

A key objective of any effective marketing strategy is to turn customers into raving fans of your business, product or organization.

■ by Candice Myers

Referral Programs

Harnessing the power of word of mouth in marketing isn't just about getting people talking — it's about creating the kind of experiences that make them want to share with others. A key objective of any effective marketing strategy is to turn customers into raving fans of your business, product or organization. By identifying those who truly love what you offer and are eager to spread the word, you can maximize your marketing efforts and extend your reach without increasing your budget.

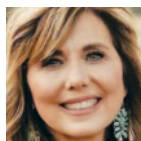
Here are five ways to make word of mouth work for you:

1. **Ambassador events** — SkyMoms, a key part of Sky Ranch's marketing and ministry strategy, hosts 14 to 16 luncheons annually in target cities. At each event, 10 camper moms invite eight to 10 friends for a free lunch, an inspiring talk from a parent mentor and information about camp experiences.
2. **Networking luncheons with church leaders** — If your camp serves mostly groups, gather five or six of your most passionate youth leaders and invite them to a free lunch. (What youth pastor doesn't say yes to a free lunch?) Ask them to bring two or three friends who are also serving in group ministry, whether they are staff or volunteers, to hear about what your camp or conference center has to offer. You can initiate the conversation and then let the youth leaders share the experiences their students have had with your camp. It is a powerful form of advertising.

3. **"Bring a Friend" discount codes** — Use your existing campers to help recruit new ones! Offer a discount to the new camper, as well as a discount to the loyal customer who referred them. Utilize your CRM system to create discount codes and help track the effectiveness.
4. **Social media influencers** — Research social media influencers in your area to gauge potential interest in your offerings. Confirm alignment with your mission by doing your research before considering these relationships. They immediately become ambassadors for your brand, so it's important that they say the same things as you do as a ministry organization.
5. **Testimonial videos** — Find parents, campers or group leaders who are great on camera to provide testimonials that you can use for social media posts or on your website.

plug and play marketing

By leveraging existing customers to spread the word, referral programs offer a cost-effective and trustworthy way to drive growth and build lasting brand loyalty. ■



Candice Myers serves as the vice president of sales and marketing for Sky Ranch Christian Camps (Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma). Her background includes experience in marketing, television news, commercial production, freelance writing and customer service. In the fall of 2024, she celebrated 20 years with Sky Ranch, and as part of the executive leadership team, leads those responsible for group sales, marketing, retail and guest services. Candice and her husband, Rope, live in east Texas and have four children.