

During a brief career in real estate in Las Vegas, I saw what building a “spec” house could do to a builder: I’d see an empty house, with nobody to buy it, and a whole bunch of money tied up in an investment that wasn’t paying off any time soon. When I became a yearbook adviser, I decided never to buy yearbooks on spec for the same reason- Why should I buy in hopes of selling, when I could just buy what I knew I had already sold or could easily sell and know that we’d make a profit each year?

There’s nothing as effective as crying children who didn’t get a yearbook this year to convince their parents to buy early for the next year, when the prices are lowest and opportunity is best. I never worry about if we will sell the books we have left- I worry about hoping the plant can send a whole bunch of overruns because we’ll sell every single one- and at \$20 each over the original discounted early purchase price. (We discount by \$10 for purchases made by Oct. 1, then return to the regular price, then add a \$10 late fee to the price after we place our final order Jan. 15.)

We also have a policy that states “Time is of the essence. If a student or parent does not pick up a purchased book by the end of the last regular day of instruction, that book will be considered abandoned. The book will be sold to a person on the waiting list, and the purchase price of the original sale will be converted to a donation to the yearbook program.”

(Not all states or districts can do this, but we have done it successfully for 10 years. If a parent realized in the summer, or even in the next school year, and asked about it, we’d either refund the price or use it for the next year’s book, and if we still had a book to give them, we’d give it, but most of the time, it’s just money they gave us that they never even thought about getting back.)

We don’t just hope the books will sell. We advertise the heck out of them.

- We do begin sales in the spring with our early registration (1),
- we send home a blanket postcard to all students reminding parents to buy (2),
- we send home targeted postcards only to those families who have not purchased a yearbook (3),
- and we advertise in the school newspaper every issue (4,5,6,7,8),
- parent newsletter every issue (9,10,11),
- online on our school’s website (12+),
- in the hallways on posters (13),
- and we post fliers in classrooms (14).
- We also hand out notices to kids who are in the book (15),
- and the yearbook is recognized during at least two assemblies (16, 17) each year before the senior assembly,
- which is the third ad spot (18).
- Our staff wears t-shirts once a month on Fridays (19, 20, 21, 22).
- We have permanent posters in the yearbook hallway (23).

That’s more than 20 touches with our advertising for every student in the school between May of the previous year and January of the current year.