

## **Why is great word of mouth essential for Christian schools?**

Understanding how marketing for schools is different than selling yogurt

***“Word of mouth is not the holy grail of Christian school marketing.  
It is the only grail.”***

Carol Tilstra Nash

To effectively promote a service or product, professional marketers start by **assessing how much they are asking a potential customer to invest based on three variables.**

### **Money**

We are asking parents to pay thousands of dollars each year.

In many cases our primary competition, public school, is free. With the rise of charter schools, parents perceive (although it is demonstrably not true) that their child can get the equivalent quality of a private education without paying tuition by going to a charter school.

### **Time**

We are asking parents to invest huge amounts of time.

At minimum, driving their child to and from school 180 days each year. But we also ask them to come to evening and weekend programs, organize fund-raisers, volunteer in classrooms, drive for field trips.

### **Emotion**

We are asking parents to trust us with their child's physical safety and long-term success.

At minimum, parents have to trust we will keep their child safe for seven hours a day, 180 days a year. But in addition, they have to trust we will educate their child appropriately at each grade level so the child is ready to succeed at the next grade level and thus, ultimately, be able to accomplish their goals in life. Parents won't truly know whether we've succeeded in the long run until 12+ years after they started.

Marketing theory tells us that the greater the investment required by a service or product, the more important it is that promotional information about the service comes from a source the potential buyer already knows and trusts. In other words: Since private, Christian schools require a top-of-the-chart investment from parents, they have to hear about it from someone they trust.

Next week we'll talk about gloriously happy parents.

*By the way, in case this sounds familiar--good. I know I've shared this before in Principals' Council and at Marketing Mentoring schools. I have not forgotten I told you. And I know you are all very smart. But I'm sure you also know the value of occasional reviews of key points--consider this your Cliffs Notes review.*

**Delegating:**

There is nothing here to do--so nothing to delegate. (But you might share these ideas with your staff, board and key volunteers...)

**Binder tab:**

Put this in front of the January tab, with the pages for "ongoing" projects

**School size:** All

**Marketing process step:** This is a big picture overview, rather than a specific step.

- 1) Who are we?
- 2) What do families want?
- 3) What needs to change?
- 4) How do we tell our community?
- 5) How do we track results?