

SELLING & PROMOTING YOUR YEARBOOK



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The importance of marketing and selling yearbooks is often overlooked, yet it is just as significant as creating the book itself—if not more so. If you hit your sales goal, you can pay for your yearbook. If you surpass your sales goal, you can use the additional revenue to add more pages to your yearbook or add features like a supplement, or autograph pages. On the flip side, if you miss your sales goal, you may owe money or have to cut part of your program. Whatever the case, marketing and selling your yearbook is critical and this guide is intended to help you simplify the process and succeed!

WHAT WORKED IN THE PAST?

As with any project, proper planning and organization will go a long way in helping you accomplish your goals. In this case, the first step is to assess your school's past yearbook sales success and build on it. This means taking some time to ask and record answers to the following questions:

- **What worked well in last year's sales process? Why?**
- **What didn't work well in last year's sales process and why?**
- **If you are new to your school, ask the school secretary and the teachers how well the marketing and sales process worked. Great questions to ask could be: What did you like the most about the process? What one thing would you improve about the process?**

Review all materials that are available from YearbookLife pertaining to marketing and selling your yearbook. Do you have everything you need? Posters, flyers, money collection envelopes, etc.? What else do you need in order to be prepared for your campaign?

If your school has a tradition of keeping the yearbook a secret, consider changing that tradition. The yearbook is one of a few items where a person is asked to pay in advance with the promise of receiving a high-quality product later. Simple things like including the student body in the design of the book or taking peeks into the yearbook by sharing cover ideas are ways that can increase awareness and connection to the book which, in turn, drives a student or others to purchase one.

Learning from last years' experience is an important first step in building a successful sales and marketing plan for this year's book.

SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL NETWORKING IS WHERE IT'S AT! Use it to your advantage

Get the word out, generate interest, involve more people and ultimately sell more yearbooks!

ASK QUESTIONS—this is their yearbook, what do they want to see in it?

CREATE POLLS—fill your yearbook with stats that reflect your student's top picks.

POST PHOTOS—status updates and tweets that include photos receive 50% more feedback.

MAKE SURE THE YEARBOOK STAFF IS VISIBLE—students will be more apt to approach and share their ideas if they know the staff.

COMMUNICATE SALES—even when you think there is nothing new to say, people always appreciate a reminder about how to get their hands on the yearbook (e.g. when, where, how much, etc.).

Once you've decided which social networking tools you're going to use, you'll want to assign key people the responsibility of monitoring your accounts.

PLANNING YOUR SALES

Now it's time to brainstorm and plan your sales activities!

If you're new to the yearbook sales process, it's helpful to think about it in four key stages:

- First is scheduling the timing of your sales campaigns.
- Second is creating several sales activities that generate awareness and excitement about the yearbook being on sale.
- Third is collecting orders and payment.
- Fourth is distributing the books when they arrive.

SCHEDULING THE TIMING OF YOUR SALES CAMPAIGNS

During this stage, the goal is to identify ideal sales times that attract attention about the yearbook. Take some time to enlist students, staff and others interested in the yearbook to brainstorm ideas of what will work best for your school. Use a school calendar to compare your thoughts against school activities to determine the best times to have sales campaigns. Typically, you'll want to allow a total of 3-4 weeks to conduct a sales campaign by the time you promote, sell and wrap up the campaign activities.

Many yearbook staffs conduct three campaigns a year to ensure everyone knows they have the opportunity to purchase a yearbook.

Of course, you'll want to also have all the needed material in advance. Here is a game-plan many schools use. Feel free to expand, refine and adjust it based on your needs—it's just intended to get you started.

3 WEEKS BEFORE yearbook sale date(s)—create and organize the announcements, posters, videos and other materials needed to promote yearbook sales. Make sure you take advantage of any promotional materials provided by your yearbook publisher.

2 WEEKS BEFORE yearbook sale date(s)— hang up posters, run ads and begin “creating excitement and awareness” about the yearbook.

1 WEEK BEFORE yearbook sale date(s)—continue promoting yearbook sales happening the next week; send letters home and post info on school marquee. Have announcements begin!

SALES WEEK—have fun executing the sales activities you planned and taking orders!

