

110 Marketing Tips for School-Age Care Providers

Messages

1. Be able to describe succinctly why your program is special.
2. Practice saying your sound bites, so you can pitch your program anytime, anywhere.
3. Examine your “competition”: What are other programs doing to capture parents’ attention? Now match it!
4. Create a communications calendar for the year, with marketing tasks each month.
5. Develop a strong, distinctive tagline about what you do.
6. Use your tagline on all materials.
7. Say your tagline when answering the phone.
8. Tailor your marketing messages for your various audiences (i.e., parents, funders, etc.).
9. Use exciting, active words to market to kids (fun, action adventure, friends, cool)
10. Appeal to parents’ interest in quality care with words like: enriching, caring, safe, academic, established, experienced, and professional.
11. With all messages, remember the KISS rule: Keep it simple, sweetie.
12. Ask your kids to help craft messages to their peers.
13. Understand how your program benefits each of your target audiences.

Messengers

14. Be sure everyone on your staff can explain your program’s unique mission.
15. Have staff spread the word about your program to people in their neighborhood, church, or community.
16. Train your board to be “marketers.”
17. Have your board role play scenarios using your marketing messages.
18. Make board members pledge to discuss your organization with 20 new people.
19. Ask parents to tell others about your program.

Newsletters

20. Publicize positive aspects of your program in school, church, or community newsletters.
21. Create your own newsletter tailored to parents’ interests.
22. Write your newsletter in a friendly, down-to-earth tone.
23. Attach a cover letter each time you send the newsletter.
24. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
25. Use photos from your program in the newsletter. (Make sure you have a media release on file.)
26. Use pictures drawn by children in your program for newsletter art.
27. Interview families for newsletter articles.
28. Have a standard format for your newsletter so you always know how much space you have to fill.
29. Market your organization in your newsletter: Include “ads” about you.
30. Pepper your newsletter with tips and articles that are helpful to parents.

Public Relations

31. When press attention is on afterschool issues, write a letter to the editor or contribute your own op-ed.
32. Have a photo release form on record for kids in your program.
33. Call or fax your local newspaper’s “community calendar” to post news of upcoming events.
34. Invite reporters and photographers to special events at your site.
35. Learn the names of the education reporters and editors at your local newspaper.
36. Keep a press directory in an Excel or other database file for easy blast faxing, emailing, or mail merging.
37. Train staff on procedures for when a reporter calls.
38. Write 1-page press releases with the date and contact info clearly labeled.
39. Put a headline on your press release and the words “FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE” across the top.

40. Tell who, what, where, when, and why in your release .
41. Prepare a “pitch” so you can call reporters to follow up on a press release, telling them in 10 seconds why your story is newsworthy.

Web & Email

42. Have a website with all the information parents really need to know right on the homepage.
43. Select a website with a simple content management system such as WordPress so it is easy to update.
44. Include separate pages on your website for contact information, calendars of events, fee information, etc.
45. Put photos of your program on your website and in your brochures.
46. Include photos that reflect what you’re about: quality programs, diversity of programs and people, ages of kids, etc.
47. Do not use photos or clip art from the internet unless you have purchased them or have written permission to use them.
48. Update your website regularly.
49. Consider creating an online database for easy updating.
50. Start an online newsletter or listserv so parents can get regular email updates about your program and events.
51. Use “Yahoo Groups” or a similar service so parents can have a chat room to discuss your program with others.
52. Email a welcome note to new families.

Brochures

53. In brochures, use testimonials from families who have used and love your program.
54. Follow a “grid” design to ensure your brochure is symmetrical and appealing.

55. Learn to use PageMaker so you can design your own brochure and newsletters.
56. Consider two-color printing instead of 4-color to save \$\$.
57. Print brochures in bulk to save money (enough to last you 3 years).
58. Keep your brochure text tight: provide only what people need to know.
59. Use bullet points, bold type, and italics to draw attention.
60. Use short paragraphs and even one-word sentences to draw the eye.

Recruiting parents

61. Create a postage-paid return postcard so prospective families can request more information on you for free.
62. Recruit parents with incentives to “Act Now” (e.g., discounts, prizes, etc. for a limited time).
63. Post ads for your program on bulletin boards where parents go such as libraries, churches, community centers, and stores selling school supplies.
64. Ask local homeowners associations to inform new families about your program.
65. Send a letter home with kids the first week of school to tell parents about your program.
66. Partner with local businesses: Give a special rate for kids of workers at these companies.
67. Have an open house.
68. Host events (Halloween carnivals, Back to School, Day of the Child, etc.) to introduce the community to your program.
69. Remember to continue marketing to the parents you have, as well as the new ones you want to attract.
70. Give out or sell T-shirts with your program name and logo.
71. Give tote bags, drink cozies, paperweights, etc. with your name and logo as prizes for new parents.

The Personal Touch

72. Recognize families who have been with your program for a long time for their loyalty: give a special gift or card.

73. Have annual awards for kids and invite parents to attend.
74. Try to mention at least 5 children or families by name in your newsletter as a method of recognition.
75. Call families who are new to your program and ask if they have any questions.
76. Whenever possible, address letters to people by name (i.e., *not* “Dear Parent”).
77. People read the P.S. Include one in every letter you write (handwritten, if possible).
78. Get your parents involved! Involved families are more likely to spread the word.
79. Send thank you notes when parents volunteer or do something nice.
80. Conduct “new family welcome” sessions.
81. Survey parents to find out what they want to know more about, what they see as valuable, and what they hope to change in your program.
82. Make it a practice to greet parents at pick-up time
83. Be sure staff engages with families every day.
84. Host potlucks, family nights, and parent appreciation days.

Communications Planning

85. Create a communications plan, with the “SPIN” method: **S**tudy, **P**lan, **I**mplement, and **N**otice.
86. **S**tudy: Gather information about your target audiences.
87. Distribute a mail-in survey and offer a prize to the first 50 respondents.
88. “Google” your research.
89. Assess your agency’s “SWOT”: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.
90. Conduct a focus group over brunch.
91. Look at grades or attendance records to measure how your program affects children. (Brag on the results.)
92. **P**lan: Use the data you’ve gathered to inform your communications strategies
93. Did you learn parents are looking for homework help? Then tout your tutoring talents in your ads!

94. Did you learn families wish for more sports programs? Show kids playing soccer in your brochure!
95. Did you learn kids are going to your competitor? Top it and offer something kids will enjoy even more!
96. Have immediate and long-term marketing goals: with 1-month, 6-month, 1-year, and 3-year benchmarks.
97. Implement: Ensure you have the resources to be the type of program families, kids, and funders want and need.
98. Budget for outreach and communications.
99. Hire staff who can help you build the program and spread the word.
100. Work with designers (print and web), photographers, consultants, etc. to achieve your goals.
101. Notice: Pay attention to what works and what doesn’t.
102. Ask parents when they sign up for your program how they heard about it.
103. Evaluate your marketing successes and failures and revisit your plan each year.

Social Media

104. Find out what social media your parents are using and be on it!
105. Encourage kids to share about the positive/fun experiences they are having in your program.
106. Create a YouTube page and post videos of activities.
107. Use a consolidator such as HootSuite to communicate on multiple social media channels at once.
108. Provide daily updates about what the kids did that day to help keep parents connected.
109. If your school or any partners are on social media, send them items to post about your programs.
110. Retweet helpful hints and tips that would benefit your audience(s).

Source:
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www.calsac.org

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