
*How can I get my staff
involved in marketing the center?*

Making Your Staff Your Marketing Partners

by Julie A. Wassom

A question often asked by directors working to market their centers using the team approach is, "How can I get my staff involved in marketing the center?"

A recent survey reported that staff is second only to the center director as a reason why parents select one child care center over another. And even more important, the relationship established between parent, child, and staff is the primary reason parents choose to stay at a center. That means the impression your staff makes on visiting prospects and existing customers of your center has a critical impact on your ability to secure and retain enrollment.

The best way to make your staff into marketing assistants is to let them know the value they have in communicating the professional image of your center. Your staff will know how valuable they are to you as a marketing partner if you provide them with the following:

- marketing tools;
- incentives;
- performance expectations; and
- rewards for a marketing job well done.

Marketing tools may be books or tapes on how to market the professional image you want to communicate to your prospects and customers. A very cost effective marketing tool to provide to your staff is business cards. Some directors purchase business cards with the center name, address, and telephone, with a blank line on the bottom so that each staff member can write in her own name. Name tags with the staff member's name and position makes staff feel important and are a good identifier for parents.

A good **marketing incentive** for staff might be to launch a referral program that goes like this: Each staff member is given business cards and encouraged to give them out to anyone in the community who they think may be a good prospect for your center. The staff tells those prospects to be sure to give the business card to you, the director, when they visit the school. Your staff member knows that once you have received five business cards with her name on it from inquiring prospects, she will receive a special reward. These rewards might be lunch with you, a gift certificate, money, or some other prize that is of value to the staff member. Several center directors have found this an

effective program for encouraging staff to recruit other staff members, as well as prospective parents.

Make sure your staff has clearly stated **performance expectations** about their role in helping you market the center. You may want to decide together just what these expectations are. One of the most important things a staff member can do is to acknowledge each prospect who visits their classroom with a smile and brief greeting. Other expectations might be contributions to your center's newsletter, daily or weekly communications to parents posted on the parent board or sent home on "What Happened Today" notes, involvement in community organizations as your center's representative, etc.

There is no substitute for a good attitude and pleasant demeanor. Even though a staff member may not agree with the old adage, "the customer is always right," she must be able to empathize with the customer's or prospect's perspective. That means always being pleasant, friendly, and helpful on the telephone or in person.

As you **reward** staff members for good performance as your marketing

partners, the other staff members will take notice. If you openly communicate the importance of the staff in marketing your center, and provide the necessary training resources to help them to feel comfortable and confident in marketing, you will be amazed at how valuable they become to you as marketing partners.

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