

Let's Discuss - *Marketing in FDC and In Home Care*

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Practical suggestions that will help you to achieve QA Principles 1.3; 1.4; 1.5 and 6.5

Marketing begins and ends with your customers. In Family Day Care (FDC) and In Home Care (IHC) these are your families.



- ◆ The role of marketing is to attract and keep customers.
- ◆ Without customers you do not have a business.
- ◆ If you can attract and keep customers profitably your business will remain healthy.
- ◆ The most profitable businesses are those that set out to build long term relationships with their customers.
- ◆ Marketing is finding out what your customers want and then delivering it to them at a cost that ensures your business's viability.

- ◆ You must identify who your potential customers are, attract them to your business, convince them to buy from you rather than your competitor, and build a strong relationship with them.
- ◆ Marketing should be seen as an investment and not an expense.
- ◆ You must develop a plan and commit to it—ad-hoc strategies don't provide consistent results.
- ◆ Be patient—it may take a few weeks to see the benefits.
- ◆ Your marketing efforts must be maintained in good times as well as bad.

Developing your USP

(Unique Selling Proposition)

- ◆ Ask yourself, why should families choose my service rather than another one?
- ◆ What makes you uniquely different from other child care options?
- ◆ What do you offer that is distinctive and appealing to parents—look for the hidden benefits that you possess.
- ◆ Ask parents what they value most about your service.
- ◆ Ask them about their frustrations or irritations when dealing with the child care industry generally.
- ◆ When you have a list of parents' values and concerns consider how you could respond in a way that would set you apart from your competitors.
- ◆ Make sure you are able to deliver on your promises.
- ◆ Remember you can't be everything to everybody.

Marketing Principles

Test and measure all your marketing activities. check which strategies are working and eliminate those that are not performing

Your customer's perception is your reality. you therefore need to know what people think about your service; don't make assumptions that parents know as much as you do about child care and your service in particular; turn your customers into advocates by delivering more than they expect

Differentiate your business from your competitor. what benefit do you offer families that your competitors do not?

Learn all you can about your customers and their needs. the only way to find out what parents really want is to ask them. never assume you know

Use a range of strategies to market your service. and see which ones bring success

Take action. adopt a can-do attitude. Plan your strategies. Expect that you may fail at first, but find out why it didn't work and adapt and try again. Never give up.

Always listen to customer feedback

Factors for success

- ◆ Smile—look happy
- ◆ Listen and show respect
- ◆ Be enthusiastic—get excited about your service
- ◆ Be professional in your approach to your customers
- ◆ Value your existing customers
- ◆ Treat every parent as if they are your 'only' parent
- ◆ Be genuine
- ◆ Follow-up to ensure parents are happy
- ◆ Treat every parent the same way you would like to be treated
- ◆ Anticipate and respond to parents' needs
- ◆ Call parents by name
- ◆ Keep them informed of what you are doing
- ◆ Use the resources of the Scheme to assist you
- ◆ Join in Scheme initiated marketing strategies
- ◆ Provide benefits
- ◆ Keep your promises
- ◆ Don't over promise but over deliver

Every time someone tells you they are impressed with your service, write down a testimonial. Then send it back to them and ask for their approval to use it.

MARKETING STRATEGIES

- ◆ Have a handbook for parents that tells them all about your service
- ◆ Word-of-mouth—help parents talk about your service by keeping them informed about the benefits you provide—try printing out a short newsheet
- ◆ Develop a brochure or flyer and distribute to your current customers; local surgeries; child health clinics; schools; libraries; community centres; shops; businesses; and any other places families meet in your locality
- ◆ Discuss forthcoming marketing opportunities with the Scheme and join in community events
- ◆ Develop a letterhead for your business—ensure it includes your full contact details

Key points of difference in FDC and IHC

- ◆ Small groups—individual attention
- ◆ Home based learning environment
- ◆ One consistent carer
- ◆ Affordability (FDC)
- ◆ Flexibility in hours of care
- ◆ Family focused
- ◆ Licensed premises (FDC)
- ◆ Nationally accredited (FDC)
- ◆ Licensed carer (FDC)
- ◆ Convenient and accessible
- ◆ Scheme support ensures safe, secure environment, and quality care maintained
- ◆ Less stress for children in the comfort of their own or their carer's home
- ◆ Siblings cared for together
- ◆ Live-in care in rural/remote or families in crisis (IHC)
- ◆ Improved safety for children on rural and remote properties (IHC)
- ◆ Flexible care for families working shift work or non-standard hours
- ◆ Access to care for families that do not have access to other forms of child care
- ◆ Long term child focused care for children with high needs that allows parents to work, study or participate in community life
- ◆ Support to parents on parenting issues

Getting Started

- ◆ Get together with other carers and Co-ordination Unit personnel to identify the unique features of FDC and In Home Care.
- ◆ After identifying these general features, think about your own service and it's special benefits.
- ◆ Send out a small survey to parents asking them to provide feedback on what they like most and least about your service.
- ◆ Develop a Unique Selling Proposition (USP) for your service.
- ◆ Use your USP in all your advertisements and publicity material about the service.
- ◆ Work with the scheme to identify who your target markets are and how you can reach these people i.e. where do they go to find information about child care?
- ◆ List all of the ideas you have gathered and decide which methods you will try first. Begin by trialling cost free or low cost strategies, as if these are successful, this will save you money.
- ◆ Set a target that you are seeking to achieve as a result of your marketing e.g. to fill a full time placement within 3 months.
- ◆ Develop a Marketing Plan based on your list of ideas. Ensure you have at least one marketing strategy each month so that you are constantly reminding your target markets and current customers about the services you offer.
- ◆ Keep a record of each new contact, enrolment or increased business from your current customers that has been in direct response to one of your strategies.
- ◆ Evaluate which strategies are providing the best results. Change or cease to use strategies that are not successful.
- ◆ Review your targets and revise them or set new targets when they have been achieved.

The image you present is important:

- ◆ Do you look professional and present an organised and knowledgeable image to your customers?
- ◆ In FDC, do visitors want to step inside your service—is the first impression friendly, welcoming, clean and organised?
- ◆ In IHC, when you enter a customer's home, are you enthusiastic about meeting the children and ready with some ideas?
- ◆ Do you deal with telephone enquiries in a professional way?
- ◆ Do you have a brochure that explains the benefits of your service?

**MAKE THE
INVISIBLE
VISIBLE.**

You must educate parents about what makes your service special. Tell them about the benefits you offer and all the little things you do to make your service more enjoyable. You cannot bore your target market with too much information. The only people you'll bore are those not in the market for child care.