1 WEEK AFTER SALES—ensure all funds have been collected and accounted for. Enter buyers' names and payment amounts into a tracking system or spreadsheet software so you know who has purchased the book and can use that list later on when distributing books when they arrive. Take advantage of YBLive yearbook software features that capture sales, including online and mobile ordering. also, make a deposit with an accountant or bank (if you haven't done so already) to ensure that the yearbook funds are secured.

TIPS:

- Consider pre-selling your yearbook at orientation, showing examples of past year's books to generate excitement.
- Gradually increase the cost of the yearbook for each sales campaign.
- Create special packages for buyers that include options like personalization or an ad space along with the price of a yearbook.
- Consider adding options to all your offerings—this can increase sales!
- Develop a system or use yearbook software features in YBLive to track and report sales balances due from buyers.
- Consider offering a payment plan for students who cannot afford to pay for a yearbook at one time. Make sure you stress a non-refundable deposit.
- Consider offering families with multiple children at your school a discount for a second or third yearbook.
- Tie in gift certificates/gift cards during the holidays. Offer people the option to “sponsor” or donate funds so a book can be purchased for a student that cannot afford one; have a drawing for a lucky winner or winners.



- Consider communicating in both English and other languages to ensure that everyone knows and understands that a yearbook will be on sale.
- Offer Recognition and Business Ads during some of the sale campaigns.
- Use your school website as a sales tool by posting prices and deadlines for sales.
- Create videos and advertising students can share virally to spread the word.

CREATING EXCITEMENT AND AWARENESS

After scheduling the best times to promote and sell the yearbook, you'll need to come up with promotional pieces and/or a theme that attracts attention to the upcoming sale dates, times and locations. We can provide these items to help you. Of course, you can always create your own promotional pieces to supplement what you've been given. Be creative and come up with clever slogans and messages if you really want to personalize the sales campaign to your school. Naturally, the use of simple statements like "yearbooks on sale!" or "don't miss the opportunity!" or "last chance!" are always effective and a fast and easy way to draw attention to the yearbook sale.

31 IDEAS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SALES CAMPAIGN

TAP INTO THE PRINCIPAL, TEACHERS, COACHES OR OTHERS HEAVILY INVOLVED IN PLANNING SCHOOL EVENTS to find out what activities are already planned that you could work around and use as a forum to promote the sale of the year book. Possibly even start taking advance orders (i.e. Open Houses, pep rallies, sports events, activity nights or other events that draw kids and their parents to the school).

IDENTIFY THE HEAVY TRAFFIC AREAS IN YOUR SCHOOL where posters and banners could be hung to capture student's attention about the yearbook. The school cafeteria, library, entrances (and even restrooms!) are used by everyone...don't miss the chance to catch their eye as they're going about their day.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENTS, broadcasts, student and parent newsletters and websites! Work with your school administration and newsletter staff to determine how to take advantage of these opportunities to get the word out about when and where to buy a yearbook.

GATHER INPUT AND BUY-IN FROM STUDENTS AND STAFF. There's no better way to entice students and staff to buy a yearbook than making sure they're included in the content and the development process. After all, making sure that the yearbook is representative of the people, events and happenings at your school is the whole value of the yearbook.

DEVELOP POLLS AND BUYER SURVEYS through English classes at all grade levels. Have these surveys ask for ways the yearbook can be improved and help you better

understand their perception of value versus cost. you will be surprised how many people appreciate your effort and how much stronger your yearbook program and sales will be as a result.

CONDUCT A COVER DESIGN CONTEST and use the winner's design for the cover or the title page if your school has already chosen a cover style. Miniaturize some of the finalists' designs and use them as custom clip art throughout your book. This way, more students will receive recognition.

INCLUDE QUOTES FROM STUDENTS and staff interviews about selected topics. Include as many students and faculty as possible.

SEND "SEE YOU IN THE BOOK" NOTES to students whose pictures were taken (include page number and coverage subject) as a reminder that this is their book with their picture in it. It will let students know they will be in the yearbook and increase their interest in buying one.

CHOOSE A MARKETING THEME that conveys the essence of and belonging that yearbooks represent. It can be used in all promotional materials and announcements such as "Making Our Mark", "Together We Are One" or "On Our Way." Your staff is sure to come up with other unique ideas!

GIVE INVITATIONS TO STUDENTS TO BUY THEIR YEARBOOK. Make them special and individualized.

CREATE AND DECORATE A "Thank You" BULLETIN BOARD for purchasers to autograph when they turn in their order.

