

Handle leads effectively (part7)

Talking to potential parents in an *Education Success Consultation*

"Using this approach creates a relationship that helps me better minister to a family's needs."

Rick Nelson
Chico Oaks Adventist School

If at all possible, talk with parents in person, not over the phone.

You will be able to establish trust more effectively in person. Remember, you are asking parents to trust you with their child.

Start your meeting with a conversation, not a tour of your facility.

Unless your school is atypically new and beautiful, you and your staff are a much better selling point than your facilities.

Be a minister, not a salesman.

"Ministry is about understanding people's problems and solving them." In your conversation, start with questions and listen, listen, listen.

1. **Situation questions:** Use early and sparingly, just enough to understand who you are talking about.
 - Examples: "What grade is your child in school?" "Where does he/she go to school?"
2. **Problem questions:** Learn what issues the parents have.
 - Examples: "What did you like and not like about that school?"
 - You will be tempted to jump in with how your school can alleviate or fix these issues. But wait for it...
3. **Implication questions:** What happens in several years (the child's future) if the problems aren't solved? This can be painful for parents and should be short.
 - Examples: "If your child continues on their current track how do you see it affecting his/her ability to do well in high school? College?" "If we can't control this bullying problem, how do you see this affecting him/her relating to others in five or ten years?"

4. **Need (solutions):** Now talk about how your school can (or can't) help address the problems.

- Example: "Let's talk about which of your concerns [my school] can address..."
- Talk to each of their concerns in turn. Be realistic about how your school does or does not address that need.
- Your role should be "education consultant" to help them find the best school for their child -- even if that is not your school.
- Try to give tangible evidence: either data or anecdotal.

Offer to answer questions while you give them a tour.

You will doubtless be asked about your tuition. Your answer will be stronger if you include these two facts as well:

- Contrast what **they will pay in tuition** with what it **actually costs** to educate their child (your total budget this year divided by the number of students at your school). Make the point that this is because Seventh-day Adventists value and support Christian education for their children and their communities. That support comes from your local church(es), the Northern California Conference and individual donors.
- Tell them how much you awarded in **financial aid this year**. Include the total awarded by your school and any constituent churches.

Credits:

Neil Rackham, *Spin Selling Field Book*

The four SPIN steps (situation, problem, implication, need) come from Mr. Rackham's research and book. The quote above is adapted from his, "Selling is about understanding the customer's problems and solving them." But I would argue that the definition of ministry is essentially the same. And the tool is useful in both.

Rick Nelson:

Thank you for allowing me to use your experience at Chico Oaks.

Justine Leoni

Thank you for your quick way of highlighting the much higher actual cost of an Adventist education as compared to the tuition rate for parents.

Binder tab:

Put this in front of the January tab and behind "Handle leads effectively, part 6."

Note: This message is essentially the same as "Talking to prospective parents" from about a year ago. You can replace that one with this.

School size: All