

# **You Don't Have To Catch A Leprechaun To Find Gold!**



**Low Cost Marketing With Golden Results**

**Presented**

**By**

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## **“When You Fail to Plan You Are Planning To Fail”**

A marketing plan is an important part of your business program. Marketing allows you to control your business. You decide what services or parts of services you offer will keep your child care full and add to your revenue. Those needs will change from time to time and your marketing plan will change along with it. Marketing is also tax deductible.

Marketing does not have to be expensive, fancy, or overly time consuming but it must be done with regularity and careful thought about the message and the cost. You are all very creative. Use those juices!

When selecting marketing media, look for the medium that services your customer population. Ask parents what radio station they listen to, what newspaper they read and what direct mail advertising they typically open. Check out the costs and returns on each before you make a decision. Do not get locked into a long term advertising contract until you understand your cash flow.

Parents, current and potential, are your customers. They pay your bills. Think about that audience. Use adult language that is clear and concise. Stay positive and NEVER run down another provider. Have a current parent and an uninterested third party review your marketing material before you put it out there.

Marketing should be specific to the group. Before you try to sell them your provider services you should ask yourself “Why is this important to parents?” After you have answered that question, tell parents what you do and how you do it. Provide potential customers with a list of educational/developmental activities that you typically provide.

Use pictures, as they indeed are worth a thousand words. Create a brochure/folder for parents that have pictures of the inside and outside of your home/center. Put children and the items they use in a couple of the pictures. (Remember you need permission!) Keep the pictures uncluttered and a viewable size. Highlight what you are most proud of and what you believe parents are most interested in. Use parent testimonials. Parents are your best and cheapest marketing source.

What is it about your business that sets you apart from the others? If you offer a specialized or unique service or activity, you should tell the parents not only what it is, but why you do it. What is the educational and social value of that activity? Do you have access to specialized activities that others do not have?

Market to those that can afford your services. Understand that you may have to turn someone down because they can't afford it. In that case, refer them to Child Care Resource and Referral.

## **“When You Fail to Plan You Are Planning To Fail” Continued**

Market to create a favorable first impression and a favorable lasting impression. Marketing is visual. During an interview, point out child sized tables and chairs, tidy activity area, clean highchairs, cribs, bathroom, and kitchen. First impressions are critical.

Send some photos, art/craft projects, refrigerator art, etc. home with the children. Grandparents, relatives, neighbors, friends, business associates see all of that, and provide you with **free** word-of-mouth advertising.

Regularly survey (short and sweet) your customers. Can be written, a call, or face-to-face. Ask new parents about their first impression. When you interview a potential customer get their name and number and ask if you may call them for a follow-up. If they have selected a different provider, politely ask them why (NOT WHO) they selected someone else. Don't be offended. Thank them. Use the information they give you to make your program better. Use a written script so you stay on task. Don't wing it!

Use marketing to explain (if you have done your homework, you should never have to justify) rate increases. What are you going to offer that warrants an increase? Remember to emphasize the educational/social/developmental benefits of your new/additional services or activities.

Embrace the technology that is available. You may want to create a website that applies to your business. Clean websites (no pop-ups and no ads) are a great marketing tool.





## MARKETING YOUR FAMILY CHILD CARE SERVICES

**The BEST advertising is free word-of-mouth information** about you and your program. When you conduct your child care business in a professional manner and you provide **high quality care** for children, the word will quickly spread. However, to get started you need to do some advertising. Below are some advertising marketing methods that can help you attract parents who need child care services.

- **Classified Advertisements:** These can be placed in local newsletters and newspapers and Penny Savers.
- **Flyers and Brochures:** These can be distributed at real estate offices (realtors can distribute to clients who may be moving into your residential area and might have a need for childcare), stores, libraries, temples, colleges and churches, well-baby clinics, recreation centers, personnel offices (human resources) of large companies, local businesses, Laundromats, and beauty salons. Use pictures from the computer and internet. Create a name and a logo for your business.
- **Walk the Neighborhood:** Introduce yourself to families that you see have children and leave a flyer. Tell everyone you know that you are providing childcare. Remember to visit area playgrounds.
- **Business Cards:** Have cards made or make them yourself and keep them with you are all times. These can be distributed at public meetings, social events and dining out establishments. Don't forget to give them to the cashier when you check out at the grocery store, cleaners and drugstore, etc. **Be creative!**
- **Contact Area Elementary Schools:** Let them know you are a child care provider in the area and let them know if you have openings ask if you can leave a flyer or cards for parents.
- **Join the PTA:** If you have children in school, get to know your administrators in your child's school. Leave information for parents who ask about child care.

