CASE STUDY

COMPANY PROFILE

How Non-technical Staff at Pickering Christian School Use Rise Vision for Inspiration, Guidance, and 'Wow Factor'

Pickering Christian School was established in 1985 to provide Christian education to children in the Pickering/Ajax area of Ontario, Canada. It was originally a branch school of the nearby Scarborough Christian School and was established in order to better service the Durham Region. Now, Pickering has grown from a small number of students to a thriving school community on a 26,000-square-foot purpose-built campus. As for what that purpose is, Pickering describes its ethos as 'Educating the Whole Child.'

It does this using a model called 'Profound Learning.' Pickering explains its approach as 'an empowerment model of learning that elevates student learning to heights not achievable using the traditional "command and control" industrial age model of education.' The focus is on allowing students to take control and responsibility for their own learning. This has consequences for how Pickering uses its messaging tools; attention must be earned, and students expect engaging, innovative, and creative content.

Pickering Christian School
Ajax, Ontario

Managing Digital Signage as Part of a 'many Hats' Role

As the Administrative Assistant, it's Deb Poggensee's job to meet those expectations. Deb Poggensee has been helping Pickering achieve its mission for 29 years, in an evolving role that's fairly common in smaller schools: Deb's job is 'whatever comes up!' A typical day includes helping out on the front counter when needed, though another staff member now takes point on that. Deb also assists parents, teachers, students, and volunteers, and manages the school's digital signage. That typically involves a weekly scheduling session and a larger monthly update. She also works on a weekly newsletter, and a yearbook, and oversees the school's data program and admissions process. That's all — if nothing comes up.

Deb's situation is very familiar to other smaller organizations. She has no formal technical training and a full workload involving many disparate tasks, some rather unpredictable.

'I started at the front counter as the receptionist/secretary,' she recalls, 'doing some minor elements of graphic design like weekly and quarterly newsletters. About 10 years later the yearbook was added to my portfolio. I was responsible for the website in the early days. I had no official training. It mostly consisted of trial and error and being self-taught. I then moved into my present job 3 years ago, [with] more media and graphic work.' So she's busy and there's significant pressure. She needs to find ways to communicate schoolwide, but there are limited options for selecting a tool to do that.

Choosing a Tool for the Busy, Self-taught School Communicator

It is essential that the system does not contain certain (negative) criteria in order to make it user-friendly and valuable. The tool must not have a steep learning curve, require background technical skills and knowledge, or be time-consuming. The system also has to be asynchronous, and support a scheduling system. Photoshop and Microsoft Powerpoint, although great tools are not effective for the needs at Pickering.

In contrast, the tool must contain some equally important (positive) criteria. The system must be versatile, agile, and usable across a broad range of topics. Deb describes the most important criterion as 'the wow factor.' If the signage solution doesn't actively catch and hold the attention of

staff, students, and school visitors then it doesn't really matter how easy it is to use.

The school's Development Director made the decision to use Rise Vision in 2018. At the time, Deb was using Powerpoint to assemble content for the school's TV displays. The result was visually unappealing and managing it was time-consuming and unwieldy. Ultimately, recalls Deb, the school's administration 'wanted more of a wow factor.'

Accessing Value and Getting Inspiration

At first, Deb had some difficulties making Rise Vision work for her and Pickering. Deb has been a user since 2018 when Rise Vision was less easy to use than it is now, and she struggled to get value from the product — until she contacted us. 'I was really frustrated and didn't know how great the tech help was,' she remembers. 'I was hesitant to get tech help [and] I didn't want to be made to feel stupid. When I finally reached out, the tech help was amazing!' While we've put a lot of effort into reducing the learning curve, we're still extremely proud of the quality of our support.

Not only did Deb utilize the services of tech help, but she also attended two Rise Vision webinars. These free webinars help people use the product more effectively. 'The first was excellent, Deb recalls, and she 'learned a lot of little things that made maneuvering through Rise Vision easier.' The second webinar was an education-focused

event last year. Deb says it helped her make more long-term strategic and creative decisions and 'dream what I could be doing.'

Deb says she still sometimes gets 'stuck,' particularly when 'the programs I am using are too complicated,' but 'when I'm working on graphics and the creativity flows, I love the templates that Rise Vision has available in the template library.'

Rise Vision's template library is there to help users build content schedules quickly and easily. However, the template library also helps support Deb in other ways. She often looks at relevant premade templates, but then goes on to create her own instead of using the ones we provide. 'I love the premade templates,' Deb says, and 'if I don't use them, they definitely stir up creativity. It truly has made my job much easier and the content looks fabulous.'

Schoolwide Implementation at Pickering

Pickering currently has four display units, three in the school's main building and the fourth in the portable. Templating is a key tool for managing messaging: 'I have templates for monthly themes, [and] monthly birthdays,' says Deb. The school also uses a lot of Rise Vision's premade templates, including those for handwashing, word of the day, student activities, and upcoming events.

One of Pickering's four displays is mounted near the entrance to the main building, and Deb says she often sees students and staff looking at it: 'all seem to really enjoy' the content it shows. 'The students love it. Especially when I make a mistake. But the cool thing about that is they are looking at the TVs.'

The main goal of Pickering's content is to share info on upcoming school events, pictures that are taken around the school, words of encouragement, and display the

school's theme and Bible verses. The feedback received by staff, students, and parents, together with Deb's observations are overwhelmingly positive.

The Future of Rise Vision at Pickering Christian School

Pickering definitely has future intentions to use Rise Vision more around the school. While there are currently no plans to use the tool in classrooms, Deb says she hopes to switch the school's morning announcements to classroom screens using Rise Vision — something we've heard other schools have success with.

For school media teams (overwhelmingly composed of just one or two people), Keller's advice is equally valid: 'do not try to spread yourself too thin, get to a certain level of understanding with one form of communication before adding or learning another.'

About Deb Poggensee

Deb has worked at Pickering Christian School for 29 years. She has been happily married for over 40 years. She is blessed to be a mother of 3 and has 3 grandchildren. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, traveling, and hiking. Her most memorable trip was in 2002 when she was able to visit New Zealand, Australia, and China.

For more information on Rise Vision, please visit www.risevision.com or contact us at sales@risevision.com.

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