

Ryan Novack + George Washington High School Case Study

San Francisco, CA

Background: Ryan Novack is the former yearbook advisor at George Washington High School, the third-largest high school in San Francisco. He helped the school reverse its trend of accumulating more than \$50,000 in debt from its time working with traditional yearbook companies.

How TreeRing Helped:

Print-to-order yearbooks with no costs for George Washington High School

Reduced the price per yearbook from \$80 to \$50

Fundraising option let the school collect \$15 per book, helping administrators pay down debt



TreeRing

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When Ryan Novack wrapped up his yearbook class at George Washington High School in San Francisco at the end of the 2012–2013 school year, he was able to deliver one last lesson to his students: what to do when you turn a profit.

And that was something new for everyone at the 2,000–student school, which had turned to TreeRing before the start of the year to help them better manage costs after accumulating a closet full of unsold yearbooks and a \$50,000 debt through years of working with a traditional yearbook company.

George Washington High School ended up there the way so many other schools do – high minimum commitments due early in the school year and extra charges for everything from edits to missed deadlines to shipping. If a school is unable to cover those costs, a traditional yearbook company will roll those costs into the contract for the next yearbook. It creates a snowball effect.

“It put pressure on students to buy something that’s beautiful and sentimental,” Novack said. “But with a mixed socioeconomic background, we were ending up with a lot of extra yearbooks. And a lot of debt.”

COST SAVINGS

Tired of racking up debt, Novack worked with his principal, Ericka Lovrin, to find a solution. They partnered with TreeRing because of our commitment to eliminating the financial cost of yearbooks for schools.

How does TreeRing eliminate that financial burden from school partners? We use digital printing technology to print “on demand,” meaning we only produce the number of books that are ordered. Because of this flexibility, we do not require schools to sign a contract or make a minimum commitment, and we do not need to charge extra for last-minute edits or missed deadlines.

Our transparent pricing model showed Novack and Lovrin they would be able to drop the price of the school’s yearbook, “The Surveyor,” from \$80 to \$50. That positive change left them in a great position to take advantage of our built-in fundraising option.

Novack’s class split the \$30 yearbook savings 50–50, passing along to students a \$15 savings per book and passing along to administrators \$15 per book in profits. The TreeRing online software made it easy for the George Washington yearbook class to create a finished product that captured the best moments from the school year.

By the end of the year, the yearbook class had sold about 400 yearbooks – roughly the same amount they sold the previous few years. But instead of having several boxes of unsold yearbooks, as they would have with their previous yearbook partner, Novack and his class had zero leftovers and, more importantly, received a \$6,000 check from TreeRing for the money they raised through the fundraising initiative.

LOOKING AHEAD

The first-year experience gave administrators an opportunity to accelerate their efforts in paying down the school's debt and left Novack's students feeling

positive about their contributions to the school. Novack, meanwhile, is able to focus less on debt and more on long-term goals, like further driving down costs, increasing the popularity of the yearbook and creating a more educational, more meaningful experience for his students.

"The only real reason to make money from the yearbook is to fund the class for supplies we might need or to fund field trips to teach them more. It's kind of a bummer that we have to be creative in finding ways to do what we should be doing for our students," Novack said. "But we're definitely going in the right direction."



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– Ryan Novack, Teacher, George Washington High School

TreeRing: By The Numbers

TreeRing makes really cool software that helps you do amazing things for your school's yearbook. Here's a little bit about us.



0.

Number of contracts schools have signed to use TreeRing.



64.

Number of states, provinces and territories in the United States and Canada that are home to TreeRing Schools. (It's basically all of them.)



10,000.

Number of yearbook advisors who have used TreeRing to do amazing things for their schools' yearbooks.



850,000.

Number of trees we've planted as part of our "sell a book, plant a tree" promise.



20,000,000.

Number of photos added to TreeRing by parents and students.