

KIDBIZ NEWSLETTER
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A Newsletter for Early Childhood & Child Care Professionals

Brought to you by:
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This month's article is in response to a reader's request – how can she successfully move her family child care business from one town to another? Even if you're not moving your business, or you own a center, not a family child care home, using the following strategies can help you hit the "restart" button on your current marketing!

*Hug a kid for me!
Patricia*

MOVING YOUR CHILD CARE BUSINESS

You've worked hard to establish a reputation in your home town, your enrollment is filled, the phone rings with little effort, and then you and your family make the decision to move. How do you start over in a new town? Does it mean starting all over? Do your benefits go back to the beginning to reflect being a new provider in town, or can they reflect your experience? What about your rates? What will determine if they go up or down? How can you begin marketing? How do you establish yourself as a new business, but an experienced provider all at the same time?

Moving your child care business can be both a blessing and a headache. There's the hope for a new home that has the type of rooms you always wanted to give you space for your business and for your family. There's the possibility of moving to an area with a higher tuition rate, or the possibility that your old rate is way out of reach anymore. There's the hope for wonderful families who match your

priorities and goals for the children, and the possibility that since your enrollment is at zero that you may have to take anyone who applies and won't get to find good fits. It's exciting to get a fresh start, but to make the most of it you've got some work to do.

The first thing to do is contact the Child Care Resource and Referral agency in your new town. You can find it easily on the NACRRA website, www.nacrra.org, by putting your new zip code in the Child Care Aware search box. Talk with their consultants about getting on their parent referral lists, what the range is for rates in this area, how many other providers are in the area, approximately how many children are in need of care in the area, and what the programs are like that are currently available. Find out if the other programs offer field trips, are accredited, what age ranges they take, if they offer preschool curriculum, etc. This helps you identify the niche you can fill in the market. It also will help you in determining your rate. Using the range from the R&R as a guide, do you offer a longer list of amenities than the average provider in town, or a shorter one? Family child care is often a "you get what you pay for" field, set your rate accordingly to be marketable. Don't just set an extreme low for your rate hoping to get filled up! If you run a high quality program you will need a higher rate to continue to support that level of quality and parents will be upset if you have large jumps in your rate in short amounts of time because it was not set at the appropriate level to begin with.

Ask if there is an area provider support group. Call and sign up for their next meeting. Get to know the other providers and the programs they have, tell them about you and what you will be doing. Ask if they can pass families your way if they are full, be sure to offer to do the same once your enrollment is full.

Next, you need to really think about the type of program you will offer. What is special about your program? Will you be NAFCC Accredited? Will you offer field trips, gymnastic classes, bible study, second languages, or other program amenities to set you apart? What is your mission statement? Your slogan? Do you have a logo? Identify what will make you unique – that's your hook, that's what you want to get out there in your marketing and advertising.

Now that you've identified your niche, get out there and share it with everyone in the community! Word of mouth is the number one best marketing tool for our field, and that means getting people to talk about you! The best way to get people talking about you – is to give them something to talk about! Get out there and talk about what you do, why you love it, how you are excited to become a provider in this community. Get to know the realtors, doctors, florists, grocers. And by all means, your first priority should be to: GET YOUR HAIR DONE! Why? Because a hair stylist is the best publicity manager you'll ever find. You give them great stories of all your fun years of teaching children in your old town and how you can't wait to get started in your new town and I guarantee that your phone will start ringing by the end of the week!

What do you talk about as you meet people in your new community? Here are some ideas:

-Talk about your terrific curriculum and some of the new things you're doing, talk about the great field trips you took with the kids recently, talk about earning a national accreditation, talk about a wonderful training you attended and how you can't wait to implement what you learned, talk about how much you love your job, and talk about how special it is to touch the life of a child. Make sure that by the time you're done, there is no doubt in their mind that your place is the best in town.

