
Tim Vandergriend

Child Care Marketing Specialist

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I've had the privilege of working as marketing manager at a few of the largest child care providers in Australia. During this time I've come to appreciate a number of challenges with marketing a diverse portfolio of centres and services, and what is needed to increase enrolments.

Notable challenges include;

- Every centre is unique and therefore cross-portfolio mass communication strategies rarely work.
- Educators are not skilled in sales and marketing and have very little knowledge about what to do when tasked with the goal of 'increasing occupancy'.
- Childcare centres generally consider marketing to mean advertising. But in the education sector, there's an inverse correlation between advertising and attracting new enrolments. The more you advertise and promote, the less attractive you are to potential families.
- The child care sector is becoming increasingly crowded. More and more outside capital is coming into the sector, and going into creating brand new centres. More choice = more scrutiny. Simply hanging out the "Enrol Now" sign is no longer sufficient to turn on the enquiries tap.

So, how should we approach marketing for child care?

- Blanket advertisement campaigns are not the answer. Most enrolments come from word-of-mouth - not just through parents, but also through community partners. This means leveraging the connections and networks of the educators at the centre. The role of marketing is to provide a coaching role to the centre and support them with the right tools and programmes.
- We should embrace uniqueness - uncover strengths of each centre, and speak to the needs of their communities. This means tailored communication programs at each centre. The role of centralised marketing therefore is to liaise across all centres, support local initiatives with high impact tools, learn best practice, and share successful initiatives back into the organisation
- In competitive markets, where families have a choice, differentiation is the key. This is not about articulating USPs, but creating a meaningful value proposition that speaks to the needs of contemporary families. In a market where highly capitalised providers are pitching on premium facilities, there is for example, an opportunity to position on innovative (NQF aligned) early learning programs and experiences that require a lower investment, but generate more attention.
- Instead of trying to gain more visibility through advertising, a better return on investment is to focus on lead nurturing - providing better family engagement along the enrolment journey. Design persuasive touch-points that support your value proposition, and manage brand perception at every stage of the enrolment process. This applies to marketing collateral such as websites and brochures, as much as to staging the centre to maximise impact at show throughs.
- Finally, no matter how much we want it, there is no one solution or 'silver bullet' to solve the occupancy challenge. Effective child care marketing is about developing comprehensive and integrated marketing approach that touches all aspects of the customer experience (not just visibility). Through the use of data tracking and marketing analytics we can measure each stage of the funnel, assess the effectiveness of campaigns, and continually refine and adjust.

Contact Tim Vandergriend on 0414 295 400 or tim@vandergriend.com if you would like to know more about how to increase enrolments at your early childhood education service.

70+ Tools to Increase Occupancy at your Child Care Centre

Below is a list of tactics and initiatives that can be undertaken to drive enrolments at different stages of the sales process. [Contact me](#) to discuss the specifics of each and how they can be applied to your service.

Create Attraction	Local Visibility	Direct Marketing	Tour Conversion
Centre Value Proposition	Centre Signage & Banners	Lead capture systems	Dedicated reception and tour guide
Website Conversion Optimisation	Centre Brochure and collateral	Email Marketing system	Parent Meeting Space
Personalised Centre Photography	Shopping Centre Display	Lead Baiting Tactics	Childhood Education Philosophy
Extra / Co Curricular Programs	Community partnerships (eg Health)	Automated marketing - Drip / Trigger	Centre Styling & Room Presentation
Developing Events and Programs	Children Excursion Uniform	Follow up - Lost leads / customers	Enquiry Handling & Sales Training
Boosting Online Reviews	Corporate Partnerships	Telesales	Closing Tactics - Enrol / Waitlist
Press / Media	Child Care Rebate Consultancy	Direct emarketing - 3 rd Party Leads	Enquiry Pack (Brochure, Activities, Menu)
Local Newspaper - Editorial	Local Business Engagement Packs	Letterbox Drops	Post Enquiry / Tour Follow Up
Social Media - Educator Amplify	Digital Visibility	Advertising	Marketing Automation (Drip / Trigger)
Community Engagement	Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)	Street marketing	Post Tour Survey
Local Festivals / Events	Blogging and Article Publication	Print Advertising	Onboarding
Centre Hosted Events	"Mobile First"	CareForKids Advertising	Welcome Pack & Orientation Info
Community Excursions	Web + Facebook Events Publication	Facebook Advertising	Follow up call (inside sales)
Open Day (program information)	Facebook Optimisation	Google Display Advertising	Educator / Parent follow up Meeting
School Partnerships	Social Media Engagement	Remarketing (Facebook / Google)	Retention / Advocacy / Word of Mouth
Online Baby and Parenting Forums	CareForKids Optimisation	Enquiry Conversion (Tour Bookings)	Family Newsletters
Educator Led Initiatives	MyChild gov.au Optimisation	Phone Enquiry Capture Optimisation	Customer comms and branded collateral
Community Sales Drive	Google My Business Optimisation	Inside Sales Support and Follow Up	Ask a referral & Online Review Triggers
Refer a friend / family	Directory Listings (Sensis etc)	Live Chat	Parent Engagement Initiatives (meetings)
Local Community Networking	Google PPC	Conversion Rate Optimisation (CRO)	Customer satisfaction surveys



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I help child care providers increase occupancy through a number of marketing approaches;

- Mapping enrolment journeys
- Improving customer engagement
- Optimising sales funnel nudge points
- Understanding family needs
- Defining centre value propositions
- Developing innovation new services
- Designing great centre experiences

See how: www.vandergriend.com/go