SCAN AND POST YEARBOOK PHOTOS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS and include them on flyers asking the student body to guess whose image is pictured. Give all correct answers a coupon off the yearbook price.

USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO PROMOTE YOUR CAMPAIGNS where people can quickly and easily share your messages.

PROMOTE THE SALE OF YEARBOOKS IN EVERY REASONABLE VENUE

POST ANNOUNCEMENTS AND IMAGES ON THE SCHOOL WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA SITES announcing yearbook sales to the general public. Also consider announcing yearbook sales through a calling service if your school subscribes to this kind of service.

DEVELOP A SALES BROCHURE and order form you can leave in the front office for visitors to review. Many times parents come to visit the nurse's office, the attendance office, or the front office. These three places are great locations for brochures so parents can learn about your yearbook sales campaign. (you may also want to contact the feeder schools to see if you can leave brochures at their locations as well. Many times classmates may have a younger sibling attending one of those schools and the more exposure to parents, the better.)

AT ORIENTATION, HAVE STUDENT BODY LEADERS DISCUSS THE YEARBOOK and describe its importance to incoming students.

CREATE A SKIT DURING AN ASSEMBLY, AN AUDIO COMMERCIAL OR VIDEO that can be shown during morning announcements about the yearbook to get the student body excited about upcoming sales.

ENLIST THE AID OF KEY INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE ON CAMPUS TO HELP PROMOTE THE YEARBOOK. Have teachers bring their yearbook the week of sales so they can share their stories. Have coaches and sponsors inform their teams of the value of purchasing a yearbook and demonstrating the ultimate sign of school spirit.

GET PARENTS AND OTHER SCHOOL MEMBERS INVOLVED

SEND POSTCARDS OR FLYERS to parents letting them know that yearbooks are available to purchase for themselves or their child. Suggest purchasing two books, one for the student and one for parents to keep.

ASK LOCAL BUSINESSES to display yearbooks to promote awareness.

WORK WITH YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER, TELEVISION AND/OR RADIO STATION to write up announcements that let your community know this is a special time for your school. Invite a reporter to visit your yearbook class or club and see how the yearbook project is created.

OFFER AN INCENTIVE FOR EARLY ORDERING OF A YEARBOOK—it could be a discounted price off the yearbook (which is always enticing) or a special gift such as a pen, magnet, button or pencil. A simple message stating “I ordered a yearbook,” like the “I voted” stickers given at polls, will let others know that they’re available.

USE BRIEF MORNING ANNOUNCEMENTS to promote yearbook sales, organize groups for photos or give important progress updates.

CREATE A MONITORING DEVICE to show sales progress (i.e. a chart or graph) or have a countdown using signs or announcements to remind students of the last day to order a yearbook.

SEND A “LAST CHANCE MEMO” to those who haven’t yet purchased a book.

CREATE AND PUBLICIZE A SIGNING PARTY for the last day of school. Make the distribution of books a big deal. Gain permission to allow students who have ordered yearbooks to leave classes early. Serve refreshments - make it fun!

SEND TEXT MESSAGES to students and/or parents announcing the yearbook sale. Include a link to direct them to the yearbook ordering page at the YBLive store.

USE THE SCHOOL’S PHONE “CALL OUT” SYSTEM to announce your yearbook sale.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PARENTS UNDIVIDED ATTENTION IN THE DROP OFF AND PICK UP LINES. This is a great opportunity to pass out flyers and information regarding the yearbook sale. Use “Yearbooks On Sale” yard signs available from YearbookLife.

The goal is to get everyone excited about the yearbook to a point that they are willing to purchase immediately. Brainstorm with your staff to see what other ideas you can generate.

OFFERING ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE YEARBOOK

If you want to raise additional revenue for your yearbook, you may want to consider offering advertisement space to businesses and recognition ad space to students, clubs and families. It is amazing the amount of revenue you can raise from one page in your yearbook. Many schools offer space to families, club sponsors, businesses, teachers, students, etc.

Developing an advertising program for your yearbook can be easy if you have a plan that includes (1) identifying your potential audience for purchasing advertising space, (2) determining ad sizes, guidelines and rates, and (3) creating effective ad sales campaigns, including collection methods.

