

## Situation

Red Bank College is a small, private, liberal arts college located in a rural area. The school advertises itself as offering a challenging academic experience that integrates faith, the liberal arts, career-oriented programs, and service. Red Bank offers over 40 academic programs with personalized instruction and the opportunity to study abroad. The College also has a small but growing online degree program in eight disciplines.



The College had seen declining enrollment for several years. While the decline was not substantial in number, it was large enough to have a substantial impact on the College's financial health since enrollment was just above break-even.

## PMG Solution

PMG developed a methodology to examine Red Bank's brand and competitive positioning. We gathered substantial secondary information and completed surveys with faculty, development partners (donors), guidance counselors, current and prospective students and their parents, and alumni. Results of this data collection were used to:

- Measure brand awareness,
- Determine brand strengths and weaknesses,
- Uncover key differences by segment,
- Identify competitive colleges and universities and perceptions of their performance,
- Develop a competitive positioning map.

Working from this information, PMG identified specific opportunities, by segment, to increase its brand awareness and strengthen its overall position with the ultimate objective of increasing enrollment.

## Results

PMG learned that brand awareness was below expected levels and well below that of peer schools. The school was characterized as being small, Christian, welcoming, safe and comfortable. It was also seen as restrictive, outdated and hidden. The school was seen as being ahead of peer schools on the moral and ethical environment, having a small student population and small class sizes, and the quality of faculty.

Campus visits had a strong positive impact and led to increased chance of enrollment. However, many parents and students did not visit due to travel time. But, if extended a personal invitation most said they would visit.

One school stood out as the primary competitor. That school also attempted to differentiate itself on its size, location and faith-based atmosphere. In addition, it touted the career direction provided to all students, the range of degree programs and athletics. They also utilized a marketing and communication model targeting specific segments.

PMG developed specific ways to improve Red Bank's image with prospective students and parents, guidance counselors including: stronger encouragement and facilitation of campus visits, gradually increasing admissions standards, and developing centers of excellence in coordination with alumni and employers. PMG also recommended and developed a segmentation scheme that identified the highest likelihood students and a contact strategy to develop and nurture a positive, impactful relationship with these students.

Current enrollment numbers show the profound impact the findings of the project and Red Bank's associated focused enrollment strategies. In the two years following PMG's study Red Bank has a CAGR in enrollment of 8%, representing an increase in new student enrollment from 239 (2016) to 278 (2018).

## About Priority Metrics Group

Priority Metrics Group (PMG) is a B2B market research and consulting firm based in Spartanburg, South Carolina. PMG provides customized market research, analysis, and consultation services designed to generate profitable growth for our clients. Our firm works with leading organizations in a variety of manufacturing and service industries. We are experts at gathering and processing market information, analyzing data, and translating information into actionable growth initiatives.

Since 1993, Priority Metrics Group has consistently delivered high value solutions through our practical approach to any business issue. PMG principals have a wealth of real-world experience in B2B market research, strategy development and implementation, new product innovation and business growth. As a result, we know how to listen, select the right issues, and get the work done.