



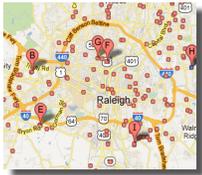
Childcare Marketing Tips

*10 Must-Do Marketing Tips to
Grow the Enrollment of Your
Early Childhood Program*

July 2012

Be Found on Your Local Map

Over the past 10 or 15 years, and especially within the last 5 years or so, there's been a "sea change" in the way today's young parents search for child care. It's all about showing up on Google and the other major search engines for your top keyword phrases – things like "child care centers, your town" and "preschools, your zip code." Moreover, Google's local map listings for all types of local businesses (especially things like restaurants, hotels, salons, and yes, child care programs) is the number one way that most programs are being found by parents. So if you have not claimed your Google Places local listing page, you are leaving serious enrollment dollars on the table. You simply must be found on the local Google and Yahoo maps, for the top keyword phrases that parents are using to search for care in your area.



Register your program with Google Places so that you show up on the map!

Treat Your Website as an Investment...not an Expense

Your website is the single most important marketing tool for your program. Period. Any potential client will absolutely visit your website before ever making contact with your center and it will, most often, be the first impression you make on a parent. Your website should be easy to navigate and provide useful information to your viewers. Useful information includes an "About Us" page, a "Contact Us" page, information on your programs and curriculum, tuition information, and your mission statement. List phone numbers, email addresses and teachers if possible. Since you literally have seconds before someone leaves your site it should load quickly. One way to avoid a slow loading website is to keep the number of large images to a minimum. Pictures of children are fantastic, but too many of them and your site will be too slow to load. Add things to your website that are exciting and different, like a virtual tour, pictures of children and your center, and most importantly, parent reviews. Your site must contain proof from actual parents that they love the staff and the program. Lastly, be sure to tell visitors how your program is different!

Notes

List below the keywords a new visitor might use to find your center through a Google search.

Do you have a website? If not, what steps are you going to take in order to budget one soon?

Design a Custom Branded Logo

A logo is a great way to get people to recognize your program. The most popular brands in the world are recognized by their logo. Think about the Nike swoosh. Having an image that quickly provides a snapshot of what your center is all about can really help with your reach. Start your own branding exercise by writing a mission statement. Put yourself in the parents' eyes and make it about them. Include a statement of your goals with adjectives that describe your center and how you accomplish your objectives. Use that direction to create a logo for your program. Before you get too far on your creativity first do a little research and look at the logos of your competitors. It's important that your logo stand apart. Consider whether your logo should be font-based, include images, or represent an abstract graphic, like the Nike swoosh. Whatever you do, make sure you keep it simple. The less complex the design, the easier it will be to work with the logo for all of your marketing material. If you lack the design skills to create a logo then you can check out <http://99designs.com/logo-design>. If you have the resources it would be well worth hiring a branding and design company to help you create something really unique. A well-designed logo is an investment that will pay you dividends for years to come.



Make sure your logo is unique, fresh, and rememberable.

Understand Your New Target Market - Millennials

Chances are good that you and your target market think VERY differently. After all, 80 percent of today's babies are being born to a new generation: the Millennial Generation, also known as "Gen Y." These new parents act very differently when it comes to searching for products and services, using social media to connect with the world, and using their smart phone or mobile device to do almost everything. You've got to study and understand how they think, act, and behave if you want to be effective in attracting them and enrolling them in your program. Here's just one example: Millennials are very concerned about the environment and seek to do business with companies who are good stewards of our planet. So if you're celebrating Earth Day in your program by planting trees with your preschoolers, tell your market about it!

Notes

Brainstorm on some logo ideas and maybe even sketch some ideas out in the space below.

List 3 things you can do that will attract the attention of millennial moms and dads.

Harness Social Media Marketing

Once you have a well-designed, search engine optimized website, you can focus on social media. Social media isn't just having fun with your friends online. Social networks are becoming the place where people go to interact with businesses. In December of 2010 only 1 million businesses used Facebook, by September of 2011, there were over 200 million businesses using Facebook! According to the 2011 Social Media Report, 80% of Americans use some sort of social network, 40% of those people have access to social media through their cell phones. 53% of active social media networkers follow a brand or business. In short, social media use has ballooned in the past few years and you don't want your center to be left out. The most popular age group of social media users is 18-30; the parents at your center are on Facebook! Facebook and Twitter are two popular sites where a childcare center can connect with current parents and build relationships with new ones. Social media is also great for visibility, challenging the competition, and generally marketing your services. Your brand (and logo) will find visibility on these networks and as your online reach grows, so does your ability to drive visitors to your fabulous website. Posting photos, articles, news, announcements, etc. are all great for social media. Social media is an incredible marketing tool, but just make sure that you list your social media objectives and goals. Then measure your efforts. It needs to be personable and fun. Give your Facebook page some personality and pretend it's a person that's just being social, as if at a party.



Marketers plan to increase their spend on social media in 2012 faster than any other tactic. What's your plan?

Notes

Which social networks are your audience on and which ones will you be successful on? Facebook? Twitter? YouTube? Pinterest?

Who will manage your social media channels and plans?

How often will you make posts on your social media accounts?

What will you share on your social media accounts?

How will you measure success?