-In addition to your hairdresser, talk to other people around town: the grocer, the banker, the checker at each store, the mail carrier, the librarian, your doctor and nurses, your dentist, the local florist, baker, and pharmacist. Tell your waitress each time you dine out how much you love what you do. There is always a way to work it into a conversation! For every person you talk to who catches your passion, they will pass it on to three more. Before long, everyone in town will know about your commitment to quality and children and do everything they can to ensure their child has a spot.

-In addition to talking, sometimes just being seen can get others talking. Field trips with the children are great for marketing (not to mention terrific for getting hands-on experience into your curriculum!) As you begin to enroll children, just do your thing – take the children out in your community and show them the world around them. As you do, people will notice, so be sure to wear identifying t-shirts or have signs on your vehicle. Other ways to be seen and appreciated are to enter a float in a local parade, donate books to libraries and doctor offices with a sticker inside with your school logo, or donate to charities in your business name.

When I had been in business for about ten years, I moved away to a much smaller community. My first disappointment was in finding out the average rate was MUCH lower than what I had been charging in the larger town. Then I worried about losing the vacation and sick days I had finally built up for myself as benefits over the years. I gathered the information as I suggested above and made my plan.

What I had found out in my research was that there were only a handful of providers in town. None of them did field trips or were NAFCC Accredited, as I had planned to do. I also found out that none of them had a structured preschool curriculum with developmental assessments. These were my niches, what set me apart. I met some of the other providers and joined their support group. They were wonderful women, many with more years experience than I, but I quickly found that my program would be much more of a preschool environment than their programs. Since I offered more amenities, and I fully believed the quality of my care was exceptionally high, I decided to take a chance: I was going

to come to town to fill a much needed gap in the spectrum of what was offered, a high-quality, low enrollment, preschool environment, and that because what I would offer was of such high quality that it merited having the highest rate in town. I set my rate \$10 above the highest known rate in our county and prepared to defend it. My husband thought I was nuts. He begged me to low-ball my rate just so I could get filled. But I firmly believed I offered a very high quality program and that any family would be lucky if I chose them to enroll. So I held my ground. I made it clear in all my marketing and advertising that it would be ME who interviewed the parents (not the other way around) and that after the interviews were over, it would be ME who chose who would enroll. And I got my hair done. And my fingernails. And my toenails. (There were 3 salons in town after all!)

In the first week I had over 10 interviews. By week two I made my choices and I was full. I had used the idea that the more limited an item is, the more people want it. I marketed my enrollment slots as limited commodities that anyone would be very lucky if they could get one, and everyone wanted one.

Now, a word of caution here. You can't go out and tell everyone you're the best in town if you've got some work to do on your quality and your program. But even if you haven't perfected things, you can capitalize on your specialty. Perhaps you don't have a great curriculum, and you're not accredited, or maybe you're even brand new with no experience, but you plan to do field trips and no one else around does –that's your niche. That's what you market, that's what makes you a "limited commodity" in the eyes of the parents who are interested in that asset. Or perhaps you have a bi-lingual program. Or you can offer transportation, or take them to gymnastics, or bible school. Find out what your specialty is and use that to market your program. As for your rate, if you've ever heard me speak before you know that I'm a big proponent of ALL providers standing up and asking for a rate that TRULY supports the level of quality they provide. It's a personal choice what that amount will be, just remember that what you do is AMAZING and you are worth it!

I realize that as I write this we are in a crisis with the economy. Parents can't afford the higher rates and may be out bargain hunting. There's nothing wrong with considering a lower rate to become more marketable to a greater number of families. But consider this – how many families need care where you live? You can't provide care for all of them. For me, I needed eight. Just eight. I can find eight families who see the value in what I offer in just about any town. Now, since we are CAREgivers, we often want to be sure we can care for all children and families – regardless of income. Great! Do that. But do it by creating "scholarships" for your program, or finding resources for the parents, or creating a sliding scale for your fees. Don't do it by short changing yourself and what you do. It is your business; you get to make these choices. If you can afford it, provide care to all the families for free! I know I wish all the time I could do this (and I know of at least one provider in Wisconsin who does!) Or, shoot for the stars and set a rate so high you'll finally be able to afford that new puppet stand (I

also know a provider who has a rate FOUR TIMES higher than anyone else in her area, and she gets it!) But for most of us, it's about finding the place on that spectrum where our comfort level for what our income will be matches our comfort level for what the parents can afford. And that's usually the best way to make your decision about your rate.

