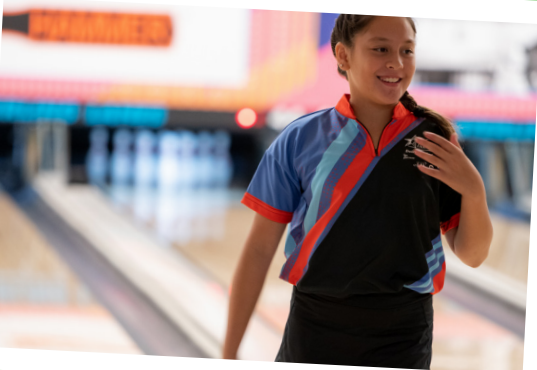




YOUTH

BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

A playbook for bowling centers, large or small, seeking to elevate their business and incorporate proven marketing strategies.





BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

Introductory

We know it is increasingly difficult to stay in the fast lane when it comes to marketing your business, but this is one area where you just can't slow down. As other youth sports continue to flourish and information becomes more accessible to kids and parents, we have to stay ahead of the curve. Today, consumers research the products and services they purchase more than ever before. We talk to bowling centers all the time, and the No. 1 question we receive is:

“That program sounds great, but how do I get more kids in my center?”

It is much more difficult now than it used to be. That is why a recruitment strategy is a **MUST HAVE** in today's market, especially for bowling. Working together has never been more important as our Youth Development team at the International Bowling Campus continues to deliver programs and information to assist centers with growing their youth programs. We believe these valuable tips will help your business, whether you are managing a six-lane or 60-lane center. We've developed this guide to have something for everyone.

Below are five strategy categories that will walk you through some of the different ways. This isn't everything, but it's a start. Hopefully, you'll find a few things you already are doing, or something to consider trying. We would encourage you to look at all options with an open mind, as most of these just require some time and effort with minimal financial investment on your end.

- a. Brand Strength
- b. Develop Relationships
- c. Low-cost Advertising
- d. Medium-cost Advertising
- e. Digital Marketing

Have a few ideas you want to share that will help bowling centers grow their youth business? Please feel free to contact Roger Noordhoek at Rnoordhoek@ibcyouth.com and we'll find the appropriate channels to share them.



BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

1 Brand Strength

Are you happy with the way you portray your brand? Has your logo been updated in the past 10 years? If the answer is NO, consider a re-brand strategy and incorporate some new life into your business.

“Your logo is the symbol for your company.”

Was your logo professionally created? Consider having a graphic designer modernize it. Make sure it tells your brand story throughout the image, and then place it on every consumer flyer you distribute to grow awareness for your business.

