

Ricky Schlesinger 's Notes

Retention and Propagation in a Jodo Shinshu Temple

Introduction

Ricky Schlesinger - VBT president
Vista Buddhist Temple – approx 100 members, 35 yrs old
North County San Diego - Diverse, no strong JA community

Buddhism is growing in America
Jodo Shinshu is declining at 3.5% per year

Blurred lines between Buddhism and Business

It's a Marketing Problem

Retaining customers
Building loyalty among our customers
Identifying new customers
Converting prospects into customers

Every temple is the same
Every temple is different

Our world is changing – all the time, and the rate of change is steepening
Buddhism in America in communities is growing, our market-share is strinking
Our challenge – get in the game

Two Target Audiences (customer bases)

1. Current Sangha
Our long term members (founders)– mostly Japanese American
More recent members – primarily not of Japanese decent
2. Our local community of Buddhist seekers
Fairly small traditional Japanese American community
Broader community of diverse Buddhist seekers
We want to get on their radar

Creating Change - Requires

Plan – Board has recently drafted in a 3 yr plan (20/20 Vision)
Discipline – creating step by step plan and remaining consistent
Patience – it's a process – creating change and significantly growing
takes years, not months.
Communication and buy-in
Talk to your Sangha
Create understanding
Celebrate successes

Not changing our principles – the dharma

We are changing our appeal
Our product evolves with an evolving market
The Market – Buddhism in our community

How to we grow our temple

Uphold our Jodo Shinshu traditions and practice
Bring awareness of the temple to our community
Attract new members to attend and ultimately join our Sangha

Building Awareness Activities

Website –
 As a promotional vehicle
 Communication vehicle
 Educational vehicle
Social Media – the new frontier
 Facebook
Temple Sign – very basic
Festival - festival promotion
 - building awareness during the festival

Gateway Activities

Meditation – we do a little yoga stretching
Tai Chi classes
Buddhist Ed Classes – every month
Outside Buddhist Speakers
 Venerable Karma Lekshe Tsomo
 Attracted 65 attendees – 60/40 non-members
A welcoming environment – greeting your guests

Adapting the Dharma Activities

Engaged Buddhism
Book club and book sales
OCBC varied and progressive ministerial voices
Non-Jodo Shinshu speakers

Remember

1. Develop a welcoming environment in your temple and Sangha.
Talk about contemporary issues
2. Develop a positive attitude amongst your Sangha members and a team,
community spirit
3. Create a Plan – and execute with diligence, consistency and patience