

64 Terrific Child Care Marketing Ideas

By Jennifer Carsen, Childcare of Choice



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You're a kid person, not a marketing person – but you know you need to get the word out about your center. You just have no clue where to start.

Good news – in this report, I've provided you with 64 effective, fun-to-implement marketing ideas (some of them won't cost you a penny, and many others are low-cost).

I invite you to read through, find the ones that grab you, and go ahead and get marketing! Remember: Don't get hung up on perfection. Just get started.

- 1. Get yourself on the (online) map.** Go to www.moz.com/local and plug in the name and address of your center. And then go ahead and get started filling in those missing listings. Not sure where to start? [Google My Business](http://www.google.com/business) is key; do that one first.
- 2. Co-sponsor events and activities with other community groups.** Talk to your local Rotary Club, Boys & Girls' Clubs, and so forth. Maybe you can provide child care, distribute brochures, serve as a drop-off point for donations, or offer meeting space.
- 3. Hop on the wagon.** The local Welcome Wagon, that is, if your area has one – see if you can be included in the information they distribute to new residents.
- 4. Register with your local Child Care Aware office.** Go to <http://childcareaware.org/> and follow the instructions to find your local agency.
- 5. Talk to your local elementary school(s).** Some schools maintain a list of local child care facilities – if your area schools do, ask to be included on it. And, even if they don't, staying in touch with the front desk staff is an excellent way to stay top of mind when someone asks them about local child care options!
- 6. Talk to competing programs in your area.** Both to pick their brains – you'd be surprised at how helpful people in this industry can be, even the competitors – and also to see if they'd be willing to refer folks to your program if they're consistently full and have to turn people away. Be effusive in your thanks for any help or insights they provide.



- 7. Develop your “elevator speech.”** This is a short, thought-out, memorable response to the question, “What do you do?” Get yours ready so that you’re prepared whenever anyone asks. “I’m the owner of SmartKids, *the* place for kindergarten readiness in Pittsburgh, PA!” is much better than, “Um, I run a daycare.”
- 8. Get a nice-looking brochure put together.** Even in this web-first era, you need a professional-looking trifold brochure. Invest in professional graphic design, barter with a savvy parent, or see if a local school will be willing to work with you on the project (and don’t skimp on the paper quality!). [Vistaprint](#) also does professional-looking printing for minimal cost.
- 9. Order lots of business cards.** Get them for you and everyone on your staff – distribute them freely, and give a substantial referral bonus to staff when a new prospect brings in one of their cards and subsequently enrolls.
- 10. Start a blog.** A blog helps establish you as *the* local child care authority, and it also keeps your website content fresh – which helps with your search engine rankings. For more details, check out my free report, [How To Create A Must-Read Blog for Your Child Care Center: 11 Steps To Success.](#)
- 11. Figure out your USP.** Your Unique Selling Proposition, that is – what makes you stand out from every other center in your area. [This post](#) explains the concept further and gives you some ideas to start with.
- 12. Do a holiday gift-wrapping fundraiser.**
- 13. Break a record.** Or set out to, anyway – fun for the kids at your center and a tremendous opportunity for local press coverage.
- 14. Get to know your local maternity ward(s).** Newborns quickly grow into older babies, toddlers, and preschoolers who need care. See if you can get included in the information packets and/or gift baskets the hospital distributes to new parents.
- 15. Talk to local midwives, doulas, and childbirth educators.** Same reasoning as above.
- 16. Host a toy or clothing swap.**



17. Actively manage your waitlist. Don't write off a family just because you didn't have an opening when they initially wanted it – stay in touch. Maybe they're unhappy with their current care situation, or maybe they've had another child. Software like [Daycare Waitlist](#) can make this process easier. Also, check out my post on the topic of waitlist management [here](#).

18. Start a newsletter. Print and/or online. If you provide useful, non-salesy info to parents, you will quickly establish yourself as a useful community resource and get your name out there.

19. Offer to write an article or column for your local newspaper. If there's a local publication focusing specifically on parents or families, that's even better.

20. Publicize your testimonials. On your website, in your brochure, in your ads, and everywhere else you can think of. Quotes from real-life happy parents are, all by themselves, some of the most effective marketing there is.

21. Write a special report on something of interest to local parents. And offer it for free, in exchange for sign-ups to your email list.