IDENTIFYING YOUR POTENTIAL TARGETS

Before getting started, identify your potential targets for purchasing advertisement space. You have several distinct buyers: local businesses, school vendors, families, students, club sponsors, teachers, and coaches to name a few. How you pursue each target may be different. Here are some ideas to get you started:

LOCAL BUSINESSES: These businesses are typically located near the school or in the district. They usually include insurance companies, banks or financial institutions, restaurants, real estate agents, mechanic shops, car dealers, and fast food establishments. Remind these potential advertisers that an ad in a yearbook will be seen for years because yearbooks are saved for a long time.

SCHOOL VENDORS: These businesses are on the school vendor list and do some sort of business with the school/ district. Your purchasing office should have a list of contacts and their addresses.

FAMILIES: These buyers want to recognize their children for their accomplishments throughout their school years. Many photos will probably accompany their ad as well as words of praise.

STUDENTS: These buyers want to recognize their friendships on campus. Many photos will probably accompany their ad as well as words of celebration.

CLUB SPONSORS: These buyers want to recognize their club officers or overall organization. Some photos will probably accompany the ad as well as words of appreciation.



TEACHERS: These buyers want to recognize a fellow colleague's retirement or accomplishments. Some photos will probably accompany the ad as well as words of congratulations.

COACHES: These buyers want to recognize their teams or team captains for their accomplishments. Some photos will probably accompany the ad as well as words of encouragement.

As you can see, you have quite a few targeted of buyers. As you develop a plan of communication, make sure to clearly state your offer to each buyer and include a rate card for the cost of an advertisement and a yearbook as well. Consider developing a rate card/brochure for all prices as well as three to five basic layout designs for all ads. This will help your buyers make a better decision. You can also consider offering discount coupons with expiration dates to all buyers during your sales campaign. This may be the driving force to help some people purchase ad space. Remember, everyone loves a deal!

DETERMINING AD SIZES, GUIDELINES AND RATES

The first element to understand before making any decisions related to ad sizes, guidelines and rates, is that you must sell your yearbook page for at least two to three times your cost for the page. You can figure out your average cost per page by taking your total overall quote provided by your publisher (per copy rate x # of copies) and dividing that by the number of pages you have in your yearbook. Although this is not a true representation of your cost, since your figure will not take into account your cover, end-sheets, proofs, etc., it will provide you a starting point of what your cost is for an average page in your yearbook. Take that figure and multiply it by two or three to get your overall selling price for a full page ad in your yearbook.

Consider the Patron & Booster layout method of advertising if you want to raise money without using too many pages in the yearbook. In this method, you sell levels of Sponsorship that include progressively more benefits as a sponsor moves from a bronze to a Silver to a gold level of sponsorship. Incentive ideas include such things as a free listing of their level of sponsorship in the yearbook or a school banner in the gym as well as free admission to basketball home games, special discounts to school functions, reduced priced copies of the yearbook, etc.

CREATING AN EFFECTIVE AD SALES CAMPAIGNS

As mentioned previously, you'll want to organize and develop multiple ad sales events, track and report financial progress of ad sales and establish a method of providing advertisement receipts to customers who purchase ads.

Here are some sales resources that should also be created and kept handy for use when selling advertising space:

COVER LETTER—To be used when explaining to the potential advertising audience what options are available. Remember that it should be personalized based on the target you're selling to. For instance, the letter that is sent home pre-mailed to parents making them aware of the opportunity to purchase a recognition ad for their son or daughter is obviously very different from the cover letter that accompanies advertising requests to local businesses, club sponsors, etc.

LAST YEAR'S YEARBOOK—To help either remind advertisers what their ad looked like last year or prompt ideas from other businesses on how they'd like to represent their message in this year's yearbook.

SAMPLE ADS—It's always helpful to see other ideas as a start in creating your own. Use sample ads you've created over time to make it as easy as possible for purchasers to decide what they'd like their advertisement to include. If you don't have any, use our ad templates to mock up examples.

AD DESIGN SUGGESTIONS

YEARBOOK SPECIFICATIONS—make sure potential advertisers understand the content of other parts of the yearbook and can visualize where their ad will be placed. Also, make sure all images given are high resolution so they show up crisp and clear when printed.

SKETCH PAD—that can be used to brainstorm and illustrate some basic design concepts so the advertisement can be designed accordingly.

AGREEMENT FORMS (INCLUDING SALES RECEIPTS)—to formalize the sales transaction for both parties so you can plan on the purchaser's advertisement as a part of the yearbook and the advertiser has a confirmation of their purchase for accounting purposes.

