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Changing the world, one client at a time.

BOHAN Advertising for the United Methodist Church, "Rethink Church"

The Challenge: BOHAN is a regional advertising agency that was tapped to create the new UMC campaign, "Rethink Church." Targetting a younger demographic, the campaign aims to redefine church as a 365-days-a-year experience where people seeking a church community can become involved at various levels - many of them non-traditional - such as volunteering with groups outside the church building and even through making online connections. The goal was for it to become a movement, with results measured in terms of lives touched and transformed. Bohan reached out to Utopia to get the story circulated among the top news weeklies.

The Gameplan: For this particular placement, Utopia Communications did background research on the top circulated and top regarded, news weeklies. There was a profound relevance between U.S. News and World Report journalist Dan Gilgoff's columns and the message that Bohan Advertising was trying to portray in the media.

Utopia Communications also aimed to tie the story into the current news cycle, using media channels to reach the younger consumers with headlines like "What Would Jesus Do...If He Had a Blog?" and "Does God have a Facebook page?"

The Result: The story was featured in the May 29th issue of U.S. News and World Report, reaching a circulation of 2,036,185. It further gained interest with the Religion News Service, Newsmax, US Ad Review, AdAge, and NBC Nightly News.



Advertising Age®



Young Worshipers Wanted



"What if church wasn't just a building, but thousands of doors?" asks a new website launched by the United Methodist Church. "Each of them opening up to a different concept or experience of church. . . . Would you come?" After watching its membership drop nearly 25 percent in recent decades, the United Methodist Church, which is still the nation's largest mainline Protestant denomination, thinks it knows the answer. So it's pouring \$20 million into a new marketing campaign, including the website, television advertisements, even street teams in some cities, to rebrand the church from stale destination to "24-7 experience."

"The under-35 generation thinks church is a judgmental, hypocritical, insular place," says Jamie Dunham, chief planning officer for Bohan Advertising & Marketing, the firm that designed the United Methodist campaign. "So our question is: What if church can change the way we think about it? What if church can be a journey?"

strategies that are more typical of evangelical churches, which have focused on member experience, contemporary music and weeknight small-group ministries. Mainline denominations, meanwhile, have clung to centuries-old worship styles. "In the current marketplace, mainline churches are trying to compete for themselves," says Stephen Prothero, a professor at Boston University.

Some mainline church officials admit that they are learning from the evangelical playbook. And no wonder. Since 1990, the number of Americans identifying themselves as members of mainline denominations has declined by nearly 19 percent of the population, a loss of 3.5 million people. One study found that nearly 19 percent of the population identifying themselves as Christians, the evangelical megachurches, has exploded to more than 8 million. "They have to address the needs of their daily lives, and that's not always been the case," says Larry Hollon, who heads communications for the United Methodist Church.



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