### **Marketing Methods Continued:**

- **A Magnetic Sign:** Consider a sign for your car, it can highlight your child care business. Shop around for the best price.
- **Referral Discounts:** Give clients a discount for referrals that is redeemable for 3-6 months or more.
- **Child Care Associations:** Providers are encouraged to join their local Family Child Care Association, it offers a great networking relationship among providers. Providers in general are usually helpful to one another. Check with your local Resource and Referral Center (R&R), for names and phone numbers of the local presidents.
- **Make Balloons:** You can have balloons made and also stickers and when you mail a bill you can advertise by mail (depending on where the mail is going)
- **Local Health Fairs:** If your town has a local health fair, get involved and advertise there.
- **Yellow Pages:** Consider placing an ad in the yellow pages. Consider combining with another provider to cut the cost.
- **Home/Business Well Kept: Maintain** the outside of your home/business as well as the inside in order to attract parents.

Consider these ideas. Some will work for you, and remember as a small business, **marketing is an important key element** – both with the parents who are already a part of your program and with those who could be in the future.



## Marketing to a New Generation of Child Care Buyers

As enrollment prospects read your ads and brochures, visit your web site, and talk to you on the telephone or during a center visit, each one sees and hears differently. Their perception, the impression they form, and their urgency to act on that impression, vary according to a number of buying influencers. One of the most powerful to be studied recently is generational diversity. It influences how your prospects see their world, and more importantly, how and from whom they buy early care and education services.

Today's primary target market for early care and education services is generally somewhere between the ages of 25 and 40. They fall into a generational group called Generation X-ers. A closer look at X-ers reveals why old marketing approaches successful with their predecessor group, the Baby Boomers, are no longer as effective, and what changes you need to make to appeal to the majority of today's early care and education buyers.

Because most X-ers grew up with uncertainty, such as the recession and layoffs and double-digit interest and inflation, they tend to be less trusting of what they hear anywhere, including what you tell them during an enrollment interview. They are resourceful and well-educated, so they will often do more comparative shopping in their search for early care and education. To someone unfamiliar with their general style, they may appear to be skeptical of your ads, more inquisitive during a center visit, or less loyal as customers. Because X-ers tend to plan and save until they can buy the best quality they can afford, they take the time to investigate, compare, and discuss their findings with others; and they expect delivery of the quality they purchase.

So how do you adapt your marketing efforts to attract the growing group of X-ers whose younger children can fill your school? Here are a few ideas to get you started.

- Use testimonials - The third party endorsement of testimonials and good publicity help assure wary X-ers.
- Cut to the benefits on bullets - Bullets make your message specific for the inquisitive X-ers. The bullets need to suggest a serious, yet fun approach to early care and education to capture the X-ers' attention.
- Think high tech - X-ers grew up using computers and pagers for communication. Make your web site a good marketing tool. They may investigate you on the Internet long before they call, visit, or read your marketing materials.

Generational marketing is a new way of thinking about how to become more effective at marketing your center and building enrollment. It's another way of thinking in the prospect's perspective. When you do that, you have a better chance of turning more of your prospects into enrollments.

## **Marketing Materials**

1. Business Cards, Letterhead, Return Envelopes & Labels with your name & consistent logo/graphic
2. Business Card Magnets
3. Car Magnets including name of business & phone number
4. Flyers with tear off section for name & phone number
5. Brochures
6. Business Sign
7. T-shirts for children and provider to wear: business name, phone number, registration # & logo/graphic
8. Bank Checks with business name, phone number & logo/graphic
9. Welcome Mat: WELCOME Mrs. Jones' CHILDCARE
10. Incentive Coupons: (example: \$25 off third week of care for your infant)
11. Raffle off gift or offer discounts to parents who bring in referrals
12. Keepsakes: (example: photo frame key chain – “Ms. Smith Does Care” pictured with children)
13. Door Hangers
14. Portfolio (certificates, daily schedule, child care philosophy, pictures of children involved with activities, etc.)

### **Information to include in your Marketing Materials:**

- General location
- Phone number
- Slogan (“Where learning is fun!”)
- Logo/Graphic
- Program name
- Provider’s Registration Number (Maryland State Law)
- 3-5 Benefits of your program



## WHAT TO INCLUDE ON YOUR MARKETING FLYER



### The Basics

- **Your logo and business name**
- **Your phone number – always answer your phone in a professional manner and/ or utilize an answering machine with a message that would impress potential (and current) clients.**
- **Your location – give a school district, familiar landmark, or nearby major employer**
- **Include the ages of the children that you care for**
- **Indicate if you are full-time, part-time, both, or drop in care or wrap around care.**
- **List your hours any special hours or services like weekend or 24-hour service. Consider being flexible.**
- **Give your credentials such as “Licensed by the State of Virginia, number of year’s experience, CEU’s or degree in the field of early childhood.**

### The Selling Points

- **Look at your setting – What are the best features that make it ideal as a child care setting?**
- **Describe your philosophy and approach to developmental learning-use a few key words to phrases to do this.**
- **Use testimonials from other satisfied clients! Use in your flyer.**

### Key Phrases

- ◆ **Warm and loving home environment**
- ◆ **Individual Attention**
- ◆ **Wide Range of Toys and Play Activities**
- ◆ **Mature and Experienced**
- ◆ **Developmentally Appropriate Experiences for Children**
- ◆ **All Ages Welcome!**