Southern Cross Program  
Case Study  
School Expansion

Holy Trinity Lutheran School
Preparing to Implement a Middle School

School Description

Holy Trinity Lutheran School is a Prep to Year 6 coeducational, Independent Christian school in Horsham, with an enrolment of 265 students in 2013.

The school offers a broad and comprehensive curriculum in a Christian context with particular emphasis on mathematics and English. Stimulating developmental programs in Art, Music, Information Technology (IT) and Sport and Physical Education are provided for all students.

One of a network of over 80 schools run by the Lutheran Church throughout Australia, Holy Trinity Lutheran School was established in 1979. In 2014, it will run its first Year 7 class. By 2016, Holy Trinity Lutheran School will be a Prep to Year 9 school.

Project

Holy Trinity Lutheran School's initial intention in attending Southern Cross training was to evaluate the school's administration and office systems in the light of the school expanding from a primary school to a Prep to Year 9 school.

‘Our facilitator convinced us, quite quickly, that such a project was too broad for the four days of training,’ said Principal Jeff Gork. ‘Instead we refocused our thoughts and concentrated on a marketing plan for the transition to junior secondary.’

Process

Accompanying Mr Gork at the Southern Cross training were the school's business manager, administration manager, IT manager and a classroom teacher. Horsham, being several hours’ drive from Melbourne, the team chose to stay in the city and divide their four days of training into two, two-day blocks a week apart.

Changing the direction of their project before lunchtime of the first day surprised the team, but they soon embraced the Southern Cross process management model. ‘There is a very strong emphasis on data, data and more data, which stems from the training originally being for the commercial rather than the education sector,’ said Mr Gork. ‘It’s a totally different mindset.’

Over the four days of training, the team examined its marketing plan, step-by-step, following all the elements of process management. ‘Your head fills with many ideas, but the training is
Results

Holy Trinity Lutheran School learnt that its marketing plan was neither detailed nor integrated. ‘It needed a new framework, which actually gave us more ownership of the plan. We realised that starting afresh was better than trying to rewrite the existing plan.’

In early 2013, the school began developing a new marketing strategy, a crucial part of the transition to becoming a junior secondary school. ‘We have to market outside our existing families because, understandably, more than a few of our Year 6 students will be following their elder siblings to Horsham’s two established secondary schools,’ said Mr Gork. ‘We have to market to a new catchment as well as to our own families.’

Holy Trinity Lutheran School completed its Southern Cross training in early December 2012, just before school finished for the year. With the summer holidays, and then the busyness of the start of the 2013 school year (plus an excursion to Hong Kong for Year 6 students), there was the risk that the lessons learnt from the Southern Cross program might fade.

‘It could have been easy to fall into old habits but we keep reminding ourselves of what we learnt late in 2012 and what we’ve done since then.’ Indeed, Holy Trinity Lutheran School has already applied the Southern Cross process management model to its enrolment system and believes it is now better-placed to evaluate other office systems at the school.

Mr Gork said he was initially doubtful about Southern Cross’s seeming emphasis on data and on looking at a school solely as a business. ‘You may not agree on everything in the training but there’s a lot of value. They key is to go with an open mind. And, like any training, it very much depends on the presenter, and I have nothing but praise for the facilitator, who was very experienced and very confident.’

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