

## ETJ School Owners Forum Update

The ETJ School Owners' Forum has been up and running for 18 months.

There are currently 88 members and discussion topics have ranged from the wholly specific, such as advice on a good database system, to the general, such as what to do about the proliferation of Monday national holidays in the scheduling of classes.

One of the recurring topics is advertising, and to give a taste of some of the exchanges on the forum the following is a selection of some contributions on this subject.

For small schools, building a good reputation and relying on word-of-mouth is probably the most cost-efficient way of getting new students, as Sharon related, "When I first started, my children were in kindergarten, and their friends' mothers asked me to start teaching. That was fine, I immediately had 14 students in one class and 10 in another, all through word-of-mouth. A year later, I started more classes, and again had great results with word-of-mouth and passing out an announcement to all of my then current students. A few years later, the same. And two years ago, the same again, as I gained 2 classes per week each time. The last time I also put up a B-5-sized announcement on green paper at my local market (in our community), but that netted absolutely zero results."

Jun reiterated this importance of word-of-mouth: "We stopped using the newspapers for our ad and just give the mothers our brochure around this time. We give them 5 copies each and hope that they pass it to a friend who has a kid. Since then I usually get 20 calls and most of them end up as students come April."

Robert's school had the idea of rewarding students who introduced their friends: "We tried a "Tomodachi Shokai" campaign. If a student referred someone else who

joined, we gave them one month free tuition. If they referred two, two months, etc. The new student paid nyukaikin. Guess what? We got more new students than any other form of advertising, at any price. No multicolored fliers, no ad reps, just a piece of paper typed up on the computer, copied and inserted into gesha bukuro. It only costs if a new student joins (100% cost effective). We had one student introduce five friends and come for free for almost half a year."

Some, though, were more positive about using ads, this experience coming from Kathy, "On advertising, I put a weekly ad in the small local newspaper. It's expensive, but gradually, I have been getting better and better responses. I buy 9 ads

and the 10th one is free. I also request to have it put on the obituaries page as all people read that in small towns. It seems to work... Also, I like the idea of giving one month's free lessons to "friends" who join, but I already have a way that works. I give a book certificate for 500 yen for any referrals that become students. Young mothers especially like it.

Laurie put the dilemma facing school owners as they contemplate advertising very succinctly: "Why advertise at all, if the majority of students come through word-of-mouth? It is a good question, one I pondered many nights. After three years, I have come up with an uneasy compromise. External advertising is indeed a necessary

### In the Spotlight

#### Factual Information

**Name:** Brian Miller

**Years in EFL:** 4

**Name of school:** The New Village

**Location:** Sannomiya, Kobe

**Year started:** June, 2001

**No. of staff:** 5

**Ratio of kids - adult students:** 5%-95%

**Summary of EFL market in past year:** OL's looking for something better

#### 2 - Lifestyle and work

**Most hated routine task:** Paying the bills

**Last training seminar attended:** Syllabus Design & Connectionist Theory

**Attitude to staff meetings:** How can we improve?

**Local networking:** The Gym

**Mac or Windows:** Windows

**On Sunday afternoon you'll find me:** On the golf course

#### 3 - General Advice

**Current coursebooks:** None (As a result, publisher reps don't visit me.)

**EFL in year 2005:** Technology in the classroom

**My school in year 2005:** Knocking down walls for more classrooms

**If I could do it all again:** I'd have done it sooner (and built more classrooms)

**Internet and teaching:** Tweak, tweak, tweak

**Tricks of the trade:** Go out with your students

**In a nutshell:** Whether you know that you can do it, or that you can't, you're usually right. (courtesy of Henry Ford)



## School Owners

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evil. It may only provide your school with a small percentage of new students, and you may even seem to lose money on it. However, the one or two new students that you do get a month will proba-

bly recommend you to their friends, co-workers, and relatives eventually. They become new origins of word-of-mouth advertising.”

The school owners’ forum is open to anyone involved in the run-

ning of a language school. If you wish to join then please contact David Paul at the following address: [David@DavidEnglishHouse.com](mailto:David@DavidEnglishHouse.com)

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