

5 Steps to Grow Your Tutoring Business

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It is estimated that parents in the United States spend \$5-8 billion a year on private tutoring! Tutors can charge anywhere from \$30-\$90 an hour, depending on their location and specialty. If you haven't thought of becoming a tutor...maybe you should.

We receive many phone calls and emails from tutors. Usually, they call to ask about our tutoring resources, but every conversation inevitably leads to questions about how to grow their business. I started SOAR as a tutoring business in 1996 and struggled to find clients at first, so I have a lot of empathy for these questions.

Usually, the first thing people do is print business cards and brochures. The problem is, once they are printed, who do you give them to?

This is where I got stuck. Desktop publishing was relatively new and I proudly designed spiffy business cards and brochures. But, my pretty stack sat neatly in my office while I tried to figure out what to do next. After a few years of trial and error, I learned that I had the steps all wrong and soon had more clients than I could handle!

How Did I Do It?

I now realize that I created my business cards and brochures much too early. I had to work out a few other things before business would come my way. The following five steps describe what I did, in the order that I did it:

1. I Gathered My "Proof"

Before parents would spend their money or their time with me, I needed to answer an important, but unspoken question in their minds; "Why should I hire you?" I answered that question, in part, by providing proof of my expertise and experience. I collected certificates, testimonials, letters of recommendation, etc. and assembled all of my "proof" in a portfolio for parents to review during our initial meeting.

2. I Defined My Niche.

More than anything else, this step was responsible for massive growth in my business! Once again, I knew I had to convince parents to hire me over other tutors and tutoring companies, so I thought about what I could offer that was unique. I did not have to think too hard. Every time I explained to parents how I went from "struggling to straight-As" because I learned study skills, the unanimous response was, "Oh! That is what my son (or daughter) needs!"

Bingo! The second I began to call myself a "Study Skills Tutor," business started to grow!

3. I Developed a Tutoring System.

Parents had to feel confident that their investment of time and money in my services would pay off. However, if I simply worked with their child for an hour before moving on to my

next client, parents would not know what we did or what they had paid for. So, I developed a specific system for documenting goals and communicating progress with parents on a regular basis. Parents loved this because they knew what to expect each step of the way.

4. Now I Was Ready to Communicate My Value!

Once I had defined my niche and my system, I was then in a good position to print business cards and brochures. I plastered them with information about how my services were unique and the value parents would get.

I tried a few different forms of local advertising, but generally found that word-of-mouth was the single best way to generate business. I shared my information with every person I knew and kindly asked them to “keep me in mind” if they knew of anyone who could benefit from my services as a “study skills tutor.” I also developed a referral system to encourage my happy clients to spread the word about my services.

5. I Created a Waiting List.

Once I put these first four steps into place, my business skyrocketed! Within just a few months, I had more students than I had hours in the day, so I had to create a waiting list. The waiting list instantly gave me credibility, allowed me to be more selective about the families with whom I worked (I developed an application/interview process), and allowed me to raise my rates.

This outline is a solid overview of the process I followed to grow my business and is a formula you can follow, as well. However, this is a vast subject to cover in a short article and the internet (including website templates, email, and Facebook) have brought a host of new, very inexpensive tools to our disposal that were not available, or as popular, when I got started.

If you are interested in a very specific, “how-to” guide for growing your own tutoring business, I have developed a full, 12-page report titled, “How to Advertise Your Tutoring Services.” This report is available as a free bonus with the purchase of our Tutoring Enrichment Guide.