Moving can always be scary, but it can also lead to so many great possibilities. Think of it as an opportunity to re-invent your business, its reputation, and your marketing strategies. Be high quality. Let others know you're the best. And the parents will not only come, they'll know you're worth every penny.

For more marketing ideas, read my chapter on Marketing & Interviews in *From Babysitter to Business Owner*, available at: www.patriciadischler.com.

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Instead of felt, back your story pieces with Velcro dots (the hook side). They will stick better to your flannel board.
- Color code baby items, giving each child their own color for bottles, pacifiers, chew toys, etc. It's easier than trying to find a place to write their name on small items and quicker to identify.
- Take advantage of spring to work on some math with the kids! Measure the height of the tulips/daffodils/hyacinths growing in your garden on a daily basis and create a chart to show the growth.

For more great tips, check out my booklet: "101 Tips & Tricks: Ideas to make your job easier, save you money and save you time in your child care business! On sale right now on the products page at: www.patriciadischler.com/books.htm.

If you have some great tips to share, send them to: contact@patriciadischler.com, putting "NEWSLETTER TIPS" in the subject line to be included in the next newsletter!

IN THE NEWS

To all family child care providers – I need your help! NAFCC is working on it's first book, called "Homeplaces" and I have agreed to do the chapter on environments. As you all know, it's a topic I am very passionate about. I firmly believe we should not be creating cookie-cutter environments that all look the same, but rather ones that reflect and support the personalities and interests of

*the adults and children in them. It's one of the wonderful things about family child care, we all bring a piece of ourselves and our goals for the children into our decisions for the environment we create – from providing a “home” environment that remains looking like a home and simply opens its doors to warmly invite children and families to become a part of our extended family, to turning our basements into preschool classrooms, and everything in-between! I need your stories! Please, write to me and tell me about your FCC environment, and why you chose to make it what it is. We will be using lots of these “vignettes” throughout the book. If yours is used, I will send you a free copy of the finished book. Send your comments to: pdischler@wildblue.net and put “Homeplaces Entry” in the subject line. Thanks so much for helping me and NAFCC with this exciting new project! **I am particularly interested in getting comments on NOT changing your home environment significantly, but why providers protect this home feel for the children they serve. Please write and tell me about why this is important to you!***

Join Wisconsin Family Child Care Association at the “Rumble in the Jungle!” Annual State Conference!

Fantastic speakers, 15 hours of continuing education hours, fun keynotes, and yes, I'll be there too! Come join the fun at the Kalahari Resort and Waterpark and bring the entire family! You've never seen anything like the Kalahari in the Wisconsin Dells – ENORMOUS inside waterpark (with warm water!), an indoor waterpark with ferris wheel and more, live animals like baby lions to have your family photo taken with, incredible restaurants and so much more! What a great way to spend Mother's Day weekend – I hope to see you there! May 6-8, 2010, for more info visit: www.wisconsinfamilychildcare.org.

INTRODUCING the Launch of My New Business: KIDBIZ Resources™!

I have been told by many of the CCR&Rs I've met that they use my book, *From Babysitter to Business Owner* as their “Bible” when training providers. So now, the same information they love from the book is put together in power point presentations, with lecture notes, participant handouts, an outline and a list of learner outcomes, to support these staff in the important work they do! I am very excited to share this information and through these staff, help even more providers raise their professionalism and increase their success with children and their businesses! In addition to the training guides, the website will offer articles you can use in your newsletters, books and other products to support your work, and for those looking for staff trainings, a list of my Train-the-Trainer courses. Basically, I created KIDBIZ Resources™ to help you train and inform the teachers and providers in your area by providing you and your staff with the keys to success! Check out the new website now! www.KIDBIZResources.com

NAFCC 2010 Conference is in Nashville, Tennessee!

