

Have you got your Rose Coloured Glasses on?

Succeed continues their journey of articles on occupancy growth and marketing. This article “have you got your Rose Coloured Glasses on? In an extract from Succeed Consultancy training package “Are you 100%”. It is a reminder to look at your Centre from a parent’s perspective on a regular basis; see what parents are seeing. What is your Centre’s presentation saying about you?

As usual it is sound practical information for owner operators, investors and new buyers alike. You can contact Succeed Consultancy on the numbers provided below or visit the Succeed Consultancy website for more information at:

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Take a minute to sit back and look at your centre from a parent’s perspective? How do you think they perceive your centre? Will they recommend your centre to other families?

What about a new family that is looking for care in your area? What do you think their first impression will be of your centre? What will they say about you from the visit; will it be positive or negative?

These are all questions that are important for you and your staff to stop and think about?

Have you ever taken a paper and pen, walked around your centre and looked at the overall presentation?

Going to your Centre on a daily basis or on a regular basis creates complacency. You enter the Centre in a rush, you have a million and one things you need to do in a very short time. Before you know it, the Centre is looking tired and you are letting things slip that you never would in the past. That rubbish in the front garden, the weed at the entrance, that staff member hasn’t their full uniform on today...

Complacency is a natural progression when we are busy and going to the same environment on a regular basis, it’s something we need to be aware of and we need to ask ourselves regularly **do....**

I have my rose coloured glasses on?

How does your centre stack up to other centre’s in the community?

Believe it or not the first impression of your centre will last.

Did you know that it takes parents two minutes to decide if they are going to use your centre or not? So basically that means that by the time they have pulled up in their car, taken their child out and reached your front door they have unconsciously decided if they like your Centre or not?

They have decided before they even get in the door!

If there is nothing else that you get from reading this article, start looking at your centre differently.

Let's look at this and what to consider.

- Your car park: rubbish, dirt, weeds, bin placements, car park line markings.
- Gardens; dead plants, weeds, rubbish, mulch appearance, pipes, colour.
- Signage: State of it, cobwebs, relevance to your operation, position.
- Foyer: Signage, floors, walls, displays, plants, cobwebs.
- Office: organisation, presentation, dust, floors.
- Hallway presentation: marks on walls, presentation, skirting boards
- Rooms, floor, benches, notices, art displays, windows, room set-up
- Kitchen: tidiness, cleanliness, floors.
- Outdoor environment: Playground set-up, verandah state, cobwebs, equipment status, placement of staffing.
- Staff: Uniforms, dress codes, their practice, communication methods etc.

Are there areas that you feel your centre can improve on?



Did you know that 90% of your enrolments are word of mouth? A parent's first perception and impression of your centre is one that lasts a life time, but not only this, it is one that they pass on to other families, friends, colleagues and anyone else they talk to.

Therefore doesn't it make sense to have a well presented centre?

Here is a scenario to think about?

A new enquiry drives into your centre and the first thing that that notice is a sign at the front of the centre that is old and very hard to read; they continue to park their car. They get out of the car look around the car park and see that the garden beds have many overgrown weeds, shrubs and dead plants in it. What are the parent's thinking and what is running through their mind?

Deciding to continue into the centre they continue to walk to enter the front door and along the way that they pass and see bins to the right of the centre that are overflowing with rubbish and smell...unconsciously their minds start thinking "if this is how they look after the Centre, this is how they are going to look after my child". Are the parents going to decide to walk back to their car and not even come in or are they going to just give this a go and still walk in? Are you conveying the same message inside?

Really stop and think about it, stop and think how you felt when you ate or ordered at that dirty restaurant or café. How did you feel, remember those feelings. As those feelings are the same for parents that visit or enter dirty and uncared premises.

These are all questions and scenarios that owners, centre Directors and all staff need to think about and consider.

By having your centre well presented, and from start this means even the front of your centre you are going to be enticing parents to want to come in and see more.

When walking into rooms parents want to see organised mess; meaning children are having fun and demonstrating that they are engaging in play, not a room that is covered in mess and looks like it had not been cleaned for years.

Childcare is a competitive market and we all experience the childcare centre that has just opened up down the road, next door or even on the next street. When families are looking for childcare they will not just visit one centre, they will visit all of them in the area. The first things that they are going to look at are the centre's presentation, the cleanliness and how they feel about instinctively.

If there are marks on the walls, floors, doors, rubbish overflowing the bins, broken equipment, dead plants, no sand in the sand pit, a foyer that has dirty floors parents are going to turn away. They are going to have that inevitable question in their mind; if they can not look after this how will they look after my child? If there is no respect for the children's learning environment how will they respect my child? It is an unconscious way of thinking that you have the power to change.

How can you change this? Here are some useful strategies and tips.

- Get all your staff involved. You can not only change the minds of you as owners or your managers, you need to have all the other staff involved.
- Take a pen and paper and walk around the centre. Look at it from a parent's perspective and have yourself and all the staff write both positive and negative views of the centre and areas that can be improved on?
- Also get parents to complete this and have their ideas as well, as they are your customers and the ones that will enhance and extend your centre's positive word of mouth.
- Develop yourself a presentational audit where you list all areas in the centre and have different staff rate the areas and rate the centre in this. Also get parents involved in this.
- Have your staff clean and have their rooms set up by 3.00pm every day. As parents are picking up their children they still want clean and organised rooms.
- Have the Director complete a daily 3.00pm check where they will go around and audit the centre and check that this is clean and well presented. Ensure staff receive feedback and strategies for this.
- Visit other centres in the area to see how they present. Are their areas of their centre that stands out in the community that your centre can work on?
- Have external people come and visit and review your centre presentation.
- Have effective morning, bathroom, afternoon, outdoor etc cleaning checklists that state the expectations of this to the staff and ensures that this is being completed.

At the end of the day every centre's goal is one to reach and maintain 100% occupancy. Your centre's presentation will impact in achieving this goal, you need to have positive word of mouth in the community. Do not let your centre be the talk of the community for all the wrong reasons.

Remember to take you and your staff's Rose Coloured Glasses off regularly and look at the centre in the eyes of the parents. You will be amazed that attention to detail to the smallest aspects that you think parents do not look at will make a big change on the reputation of your centre in the community.

Let your centre be the best presented centre in the community that everyone is talking about! Small things go a long mile....

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We hope you enjoyed a few simple tips to maximise your occupancy in 2010. For more information on Succeed Consultancy and our 100% money back guarantee on all of our services please contact us on:

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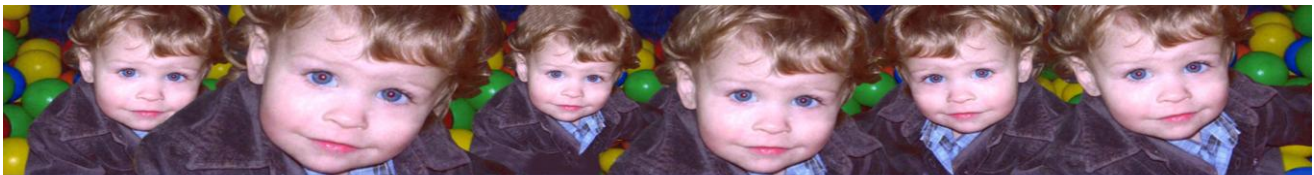
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