Manage Your Online Reputation

Parents, especially mothers of young children, are talking about preschools and childcare centers. It's what they do and it's inevitable that the conversation will take place online too. This is a good thing. If these people are discussing your program offline then you can't listen to the feedback and you don't get to join the conversation. It's a lot easier than you might think to monitor your reputation online. Here are two things you should do right now, if you haven't already. First, register with Google Places and ask your parents to review your business/school. Yes, you need to "show up on the map", but you also need to have some reviews! Next, create what's called a Google Alert. Visit google.com/alerts where you can put in your school's name and Google will alert you any time someone blogs, tweets, posts or otherwise mentions your program online. Put in every variation of your program's name, director's name or anything suggesting someone would be talking about your program. But don't stop there; and this is important. When someone says something about your program, RESPOND. Whether it's good or bad, say something. Tweet back or leave a comment. People will be more impressed with that than you might think. Setting up a Google Alert is an easy and efficient way to get started with monitoring your brand. Once you have an established social media plan and policy (to establish guidelines like who, on your team will reply to comments) you can do a simple search for "social media monitoring" and find various other tools that are specifically designed to help you take control of your online reputation.



By using saved searches and Google alerts, you can see brand or name mentions in posts even if people are not fans or followers.

Notes

What Google Alerts should you set up? List them below, then go create them.

List a few key points that your social media policy should cover. Who responds to posts? What should staff be encouraged to post with their personal profiles?

How can you use social media to further shape your reputation?

Empower Your Parents To Spread the Word

Engaged parents that talk about your program will always be the most important channel of marketing. Word of mouth is still the most effective marketing avenue for any business. Offering parents referral awards for having their friends come to your childcare center could be a great way to get your parents sharing. The more contact you have with your center's parents the more engaged they feel. So make sure you have an effective communication plan with your parents. They will start bragging about how awesome your communication efforts are and how much they feel in the loop. Set up volunteer opportunities, send out newsletters, text-message them, have events specifically for parents, and have parent-teacher conferences regularly. If you don't have a parent board then create one soon. This is a great way for parents to be involved in the decision-making process and it sends the message that you care about and respect your clients' opinions.



Happy parents are your best source of marketing. How do you encourage them to share?

Know Your Competition

Do you know who your competition is? Sure, you're aware of the centers in the area but which centers are your direct competitors and what are they up to? It's a good idea to monitor their progress. It's not necessary to worry about competition (after all, we're all in this together) but it's good to know what's new at other programs. This could just be something as simple as putting a monthly calendar appointment to visit their website or reach out to their director for a friendly conversation. The point is, when a parent goes online to find a program, Google will tell them which centers are closest and they'll want to know the difference between the 2-3 closest centers. How are you different? If you don't know that, do you know how much one new client is worth to your center, because that's how much that knowledge is worth. Create a Google Alert for your competitors and monitor what others are saying about them.

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How will you get your parents to refer your program to friends?

List your closest competitors.

How is your program different?

Make a Parent's First Experience a WOW Experience

When parents come to see your center, they must see a clean environment. Cleanliness is one of the main deciding factors for parents when choosing where to send their kids. Keep the front desk, common areas, and the hallways tidy. A little mess can speak volumes to parents. Parents also want to know that the teachers and staff truly care about the children there and want them to grow intellectually. You do not want parents to get the feel that this is a place where they just drop their kids off. Explain to your parents your mission statement and what you strive for in a childcare center; tell them how teachers discipline students and how you want their child to grow to their potential. Parents are usually anxious when bringing their child to a center for the first time. Giving tours of your center is a great way to ensure that parents see the full benefits of your center and provide that extra push to get them to enroll. Make sure to leave time for parents to ask questions and make comments; this shows how you value collaboration with parents.



Your website is often the first chance you get to make an impression on someone!

Keep it Simple

Simple is hard to achieve but it shouldn't be. Your messaging should be simple. Your website should be simple. The technology that you use should be simple. Your programs and lessons should be simple. Your logo should be simple. Your procedures should be simple. Your communications should be as short and sweet as possible. Keep emails short and get to the point fast. You can put friendly content towards the end of the message. Make sure everyone knows where to get the latest information, all the time. If something about your program feels complicated then it's likely worth your time to figure out how to make it simple. Implementing all these tips could look overwhelming at first. Take them one at a time and just get started. You'll make mistakes, but keep it simple.

Notes

List 2-3 things that will give prospective parents that WOW experience!

How will you keep it simple?



We sincerely hope that you found these tips helpful! Hopefully you've taken some notes along the way and you have some action items. The one thing that we ask is that you **share your goals & accomplishments with us** on our Facebook page. Come make a post at facebook.com/memberhub.

About Matt & MemberHub.com

MemberHub.com provides website and logo design services as well as secure web-based software for early childhood learning programs to improve communication with parents. Teachers and parents connect in secure online groups called Hubs. Announcements can be sent through email and text message and each hub has a calendar with scheduled reminders, whiteboards for signups, private photo albums, file storage, discussions and more. Learn more at <http://memberhub.com/schools>.

The MemberHub team also provides website design and development services to help programs implement the topics in this paper.

Matt Harrell is the CEO & Co-founder. Send him an email at matt.harrell@memberhub.com

About Kris & Child Care Marketing Solutions

Kris Murray is America's leading expert on child care business success. As President and Founder of Child Care Marketing Solutions, her mission is to help child care owners and directors become more successful and profitable through proven cutting-edge marketing techniques and a unique approach to running a child care business. Kris has over 23 years of experience helping companies grow and do "smarter" marketing, and has focused exclusively on early childhood businesses over the last 4 years. Kris is a new Redleaf Press author of the book "The Ultimate Child Care Marketing Guide". She is also the creator of "The Enrollment Boot Camp", "The Double Your Enrollment System & Marketing Toolkit" and "The Daycare Success System".

Kris is also a professional speaker and has contributed to various early childhood conferences on the topics of enrollment building, marketing, and management.

For more on Kris, visit <http://www.childcare-marketing.com> or email her anytime at kris@childcare-marketing.com.

Now, go do your
homework!

