



# Developing a Marketing Plan for Your Child Care Center

Many child care directors think that marketing is just advertising. They assume that if they are doing advertising, they know all about marketing. Marketing, however, is much more than advertising. Marketing is about strategically positioning the child care center in the marketplace.

Marketing is part science and part art. Two child care centers located in the same geographic area may have very different marketing strategies. In fact, a center owner or director wants her business to be different to create a “unique market niche.”

The purpose of creating a unique market niche is to make the child care center stand apart from the competition. Customers will view the center as offering more perceived added value than competitors and they prefer to purchase child care where they get more value.

Often that perceived added value may only exist in the mind of the customer. It can be a real difference in quality child care or it can be just the feeling the customer has that the way the center presents itself and provides service is different and better.

A marketing plan is a written document that details the actions needed to achieve one or more objectives. When it is part of the overall business plan, it is one of the most important sections and the one in which you should spend the most time and energy. You can use this outline to start drafting your child care center’s marketing plan.

## MARKETING PLAN OUTLINE

### 1. Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is written last and can include the following key items:

- *Purpose of the marketing plan*
- *Brief description of the business – mission statement, services offered, target market*
- *Keys to success (how you will know when/if the plan is successful)*
- *Brief summary of marketing budget*

### 2. Program Mission and Identity

- *What is your program’s unique market niche? What makes your services special or unique?*

There are several exercises you can do to help you determine your unique market niche. You can do a competitive analysis to learn all you can about your competitors and a SWOT analysis. These are described in more detail in section 5 below.

You can also use our tool “[Promoting the Benefits of Your Child Care Program](#)” to help you figure out the true benefits of your program. Many child care providers can easily list the features of their programs – the hours the program is open, the ages of children served, the fact that they are licensed. However, this does not give much information to parents trying to figure out the best program for their children. Parents want to know how a program will meet their needs and those of their children.

- *What is your child care program’s vision/mission statement?*

Now that you have good information about your unique market niche, you can write your program’s vision/mission statement. You should keep the statement to one to three sentences.

[www.FirstChildrensFinance.org](http://www.FirstChildrensFinance.org)

1-866-562-6801

### 3. Objectives of the Marketing Plan (Keys to Success)

- *How will you know your plan is successful?*

Some examples of statements of objectives include:

“We will reach and maintain enrollment at 90% of licensed capacity in six months.”

“By the end of our fiscal year, private pay parents will represent at least 30% of our enrollment.”

“In seven months, we will have a waiting list of at least half the size of our licensed capacity.”

### 4. Market Analysis

- *What are the demographics of families in your target area?*

Your state will probably have U.S. Census Bureau demographic information on its official website.

Depending upon its size, your county or city may also have U.S. Census Bureau information broken out by neighborhood on its website. You may also check the website at the U.S. Census Bureau at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov) or call your local library's reference desk for help.

- *What are trends in the child care industry, especially in your local region or area?*

Your local or state child care resource and referral agency will probably be the best source of this information. You can also check on the internet to see if your state has completed an Economic Impact of Child Care.

### 5. Competitive Analysis

- *Who are your main competitors?*

Why is it important to know your competitors? Seeing what others are doing (both good and bad) can help you really figure out **your vision** for your child care business. Once you know your vision, it will be much easier to tell parents what **you** have to offer that's special, that's unique from all other providers. You can use our tool "[Competitive Analysis: Who Are My Toughest Competitors?](#)" to help you with this.

- *What are your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?*

You can do a SWOT Analysis of your center to help you position yourself ahead of competitors. SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses help you focus internally on how your center is doing. Threats and opportunities are external and focus on conditions in the real world. The SWOT analysis challenges you to see beyond the walls of your center to determine what opportunities are out there and how to capitalize on your strengths.

### 6. Target Customers/Audience

- *Who are your target customers – age, income, lifestyle, education level, and so on?*

As you write this section, keep in mind the following questions: How many target customers are there? Where are they located? What are they currently using for child care? Can you offer them anything they are not getting now? How can you persuade them to bring their children to your center? Exactly what services do you offer?

### 7. Marketing Strategies

- *Is your **image** consistent – from your business name and logo to the appearance of your center?*
- *Can you tell prospective parents the top two to three **benefits** of your program?*
- *Are your **prices** consistent with your benefits?*

You don't have to be the cheapest program in your area to be competitive, but you do have to show how your program adds value or benefits your parents.