The conference theme is "Creating Harmony: Tuning into children through partnerships and professionalism." Conference will be at the beautiful Renaissance Hotel right in the heart of Nashville. Preconference days are filled with in-depth, high level training for providers, trainers, and support staff. Conference days include dozens of workshops by quality presenters and lots of entertainment and networking! Once again, NAFCC will offer the popular payment plan option so you can fit this amazing opportunity for professional development into your schedule. I will be presenting two "Train-the-Trainer" half-day sessions during preconference: *From Babysitter to Business Owner* and *Teaching the Three C's*. Participants will receive FREE copies of the KIDBIZ Trainers Guides for each session (A value of \$185!). Visit www.nafcc.org for more information! And, I'll see you there!

Provider Appreciation Day 2010

NACCRRRA and NAFCC join together to help organizations and individuals celebrate Provider Appreciation Day! Visit the website for loads of ideas and products to help you make the most of this event: www.ProviderAppreciation.org.

THIS MONTH'S SALE ITEMS

April Sale Item: Because I Loved You: A Birthmother's View of Open Adoption – 25% Off!

Part my memoir, part resource guide for adoptive parents and birthmothers, this book shares my personal story of placing my son in an open adoption and the subsequent years of building a trustful and respectful relationship with his adoptive parents. The book has been endorsed by 5 national adoption agencies and is guaranteed to make you cry! But I promise, it has a happy ending and is filled with lessons for us all on respect and understanding and the good that it can bring to a child's life. April is my son's birthday, so I always have a sale on this book during the month to honor him. In addition, this year, for every book sold in April I will be donating a book to Catholic Charities so they can pass them out to the women who come to them and are struggling with their decision in an unplanned pregnancy.

Regular Price \$16.95 Sale Price \$12.71

May Sale Item: 101 Tips & Tricks

Filled with ideas to make your job easier, save you money and save you time in your child care business! Over 100 of the best tips I've heard in this business over the past 20 years from those who know. Ideas on homemade toys, working with parents, organizing at low cost and much more! Get yours and start saving money and time TODAY!

Regular Price: \$8.00 Sale Price: \$6.00

Order yours today at: www.patriciadischler.com or www.KIDBIZResources.com!

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 17, 2010

Half Day Training for Family Connections, Inc.
Cleveland, Wisconsin

*Creating Inspirational Child Care Environments &
Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy*

For more information contact: Family Connections,
www.familyconnectionscc.org, 920-457-1999

April 24, 2010

Half Day Training for 4C part of their Provider Appreciation Event
Malta, Illinois

Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

For more information contact: 4C, www.four-c.org, 815-758-8149.

May 5-8, 2010

Wisconsin Family Childcare Association Annual Conference
Kalahari Waterpark & Resort, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin
Creating a Professional Attitude & Image

Tips and Tricks

NAFCC Accreditation

Teaching the 3 Cs: Creativity, Curiosity & Courtesy

YoungStar – Wisconsin’s Quality Rating & Improvement System

For more information visit: www.wisconsinfamilychildcare.org

May 15, 2010

YWCA Provider Appreciation Event

Lisle, Illinois

Keynote: *Crazy for Kids*

For more information contact: YWCA, 630-790-3030

May 18, 2010

Merton Schools Writer’s Roundup

Author-in-Residence

Camp Whitcomb, Wisconsin

Presentations to classes Kindergarten through 8th Grade on writing and publishing.

For more information contact: Merton Intermediate School, 262-538-1130

If you are a member of a group planning a training event and would like to book one of my keynotes or workshops, visit the Lecture page on my website and contact me for availability. Visit www.patriciadischler.com/lecture.php.

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