22. Get good with press releases. Here's a [post](#) that explains more, along with a sample press release for you to refer to.

23. Sign up with online directories. Here are a few for you to consider; all are free as of this writing:

- [Angie's List](#)
- [InsiderPages](#)
- [Superpages](#)
- [Manta](#)
- [Citysearch](#)
- [YellowPages](#)
- [Foursquare](#)
- [eLocal](#)
- [GreatSchools](#)



- [Yelp](#)
- [CareLuLu](#)
- [SavvySource](#)
- [Care.com](#)
- [Hotfrog](#)
- [DaycareCentersSite](#)
- [DaycareBear](#)
- [MasterMOZ](#)
- [Craigslist](#)

24. Share the goods. The baked goods, that is. You'll be amazed at how much goodwill (and positive word-of-mouth) you generate by dropping off regular goodie deliveries to other local businesses that serve kids and their families – children's hairdressers, toy stores, museums, etc. Don't forget to include some brochures and business cards, too!

25. Develop mutually beneficial referral relationships within your community. [More details here.](#)

26. Host a movie night at your center. Inside or even outside if the weather's nice; project the movie against a sheet or the side of your building. And don't forget the popcorn!

27. Ask happy parents to leave glowing reviews on online sites for you. Because prospective parents are generally "online-first" types, this will make a great impression before they ever set foot inside your center.

28. Address any negative online reviews directly and non-defensively. Head-in-the-sand thinking is not your friend here. Be proactive about managing your online presence and reviews.

29. Get involved in your local PTA or PTO.

30. Keep your Facebook page updated. You want to be posting at least once every business day. Photos of the happy kids at your center are fantastic; just be sure to get signed authorizations from parents first.



31. Set up a free craft table at your local farmer's market.

32. Include your center's full contact information and a compelling tagline in your email signature. Something like: "Where kids learn in Spanish and English every day!"

33. Sponsor parent workshops. Contact your local library, schools, and houses of worship to see if they'd be willing to have you present there, and/or host the workshops at your center on weekends or in the evening.

34. Logo it up. Provide goodie bags with logo items to touring families, as well as center-branded coffee mugs and pens for current and prospective parents. A great way to get your name out there in your community.

35. Make some flyers. And post them (with permission, of course) wherever flyers are gathered – your local supermarket, the breakfast place down the street, etc.

36. Experiment with pay-per-click (PPC) ads. These are great because you can limit them geographically, and you pay (as the name implies) *only* when someone clicks on your ad. Do a little studying up first, however, so you don't waste your money – [Perry Marshall](#) has some great PPC resources on his site.

37. Jazz up your center's voicemail message. It should be current, warm and friendly, and mention your website URL to encourage people to go there for more info even when you're closed.

38. Consider snail mail. You can buy highly targeted mailing lists from both the [U.S. Postal Service](#) and list brokers like [InfoUSA](#). Postcard mailings are a relatively inexpensive and highly effective way to reach the specific families you want to enroll at your program.

39. Invest in SEO. SEO (Search Engine Optimization) refers to how findable your website is when families in your area are searching online for child care. If you don't show up in their search results, you may as well not exist – so it can be worth it to talk to someone who knows how to make sure you get found online on a consistent basis.



40. Start a preferred employer program. If there's a large company or hospital nearby that's rich with prospects for your program, you can offer a special rate for those employees – talk to the HR rep to get things rolling. Use any connections you may have with existing parents who work there, and/or refer to Tip #24 about the wonders of baked goods to get your foot in the door.

41. Offer a rock-solid guarantee. Nothing reassures people like a strong guarantee – and very few, if any, people will ever take you up on it. So don't be shy about offering something bold (and name it big, too), e.g. "Our 110% Happy Kid Guarantee: If you and your child aren't completely delighted with our program after your first month, we'll refund every penny you've paid – guaranteed."

42. Start a parent referral program. Encourage your satisfied parents to refer you to their friends – and reward them in a compelling way (something along the lines of a \$250-\$300 dinner or experience) for doing so. The better your program is, the more people will talk it up, and the more referrals you'll get.

43. Partner with area Realtors. You're looking for buyers' agents who work with a lot of families; partner with them to offer free child care during house showings and closings. Guess who those families new to your area are going to call when they need ongoing child care?