- *What are your key messages?*

### 8. Action Plan and Budget



# Marketing Plan of

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Center Name)

## 1. Executive Summary

- Purpose of the marketing plan
- Brief description of the business – mission statement, services offered, target market \_\_\_\_\_
- Keys to success (how you will know when/if the plan is successful)
- Brief summary of marketing budget

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 2. Program Mission and Identity

- What is your program's unique market niche? What makes your services special or unique?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- What is your child care program's vision/mission statement?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## 3. Objectives of the Marketing Plan (Keys to Success)

- How will you know your plan is successful?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**4. Market Analysis**

- *What are the demographics of families in your target area?*

---

---

---

---

---

- *What are trends in the child care industry, especially in your local region or area?*

---

---

---

---

---

**5. Competitive Analysis**

- *Who are your main competitors?*

---

---

---

---

---

- *What are your strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?*

---

---

---

---

---

**6. Target Customers/Audience**

- *Who are your target customers – age, income, lifestyle, education level, and so on?*

---

---

---

---

---

**7. Marketing Strategies**

- *Is your **image** consistent – from your business name and logo to the appearance of your center?*
- *Can you tell prospective parents the top two to three **benefits** of your program?*
- *Are your **prices** consistent with your benefits?*
- *What are your key messages?*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Marketing Action Plan and Budget

### 8. Action Plan and Budget

The sample Action Plan and Budget may give you ideas to develop your own Marketing Action Plan. Remember although every action takes time, not every action costs money. Use the blank template on the back to start your own Action Plan.

<b>Action Step</b>	<b>Person Responsible</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Budget</b>
<i>Review recorded greeting to make sure that it is up-to-date and provides the information we want to convey to parents. Update the recorded message if necessary.</i>	<i>Assistant Director</i>	<i>1/31/08</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
<i>Prepare a list of our top two to three benefits. Tape it up near every phone and on the staff bulletin board.</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	<i>1/31/08</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
<i>Develop parent intake forms that track parent contact information, ages of children, and how they learned about our center. Keep a stack near every phone along with a pen or pencil.</i>	<i>Assistant Director</i>	<i>1/31/08</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
<i>Provide training to all new staff and regular in-service for existing staff about our policies for telephone greetings, knowing our program benefits, and handling parent inquiries. Get feedback from staff about what's working and what ways we can improve our interactions with perspective parents.</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	<i>1/31/08 and ongoing</i>	<i>\$0.00</i>
<i>Hire a graphic artist to develop a new, more appropriate logo for our center and design new flyers and brochures.</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	<i>3/31/08</i>	<i>\$750.00</i>
<i>Print 250 Brochures and 500 Flyers.</i>	<i>Assistant Director &amp; Kinko's</i>	<i>5/31/08</i>	<i>\$550.00</i>
<i>Update all policy and enrollment information to include new logo.</i>	<i>Assistance Director</i>	<i>5/31/08</i>	<i>\$100.00</i>
<i>Place a ¼ page ad in the "Shopper's Gazette" in May, August, and September. (\$248 for each ad)</i>	<i>Assistant Director</i>	<i>4/15, 7/15, 8/15/08</i>	<i>\$744.00</i>
<i>Distribute flyer to all parents letting them know that we will offer them \$150 off their weekly fee if they refer a child to us that stays at least two months. (5 referrals for the year)</i>	<i>Head Teachers</i>	<i>1/31/08</i>	<i>\$750.00</i>
<i>Hold a Children's book exchange at our center. Invite current and past parents and everyone from the neighborhood to participate. Print up 500 flyers (\$50) and hire three teens to distribute them in the neighborhood (\$100). Send press release to local newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. Have people who attend register to win a \$25 gift certificate at the local book store to start a mailing list of friends and prospects.</i>	<i>All staff</i>	<i>11/15/08</i>	<i>\$175.00</i>
<i>Send a letter to past parents offering them a \$50 finder's fee for any child they refer to us that stays at least two months. (3 referrals for the year)</i>	<i>Assistant Director</i>	<i>10/15/08</i>	<i>\$150.00</i>
<i>Research cost and time involved in setting up our own website.</i>	<i>Executive Director</i>	<i>12/15/08</i>	
<b>Total Budget</b>			<b>\$3,219.00</b>



## Marketing Action Plan and Budget

### 8. Action Plan and Budget

The sample Action Plan and Budget on the other side may give you ideas to develop your own Marketing Action Plan. Remember although every action takes time, not every action costs money. Use this blank template to start your own Action Plan.

Action Step	Person Responsible	Due Date	Budget
<b>Total Budget</b>			