RATE CARD(S)—to be used to explain advertising rates and other critical information advertisers need to know such as deadlines, ad guidelines and digital guidelines.

Your goal to the public should be to sell as many small ads as possible along with a yearbook. The goal should be increased coverage. Buyers who want a full page ad will tell you, but many students and parents may not have the funds for a full page. If you take a business card size ad and a yearbook and package it together, you may create an attractive package for a parent.

As you gain more hands-on experience in selling advertisements, you can modify your approach based on what works best for your situation.

Now that you've collected plenty of ideas on how to get organized, plan and conduct yearbook sales campaigns and advertising, you're ready to prioritize your thoughts and put your own game plan to work.

Remember to enlist the help of others and have fun with such an important and rewarding opportunity!

Consider publishing your ad rates at a higher price and then offer all buyers a special discount or coupon of savings with an expiration date.

COLLECTING ORDERS AND PAYMENTS

Not surprisingly, the process of collecting orders and payments is all dependent on organization and detailed tracking. Take time to think through all the people and supplies you'll need to make this process run smoothly. Some items will be obvious, like creating a sign-up list of people to collect orders at different venues and an order form that collects the student's name, grade, class or homeroom and address as well as the yearbook quantity and total payment due. YearbookLife offers money collection envelopes, receipt pads and sales flyers to greatly simplify this process.

For instance, potential items to have at a yearbook sales table include:

Table and chair(s)—for order takers to sit and work efficiently.

Posters or banners—so it's obvious that yearbooks are being sold.

Student and staff list—to quickly locate and record who has submitted an order for a yearbook and how much has been paid. This information can be tracked manually or electronically depending on the sophistication of your money collection system.

Money collection envelopes and/or cash box—to keep orders organized and secure.

Sales receipt pads—to act as proof that a sales transaction has been enacted. If possible, use a sales receipt pad that enables duplicate carbon copies. That way, each party has a record of the purchase— this is especially important for cash purchases should there be a record-keeping discrepancy later on.

Lots of pens—to record order information quickly and enable purchasers to borrow them if writing a check without a pen at their fingertips.

Other office supplies — such as a stapler, extra staples, note pads, scissors, etc. since you never know what items will need to be followed-up on and you'd rather be over-prepared than under-prepared when you're working with a crowd of purchasers.

Enlisting others to help you think through the entire order and payment collection process will really help you build a game plan with confidence. Perhaps you can start by talking with seasoned staffers about what methods worked well (or not-so-well) during last year's process.

DELIVERY AND DISTRIBUTION

AT LAST, AFTER MONTHS OF ANTICIPATION AND HARD WORK LEADING UP TO YEARBOOK DELIVERY... The day comes when you can distribute the school's yearbook with pride! Here are more ideas to consider when planning for this special day.

- How will you distribute the book and how will students be notified of its availability?
- What distribution method you choose?
- How will you keep track of who has received their book and who hasn't to ensure everyone has received what they paid for?
- If you decided to create and publicize a signing party to coincide with the yearbook delivery day, are you prepared for it? After many months of curiosity, kids are especially anxious to see the book and, of course, never want to miss an opportunity to socialize with their friends!
- This is where it's critical to have a detailed tracking mechanism (either manually or computerized) that allows you to quickly find and record each student who is given their yearbook. It's helpful to have the yearbook distribution list sorted and available in a multitude of ways so you can easily find the purchaser's name and check them off the list. Common sorting methods include alphabetical by last name, grade, classroom or homeroom.
- Will books be delivered to each classroom or homeroom in a way that ensures that each student that ordered a book gets one?

You'll also want to make sure that you have a method of tracking any additional sales that are made once the yearbook is delivered (versus the advance sales) since many others will want to order a yearbook after seeing it!

Regardless of whether you're distributing a book that was ordered in advance or ordered on the spot, it's critical that you collect the money prior to handing over the yearbook to the purchaser. Otherwise, it's difficult to collect the money afterward.

Once the mad rush of book distribution is over, it's crucial that you reconcile your records to ensure that every person who ordered a yearbook received what they paid for. If for some reason, someone paid and didn't get their yearbook as a part of your normal distribution process, you'll want to make alternate arrangements right away to get it to them. Hopefully, it'll be easy enough to track them down in school without having to locate them over the summer or fall. It's also important that all money collected be kept in a safe place.