44. Congratulate new parents. Most local newspapers publish local birth announcements – send those happy families a congratulatory card, along with an offer to come visit your center sometime.

45. Speak in front of local mom (and mom-to-be) groups.

46. Get included in local coupon mailers. Mailings that are specifically targeted to families with young kids are ideal.

47. Try out Facebook advertising. As with PPC ads (Tip #36), you can target these narrowly for great results. And don't forget to include a photo – people respond particularly well to images of happy kids and happy babies.

48. Update the sign outside your building. You can also get a banner made up for a special limited-time promotion.



49. Team up with a local family/child photographer. You can each offer exclusive deals for the other's clients, or just agree to promote one another.

50. Bring in the experts. Invite local doctors, police officers, firefighters, or other influential community members to come in and speak to kids and their parents.

51. Post some videos on YouTube. Whether it's kids playing at your center (again, get parental permission first) or you speaking on a topic of interest to parents, people find online videos irresistible. Posting them on your website helps with your search engine rankings, too, in no small part because YouTube is owned by Google.

52. Get more Facebook likes. Encourage current and past parents, as well as friends and family, to "like" your page. The more likes you have, the more marketing reach you have.

53. Join local community groups that have nothing to do with child care. The outside perspective is incredibly useful, as are the connections you make.

54. "Swipe and Deploy." The next time you see an effective ad, tear it out or save it on your computer – then figure out a way to make that same marketing technique applicable to your center.

55. Create a slideshow. And post it on [SlideShare](#), which is a high-quality backlink to your site.

56. Stay in touch with your alumni students and their families. They can be a source of great word-of-mouth for you – but need a bit more reminding than the families currently at your center (who, after all, see you almost every day).

57. Place ads in community publications and bulletins.

58. Comment on other people's blogs. Again, this creates backlinks back to your site – and also helps establish you as an authority on child care in your area, if you pick your blogs carefully. Think about the websites that parents of young children in your area are spending time on.

59. Contribute to online forums. Many communities have active online forums for local moms/parents. This is a great place to join the conversation and showcase your knowledge – don't try any hard selling here, though!



60. Engage with local businesses on Facebook. “Like” their pages and encourage them to like yours, too. Share and comment on their posts, as appropriate.

61. Get logo T-shirts for your kids to wear on field trips. Instant (and adorable) walking billboards! Makes it easier to keep track of everybody when you’re out and about, too – especially if you pick a bright color, or tie-dye the shirts as a class project.

62. Leverage a current trend. Partner with a local dance studio for an evening of *Dancing With The Preschool Stars*, for example – events like this are both fun and newsworthy.

63. Update and flesh out your LinkedIn profile. Parents will be preshopping your center online. The more professional you come across, the more impressed they’ll be – with both you and your center.

64. Hand out referral cards to current parents and staff. Provide a small bonus for referrals that lead to tours and a larger bonus for referrals that lead to enrollments.

I hope you’ve found these tips useful! Please do stay tuned at the website for more ideas and strategies to implement at your child care center. I’d love to hear your ideas and feedback, too.

All best,

Jen Carsen

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About Jennifer Carsen

Jennifer Carsen is a mom, child care marketing coach, writer, and recovering employment law attorney.

At Childcare of Choice, we help child care centers with their communications – both internal (current parents and staff) and external (prospective parents and staff). This can include:

- Helping you get found online through well-targeted **social media** efforts
- Polishing up the writing on your **website**, and in your ads
- Implementing **legally compliant best practices** that keep your center productive and lawsuit-resistant
- Writing **blogs and newsletters** for parents and/or staff
- Drawing up both a **staff handbook** and a **parent handbook**
- Working with you to figure out what makes your center **truly unique and special**, and helping you spread the word
- Enhancing your relationships with current parents and staff to **increase loyalty and retention**
- Developing a **strong referral program** that will consistently bring you all the kiddos you can handle
- Providing **hiring and interviewing strategies** to help you find the very best teachers for your center
- **Troubleshooting common – yet costly – problems** that can decrease enrollments and increase undesirable staff turnover

If you're ready to take your child care center to the next level, I invite you to call (603-340-1854) or email (jennifer@childcareofchoice.com). Let's talk about what you need, and I'll help you reach – and retain – more of the great families and teachers that keep your center thriving.

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