Creatively promote your brand, stand out in your community

- a. Dedicated Youth Director and/or volunteer(s), make sure to have your staff support their efforts
OUR RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL YOUTH PROGRAMS AROUND THE COUNTRY CAN BE DIRECTLY CORRELATED TO HAVING SOMEONE WHO SPECIFICALLY FOCUSES ON YOUTH. DON'T STOP THERE, EMPOWER THEM TO GO OUT AND RECRUIT NEW YOUTH BOWLERS WHO AREN'T CURRENTLY BOWLING AT YOUR CENTER.
- b. T-shirts can be a great way to promote your business by your loyal customers
I SPEND MY FREE TIME AT RED RIVER BOWL. COME UP WITH SOMETHING FUN AND PUT IT ON SHIRTS THAT YOU CAN DISTRIBUTE AND SELL TO YOUR CUSTOMERS. YOU'LL BE SURPRISED AS IT ALSO OFFERS SOME NICE INCREMENTAL BUSINESS, AS WELL. NOT TO MENTION THESE ARE WALKING BILLBOARDS AROUND TOWN.
- c. Flashy business cards with a free-game pass on the back that you can distribute everywhere
CHANGE THEM FREQUENTLY WITH DIFFERENT OFFERS WITHIN YOUR BUSINESS, AS IT MAKES SENSE.
- d. Hold regular staff meetings with the entire bowling center, use that time to talk openly
THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS TO DO THIS, BUT GIVING EVERY EMPLOYEE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BE INVOLVED WHILE INFORMING THEM OF ALL THE THINGS GOING ON IN THE CENTER WILL CREATE MORE INFORMED AND DEDICATED TEAM.
- e. Craft an elevator pitch for your business – a slogan, something that supports what you do that goes beyond your logo
CREATING A LIFETIME OF FUN WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY SINCE 1964. LAUGHS, MEMORIES, FOOD AND DRINK, WHERE COUPLES PLAY TOGETHER.
- f. Send hand-written thank you notes to new customers who come to your business
WE APPRECIATE THAT YOUR FAMILY CHOSE JOHNSON'S BOWLARAMA AS YOUR ENTERTAINMENT LOCATION LAST THURSDAY. PLEASE ENJOY 10% OFF YOUR MEAL NEXT TIME YOU DECIDE TO TRADE A NIGHT IN THE KITCHEN FOR SOME FUN AT YOUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME.
- g. Apply for local business awards of all kinds. When do you do the research, you'll see you qualify for numerous ones
PLACE THESE IN YOUR DOORWAYS, INCLUDE ON YOUR WEBSITE, AND SHOWCASE IN YOUR MARKETING MATERIALS AS IT PROVIDES A NICE STATEMENT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS AT THE EXPERIENCES THEY CAN EXPECT HERE.



BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

2 Develop Relationships

Are you an active business leader in your community? When was the last time you reached out to your neighbor small businesses to discuss strategies and ways you could help each other through partnerships? Join your Chamber of Commerce and start working with Civic, Lions, and Rotary type clubs. If you have not been active, consider these tips on ways to start, as it is never too late to cultivate a relationship.

“Participate, be present, and go network with your fellow businesses.”

You have a captive audience that walk through your doors each and every day, which has value. Remember though, so do other businesses, so find ways to trade goods and services.

Collaboration is ONE of the keys to success in businesses today

- a. Contact store managers from places such as Toys R’ Us, Target, Walmart and offer a discount on a corporate party for their employees. You might even get a league out of it
IN EXCHANGE, YOU’LL SET UP A TABLE AT THEIR BUSINESS FOR A WEEKEND TO PROMOTE BIRTHDAY PARTIES, LEAGUES, BLASTOFFS, FAMILY NIGHTS, AND MORE.
- b. Reach out to other little league sports and offer your facilities for their season-ending awards party. While you are at it, consider sponsoring a team
THIS IS A GREAT WAY TO REACH PARENTS WHO MAY WANT NUMEROUS OPTIONS FOR THEIR KIDS TO TRY OTHER SPORTS BY PLACING BOWLING AT THE END OF A DIFFERENT ACTIVITY AND PROVIDING A FUN EXPERIENCE. IF ANYTHING, YOU’LL BE TOP OF MIND AS AN OPTION FOR A FAMILY NIGHT OR A YOUTH/ADULT LEAGUE.
- c. Find other pay-to-play sporting venues in your area and team up on a dual event for kids
RUN A KIDS GOLF OR MINI-GOLF AND BOWLING EVENT. MAYBE INDOOR RACING AND BOWLING CHALLENGE. REALLY, THE OPTIONS ARE ENDLESS IF YOU ARE WILLING TO TRY SOMETHING DIFFERENT.
- d. Utilize the Bowlopolis Little Bowler Magazine by donating them at your local doctor and dentist offices along with our Bowlopolis Crayon 4-pack
STAMP YOUR BUSINESS ADDRESS AND INFORMATION INSIDE THE MAGAZINE. YOU ALSO COULD PROVIDE AN ACRYLIC STAND TO KEEP THE MAGS IN WITH A BUSINESS CARD HOLDER AND PLACE YOUR FREE GAME PASSES INSIDE.
- e. Participate in local contests by donating a family or date night all-inclusive package
YOUR BUSINESS WILL BE REPRESENTED ALL OVER YOUR COMMUNITY IF YOU PROVIDE OTHER BUSINESSES WITH OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE SOMETHING TO THEIR LOYAL CUSTOMERS. THEY’LL BECOME SPOKESPEOPLE FOR YOU AND ALLOW YOU TO LEAVE PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL INSIDE THEIR FACILITIES.
- f. Host a school car wash, or any fundraising event, in your parking lot by connecting with your local PTO/PTA groups
HELP ORGANIZE THE EVENT BY PROMOTING IT TO YOUR CUSTOMERS. MAKE SIGNS FOR THEM THAT PROMOTE THE CAR WASH AND OPEN PLAY/LUNCH PACKAGES INSIDE. DONATE FOOD FOR THE KIDS WORKING AND A PORTION OF THE DAY’S PROCEEDS TO THE PTO/PTA TO HELP YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOLS.



BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

3 Low Cost Advertising

Are you taking full advantage of all the free or inexpensive ways to promote your business? Sure, most cities in America today have a bowling center, but are they considering visiting you just because you are there? Probably not, so make sure you are included in every possible way that will tell people where you are.

“Do right by your business and seek out all options to promote it.”

If you remember a time when phone books were how you found businesses, you may need to check your online strategy. Today, that is not the case as there are numerous ways, and most of them are online.

Promotion is a way of life for businesses, let's encourage all to join in

- a. Business listings can be a daunting task to keep up with, especially when you change your business hours frequently; however, it must be done
GOOGLE, BING, YAHOO, REDDIT ARE JUST A FEW OF THE WAYS.
- b. If you own the business, wrap your primary vehicle with loud graphics and images
THE MORE OBNOXIOUS, THE BETTER. YOU ARE LITERALLY A MOVING BILLBOARD. CREATE MAGNETS FOR MANAGERS AND ASSISTANT MANAGERS, TOO. OFFER SIMPLE PERKS FOR OTHER EMPLOYEES WHO PUT THEM ON THEIR VEHICLES.
- c. Make sure to work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau
ADD YOUR EVENTS TO THEIR COMMUNITY CALENDARS, GET LISTED UNDER PARKS AND RECREATION WEBSITES AND THEIR EVENT BULLETINS THAT GET PRINTED AND SENT OUT. MAKE SURE YOURS IS A DESTINATION LISTED FOR FOLKS TRAVELING TO THE COMMUNITY.
- d. Work with local media companies to help promote your business activities
WHEN IT IS NEWSWORTHY, THE LOCAL NEWS CHANNEL LOVES DOING A STORY ON FAMILY OR KID-ORIENTATED OPTIONS. THE SPORTS SECTION NEEDS THINGS TO WRITE ABOUT AND MAY INCLUDE LOCAL HIGH SCHOOL AND TOURNAMENT RESULTS. RADIO STATIONS, TOO. ONCE YOU ARE IN, NOTIFY THEM ALL THE TIME ABOUT THINGS YOU ARE DOING AND YOU'LL BE SURPRISED HOW OFTEN YOU GET A BLURB. RECIPROCATE WHEN YOU CAN WITH A SMALL ADVERTISING PACKAGE THAT YOU CAN AFFORD.
- e. Host an event like a bowling blastoff or offer clinics for kids and adults, then look for free community bulletin boards that will let you post information about it
PLACES LIKE LIBRARIES, COFFEE SHOPS, GROCERY STORES, AND LOCAL COLLEGES, TO NAME A FEW.
- f. Run promotional contests and discount opportunities inside your business
SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A BUSINESS CARD FISHBOWL NEAR THE DOORWAY OR FRONT COUNTER PROMOTING A FREE TABLET OR COMPLIMENTARY PARTY PACKAGE. WHILE ONLY ONE PERSON WINS, YOU CAN USE THOSE EMAILS TO SEND OUT A THANK YOU EMAIL FOR PARTICIPATING, AND THEN PROMOTE CORPORATE PARTY IDEAS, AS WELL AS GETTING THEM TO SIGN UP FOR YOUR NEWSLETTER. INCLUDE ONLINE CONTESTS BY USING A COMPANY CALLED RAFFLECOPTER.COM, WHICH IS THE WORLD'S EASIEST WAY TO RUN A GIVEAWAY (THEIR WORDS, NOT OURS).



BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

4 Medium-cost Advertising

Really, I just needed an excuse to suggest more ways to promote your business, but some of these may cost a few more of your marketing dollars. If you aren't investing and developing new leads, you WILL see a drop-off in your sales.

“Simple advertising methods are staring you in the face every day.”

Word of mouth is one of the strongest ways to advertise, and it really is vital to growing your business because we can only do so much on our own. Customer testimonials are a must wherever you can use them. Place them on your scoring monitors when the lanes are off.

Brand Advocates are essential to your business

- a. Customer referral programs are a simple way to develop brand advocacy every single day
BRING A FRIEND TO LEAGUE WHO HAS NEVER BOWLED LEAGUE BEFORE AND GET YOUR MEMBERSHIP PAID. BIRTHDAY PARTY DISCOUNTS FOR THE KIDS ATTENDING YOUR OWN PARTY, SO THEY COME BACK, TOO. CREATE A GROUP NIGHT PROMOTION ON A THURSDAY WHERE YOU OFFER DISCOUNTS FOR GROUPS OF 8 AND THE GROUP ORGANIZER RECEIVES FREE SHOE RENTAL AND A DRINK.
- b. Volunteers can be hard to come by, but sometimes you just need to ask the right people
MOST OF US ALREADY HAVE VOLUNTEER COACHES. ARE WE PROVIDING THEM WITH FREE PRACTICE, BOWLING CENTER APPAREL, AND SNACK BAR DISCOUNTS? TRUST ME, THEY DON'T ALWAYS DO IT FOR THE PERKS, BUT IT HELPS AND PROVIDES YOU A BETTER OPPORTUNITY TO ASK FOR A LITTLE MORE TIME AND EFFORT IN EXCHANGE.
- c. Billboards can be a great way to drive business in high-commuter traffic areas
INCLUDE YOUR LOGO AND A PICTURE OF A FAMILY HAVING FUN WITH LARGE TEXT FOR THOSE DRIVING BY. CONTACT YOUR BILLBOARD SALES AGENT AND SEE WHAT OPTIONS THEY HAVE. MAYBE YOU ONLY DO IT SEASONALLY, WHEN YOU HAVE HOLES AND WANT TO DRIVE OPEN-PLAY BUSINESS IN THE SUMMER. YOU COULD ALSO SPONSOR A SCHOOL TEAM AND PLACE BANNERS ON THEIR FIELD, OR EVEN BUY INEXPENSIVE AD SPACE FOR A SCHOOL PLAY PROGRAM BOOK. THESE COULD ALL DRIVE MORE TRAFFIC, WHILE FURTHERING YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SCHOOLS.
- d. Consider Groupon as a way to drive new business, but keep it profitable
GROUPON IS A GREAT NEW WAY TO DRIVE MORE PEOPLE INTO YOUR BUSINESS ON CERTAIN TIMES AND DAYS THAT YOU DON'T ALREADY HAVE TRAFFIC. DO THE MATH HERE AND DON'T OPERATE IT FOR A LOSS, THOUGH, AS YOU'LL ALSO BE GIVING UP SOME OF THE REVENUE. IF THE GROUPS HAVE FUN FOR A VALUE PRICE, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO SHARE THESE OFFERS WITH FRIENDS.
- e. Participate in local community events by hosting a booth
THIS IS WHERE BOWLER'S ED CARPETS ARE A GREAT TOOL FOR YOUR BUSINESS. RENT A SPACE WHERE YOU CAN HAVE A TABLE AND SET UP A FULL 20-FOOT CARPET, PINS AND BALLS FOR KIDS AND ADULTS TO PLAY. SCHEDULE BUSY ON THE WEEKENDS? THIS IS PERFECT FOR YOUR BRAND ADVOCATES TO WORK FOR YOU. THEY'LL LOVE TELLING EVERYONE HOW MUCH FUN IT IS IN YOUR CENTER AND ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR KIDS. MAKE SURE TO HAVE SPECIAL GAME PASSES AND UTILIZE OUR “BOWLING IS A HEALTHY WAY TO LIVE” MATERIAL AT EVENTS.



