



**Marketing
during
Covid-19!**

Coronavirus has impacted on every aspect of life and there are many adaptations that we now have to make. This is something that you all know and have experienced I am sure. With the future still a little unknown we need to try to plan ahead where possible to ensure sustainability in the childcare market.

Marketing is one aspect that we will need to consider how we manage carefully in this new situation. Below are some things to consider and some ideas as to how you may wish to do this.

Online visibility - At the moment with people being at home more, spending limited time outdoors, online visibility is crucial for all businesses. Ensuring this fundamental is in place will not only help draw in future enquiries but will also help maintain strong relationships and communications with existing customers and retaining client satisfaction.

Whether this be done through social media pages such as Facebook, Instagram or via a website, content should be planned properly. All communications need to be consistent and at this time more than ever, empathetic. Communications via social media pages is a way of spreading messages to your parents/prospective parents in a fast/efficient and often free way, however being aware that everyone is at different stages of the change curve during this pandemic and therefore catering messages (as far as possible) to all audiences is key.

When planning content FEAST – Fun, Educational, Advert, Story, Testimonial, is a great acronym to remember, doing it this way helps to keep ‘viewers’ engaged, as you are not constantly selling to prospective parents but are also keeping current parents informed/providing inspiration. Some people have been using social media during this time to share stories/live sessions/play ideas as well as sharing key messages such as visual guides as to the changes made to make settings safe. Obviously safeguarding needs to be carefully considered when planning and sharing content.

Video can be a great tool – it can help avoid any chance of misinterpretation when passing on messages, it helps your personality and emotion come across. People invest in people, so speaking to your families via video can be a great selling tool. If you have a good/passionate manager who is able to put their message across clearly and concisely this could be extremely useful.

Communications

Word of mouth – Word of mouth was one of the Childcare sectors biggest influencers. During this period people have relied much heavier on digital methods for their communications. So think about how you can you share your parents' thoughts on your setting in a more digital format? Could you share any parents' testimonials electronically? (Please note you would need their permission to share) or could you ask them to leave you a review on Facebook or www.daynursery.co.uk . At present it may also be helpful to share the experiences of a parent/child/family who have returned to your setting since coronavirus, this may help reassure any parents who may feel apprehensive.

Some may feel it is appropriate to amplify their parents' views and may consider paid advertisement methods, such as google/Facebook ads. This again can be a very effective tool, however it is always worth weighing up the cost of investment Vs your likely return on this.

Show rounds – Show rounds can play a crucial part in which settings parents choose. However due to current restrictions they may not be possible in the format we were previously accustomed to. So we need to think about how they can be conducted differently.

If there is capacity perhaps you could show parents round on an evening or a weekend, however this would obviously be showing parents 'an empty' setting. Alternatively you could consider a virtual show round. This can be done either on a generic basis by that I mean filmed in advance and the same video shared with each family, or it could be tailored to each family and their needs individually. If considering generic tours I would consider all of the typical questions you receive from parents and try to cover them throughout your tour, I would also advise if you have separate rooms for each age group filming each room/ experience separately and then you can send the appropriate one needed for that family. For instance if I had a preschool aged child I may not be interested in the baby room, however if I had a baby I may want to see the whole setting. This would make videos shorter and more concise. Virtual tours can be filmed in advance and software used to add voices at a later date so you don't need to worry about getting it all right in one go.

Follow up on previous enquiries – Understandably for some providers this has not been at the forefront of their minds, but if you had any enquiries with parents prior to the start of this pandemic follow up on them. If parents are still wary of using childcare at the moment ask if they want to be added to your social media channels/ mailing list whilst they think about it. Providing this is ok with your existing parents, (something that should be included in your social media policy) this will allow them to get a feel for what happens in your provision.

Newsletters – a great way of keeping existing parents up to date, which can also again show prospective parents what happens in your setting. Again it is important to make these engaging, whilst being concise. With everything that is going on we are being 'bombarded' with information more than ever, therefore it is worthwhile thinking about how regular you need to send these out, it is also worth considering what the purpose of this is. Parents will only read it if they find it of use. This is something to bear in mind.

Flexibility – Covid 19 has had an impact on many peoples working ways, with lots of people being placed on furlough or sadly made redundant. This is something that needs to be considered. It may be worth sending your parents a questionnaire to see what levels of childcare they require, if it is something you can accommodate it may be that more flexibility in your offer would really support your parents at the moment. Please bear in mind any changes made need to be balanced with sustainability, only make changes when it is actually viable to do so.

Make things easy! – Whether you are asking parents to fill in a survey, to read guidance, to book sessions for the children. Whatever you are doing make it as smooth and as easy a journey for your parents. The simpler you make it the more likely they are to do whatever you are asking!

Be contactable – This may sound really obvious but make sure you are contactable, this doesn't need to be 24/7, nor should it be, but make sure your parents know how to contact you, and when you will get back to them. For example if contact is made via email have an automated email set up to say when you will respond, you can also set up automated responses with social media. For telephone calls that go to voice mail, make sure your voicemail message tells parents when you will get back to the. The same should apply for during the summer holidays as this may be a period when parents try to arrange care for September.