



Creating a Marketing Strategy

It is important to understand the necessity of implementing an effective marketing strategy. It enables the childcare business to have a short, medium and long term planned approach, to identify effective networking and promote a professional image. This supports the decision making for allocating appropriate budgets.

The marketing strategy should be based upon the core marketing aims and objectives of the provision. It is essential to identify who the target audience is and which types of marketing methods are most suitable for this audience.

Marketing Recommendations:

1. Create a written marketing strategy

This should include all the marketing techniques to be undertaken, and be linked to cost, timescales, and responsibility for delivery. A good strategy will include short (within 3 months), medium (within 3 to 6 months) & long term actions (6 to 12 months).

You should ensure your strategy follows SMART objectives:

- S – Specific
- M – Measurable
- A – Achievable
- R – Realistic
- T – Timely

A Marketing Strategy should include:

- **What is going to be done** - decide on what marketing techniques you are going to use and what types of literature needs to be produced eg: produce posters / flyers, plan leaflet drops, attend local events
- **When and how often** - plan where marketing literature will be displayed and how often it will need to be refreshed. Consider prime times for marketing eg: promoting 2, 3 & 4 year old funding prior to start of new terms
- **What resources are required** - this includes budgets, planning purchasing activity materials for fayres etc. and staff time to carry out the tasks
- **Who is responsible to make it happen** - allocating specific tasks will not only ensure everyone is clear on responsibilities but could also support staff development
- **What costs will be involved** - budgets should be realistic for the marketing techniques required to support the business needs. It is important to remember that word of mouth is

Information can be made available in other formats such as Braille or Audio Tape on request. If you know someone who may need this service, please contact a member of staff for more information or if you need any other help or advice.



often the best form of marketing and more costly methods are not always the most successful

- **Who is the target audience** – consider the audience for your marketing eg; increase occupancy for babies, funded children etc.
- **How marketing will be monitored** - it is important to monitor the effectiveness of marketing. This can be done using a simple tracking sheet

A template marketing strategy can be found at the end of this factsheet.

2. Set a marketing budget

The marketing budget should be included as part of your annual budget to ensure finances are allocated to support the strategy. This budget will be allocated and revised through monitoring the effectiveness of marketing techniques.

3. Unique Selling Point (USP)

It may help to consider the unique selling point of your business. How are you different / how do you stand out from other childcare providers? What do you offer that others don't? This can be used as a focus for your marketing strategy.

4. Identify your business image

This could be in the form of a business logo or colours which need to be used consistently across all aspects of your business eg signage, marketing materials, uniforms, paperwork / invoices / policies etc. When deciding on a logo ensure it reflects the image the childcare business wants to portray. Research suggests that simple designs are the most effective, using a maximum of 3 colours.

Give consideration to the age groups you are aiming the advertising at, for example: Will an older child (7+years) want to come to a childcare provider represented by a rattle/ baby / child's pram? Consider the impression you will give if using images of a doll or children playing football – this could portray the service is more male or female orientated. The use of non-stereotypical images will demonstrate the childcare provision welcomes a diverse range of children, of all ages and abilities; both genders and from multi-cultural backgrounds.

5. Remember the importance of the first contact

A key objective of marketing is achieving the 'follow-up' contact, for example a leaflet that leads to a telephone enquiry, the open-day that leads to a registration. Your marketing has done its job in these cases and it is then up to the staff to deliver good customer service and portray the quality and benefits of the childcare provision at this time. All contact with potential customers should be positive and professional.

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6. When you have secured a visit to the setting with a potential customer ensure you take the opportunity to sell your service by:

- Having a planned approach for the visit including: staff awareness; who will meet and greet / take on a tour of the premises / discuss general information and procedures etc
- Ensuring staff are all aware of the childcare provisions strengths and unique selling point
- Ensuring staff are welcoming, display a positive attitude and they are aware of how any interaction between other staff or with children can be perceived by potential customers
- Building trust with the parents / carers and children
- Building up a picture of how the child would spend their day at the childcare provision
- Planning a visit to the premises, try not to arrange it at busy times eg: lunch time or drop off / pick up times

7. Monitor effectiveness

Ensure that all of the marketing elements are analysed to support future planning of an effective marketing strategy. This could include collecting information about who takes promotional material away from events, who makes enquiries about the childcare service and where they heard about your childcare, who comes for a visit, and who registers their child. Monitoring the ways that people hear about your service will outline the effectiveness of each method. This will also allow you to calculate the cost implication for each method. This will inform the marketing strategy for the future.

Marketing techniques for consideration:

- Signage and visible advertising on the building
- Strong and consistent use of business image / logo / colours
- Staff uniforms
- Open days / themed events
- Networking in the community (schools, family hubs, community groups etc.)
- Attend local events (community events, family hub events, school events eg parents evenings etc.)
- Newspaper advertising, local newsletters and community publications etc.
- The grapevine: word of mouth and recommendations
- Referrals: other providers, schools, and businesses could all recommend your service
- Posters and cards on notice boards in the local community
- Leaflets and mail shots
- Range of literature eg: brochure, prospectus, posters, fliers
- PR activity: inviting press and local dignitaries (local councillors, MP etc.) to openings and events
- Free editorial in local press
- Register with: phone books, directories, Families Information Service, range of child / family orientated websites eg Netmums, etc.
- Targeted marketing e.g. leaflets sent out via schools, health visitors

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- Discounts for siblings / full week attending
- Promotions eg: free session if an introduction turns into a booking
- Sponsorship eg: local sports team
- Information on vehicles eg: sticker with logo and contact details
- Company website
- Social media: facebook, twitter etc.

This list is not exhaustive and should be used as a starting point for your strategy.

Template Marketing Strategy

<u>Overall aim of marketing:</u>					
Method	Target Audience	Preparation Date	Market Date	Who is Responsible	Cost
Eg: Leaflets printed x 350	Funded children: 2, 3 & 4 year olds	June	July / August	Deputy Manager / Childminder Assistant Need to include breakdown of specific tasks involved eg: ❖ Obtain 3 quotes ❖ Order leaflets ❖ Collect leaflets from printers	Maximum £50
					Total Cost: £
<u>Monitoring</u> – How effective has the marketing been?					

For further support, information or guidance contact:

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