

// LEARNING THE BUSINESS

# TARGET MARKETING sells yearbooks and inspires creativity



When you think of all the skills yearbook staff members learn over the course of the school year, sales and marketing acumen isn't usually the first thing that comes to mind. However, in the midst of design principles, photography techniques and writing practice, students are learning to position and market a product to a highly sought after target audience — teens.

"The old ways don't work anymore. You have to find creative ways to market the book," said Matthew LaPorte, yearbook adviser at Southwest Career and Technical Academy [NV]. "Listen to the student body. If you don't listen to what they are into, you are not going to come up with a plan they are into."

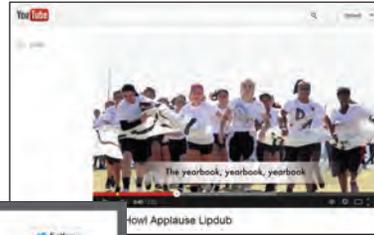
LaPorte's yearbook staff is small — just 10 students, but they are producing big results. They sell 30% of their copies at registration, then launch a student-focused campaign to convince their peers that the yearbook is a "must have" purchase.

By October, the staff had sold more than 650 copies and are on track for their biggest sales year ever at this five-year-old career and technical magnet high school. The starting point for their sales effort is always the book's theme.

"It all starts with a theme. Pick one you can easily market," says LaPorte, "If you can't think of ideas early on, you won't later. Always pick a theme they can sell."

The theme of Southwest CTA's 2014 yearbook is "Never Forget." Using a daily social media campaign that includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr, students are asked to share their "Never Forget" memory for that day. Many of the responses will appear in the yearbook.

**VIDEO LIPDUB:**  
A yearbook parody  
of a popular song  
creates excitement  
about the book.



Howl Applause Lipdub

**SOCIAL MEDIA:** A daily social media campaign includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr.

			
Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
			
Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	

**PAYMENT PLAN:** Students put \$10 down to reserve the yearbook and get a payment stamp card that becomes a raffle ticket when completed.

**YEARBOOK DRESSES:**  
Fashion students promote the book by wearing dresses made from old yearbooks.



commercials • social media • video

yearbook dresses • payment plan • raffles

In addition to engaging students on social media to drive sales, journalism students are tasked with creating a marketing plan and carrying out a yearbook promotion that appeals to specific interests of the student body.

Students from the school's fashion program created "yearbook dresses" made from old yearbooks and wore them to school to promote the yearbook. A group from the medical program did a "yearbook anatomy" project.

Most recently, a yearbook parody of Lady Gaga's "Applause" was created by journalism students and posted on YouTube. [Click here to watch.](#)

The goal of the video, of course, is to convince students to buy a yearbook.

The staff also worked with broadcast journalism students to create a news story promoting new features in this year's book.

When dealing with those non-buyers who are still unconvinced, the sales staff calls upon their persuasive, problem-solving and critical thinking skills to combat objections.



"They figured out how to problem-solve with students who don't want to buy or think it's not worth it. Statements like that require them to reflect and adjust their marketing plan to best reach their audience," said LaPorte.

Price is one potential objection that staffers are well prepared to respond to. The school utilizes incremental pricing to create a sense of urgency. Early buyers get the best deal. Online credit card sales and a generous in-school payment plan are other ways the staff makes it easy for students to buy.

"Most of the books we sell are on a payment plan. They put \$10 down to reserve the book and we give them a stamp card. They get an additional stamp each time they make a payment. When they complete payment, the stamp card turns into a raffle ticket for a \$25 gift card," said LaPorte.

Perhaps the best argument of all for buying a book early is to insure you get one. The staff broadcasts a daily commercial showing the number of books sold so far with the warning that sales could stop at any time once they sell out. LaPorte said that is definitely a bargaining chip this year since the yearbook sold out last year for the first time.