 4

Enhance Military & Corporate Relationships

- Serve our military through on-base partnerships and providing resources within military communities.

- Continue adding partnerships with large corporations where we can provide educational opportunities to their employees.

- Focus efforts on partnerships that are productive for both us, and them.

- Launch a tiered system to encourage organizations to provide higher education opportunities to their staff.

Strategic Objective 5

Optimize Student Retention

- Enhance internal communications to keep students engaged

- Reward students who persist

- Work to increase completion of end-of-course and end-of-program surveys

Strategic Objective 6

Focus on Creating More Transfer Credit Opportunities

- Identify organizations where an articulation agreement would assist their stakeholders in achieving a degree.

    - Community colleges

    - Training organizations

    - Corporate partners

Outcomes

3

Outcome 1

Enhanced Cross-Departmental Communication

- The plan has been in action since 2021

  - Weekly meetings & annual retreat with relevant department heads – consistent platform for communication

- Allows Online Operations the ability to influence overall organizational strategy in a cohesive, data driven way, with reliable enrollment and conversion projections, with one unified voice.

- Open channels of communication allow for flexibility and seizing opportunities for success within operations, marketing, and outreach.

Outcome 2

Increased Flexibility

- This plan encourages both thoughtful advanced strategy and quick adaptation/pivots should marketing opportunities arise

- Longer term strategy includes program-specific efforts

    - Growth vs Sustain

- Short term, fast turnaround opportunities

    - Conference sponsorships and advertising through partners

    - Persona targeting alongside outreach activities

    - Collateral creation for specific niche groups or events

Outcome 3

Partnership Enhancement

- Woven throughout several strategic objectives is the intent to enhance our partnerships

  - Adding new partners where we can provide value through offering opportunities to their stakeholders.

    - Several new partners have been added, including corporations, municipalities, colleges, and workforce trainers.

  - Enhancing existing partnership through providing resources and increased communication.

Outcome 4

Increased Accountability

- This plan provides us with measurable goals that trickle down to the staff level, encouraging accountability at all levels
    - Staff are held to productivity standards with conversion targets for both existing student retention and new student enrollments.
    - Each campaign or event has set goals with target ROI, allowing us to calculate actual ROI after its conclusion
    - Vendors are provided goals based on their promised conversion, which allows us to determine if their performance is considered successful.

Thank you!

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