BOWLING CENTER MARKETING TIPS

5 Digital Marketing

Are you using social media yet? Haven't figured out why all these millennials are spending their time on Facebook and other platforms? Well, it is time to take your approach to the next level and get ONLINE.

“More than 50% of people today are searching for businesses online.”

Do you have a social butterfly working at your center, always smiling, but also someone who has a hard time staying off their phone when working? Guess what, you may have found the person to head up your social media marketing. In an 8-hour shift, have them spend two of those hours working in the back office to grow your online presence.

Go after the low-hanging fruit first; start small

- a. Create a business page on Facebook and use it as a way to talk to your community, while promoting everything your business has to offer
THE CONTENT IS THERE, YOU JUST HAVE TO TRANSITION YOUR PRINT MATERIAL TO SHARING IT WITH AN ONLINE COMMUNITY OF PEOPLE WHO SPEND A MAJORITY OF TIME THERE. TAKE PICTURES AT EVENTS WHEN PEOPLE ARE HAVING FUN, AND THEN TELL THE STORY IN A SHORT, CONCISE WAY. ONCE YOU HAVE MASTERED FACEBOOK, GO TO TWITTER, PINTEREST, AND OTHER PLATFORMS THAT MAKE SENSE.
- b. While social media marketing grows every year, email marketing is still the No. 1 way businesses promote themselves online
IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY, REGISTER FOR AN ACCOUNT WITH AN EMAIL MARKETING PLATFORM SUCH AS CONSTANT CONTACT OR MAILCHIMP. CHANCES ARE YOU ALREADY COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESSES FROM YOUR CUSTOMER TRAFFIC IN YOUR BUSINESS AND ON YOUR WEBSITE. IF YOU AREN'T, I SUGGEST YOU START NOW. PROMOTE SPECIAL EVENTS AND ANYTHING NEW YOUR CUSTOMERS MAY NOT YET KNOW ABOUT THAT IS COMING UP. STUDY THE RESULTS AND GEAR YOUR CONTENT TOWARD WHAT THEY SEEM TO OPEN AND CLICK MORE.
- c. Pay Per Click (PPC) advertising is not just for big business and can be really easy to do
WHETHER THROUGH GOOGLE OR FACEBOOK, YOU CAN DRIVE LOCAL TRAFFIC TO YOUR CENTER THROUGH KEYWORDS, VIDEOS, COUPONS, AND SIMPLE MESSAGES THAT DRIVE PEOPLE, FROM THOSE AT HOME SEARCHING ONLINE TO THOSE IN THE CAR HEADING TO YOUR BUSINESS.
- d. Research and choose an online marketing platform company to assist you with all your needs
THERE ARE A LOT TO CHOOSE FROM, BUT WITH THE RIGHT BUDGET THEY CAN HELP TREMENDOUSLY.
- e. Your website is nearly as important to your business as your logo. It should be the central location for everything you do
EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS AND WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER. IF YOU AREN'T ALREADY, USE GOOGLE ANALYTICS TO MONITOR YOUR WEB TRAFFIC AND UNDERSTAND WHO YOUR CUSTOMERS ARE, HOW MANY VISITORS YOU ARE ATTRACTING, WHERE DID THEY GO AND HOW LONG DID THEY STAY. IS YOUR WEBSITE MOBILE FRIENDLY? TALK TO BPAA ABOUT UTILIZING THEIR WEB SERVICES TEAM, AS WE CAN HELP.