RESOURCES FOR SUCCESS AT YOUR CHILDCARE CENTER

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LET'S RAISE AMAZING CHILDREN

Challenges Facing Childcare Centers

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The challenges facing childcare centers are vast. Childcare centers face fierce competition from other centers in their area and changes in the industry. This includes parents working at home or using in-home daycare options.

The ever-changing marketplace makes it difficult for centers to meet their financial responsibilities and execute strong communication and operational goals.

Millennial parents grew up in the digital age, unlike their Gen Y counterparts who adopted technology later in life. Most millennials never had to write a research paper using encyclopedias or resources you can only find at a library. For them, they could always say "just Google it."
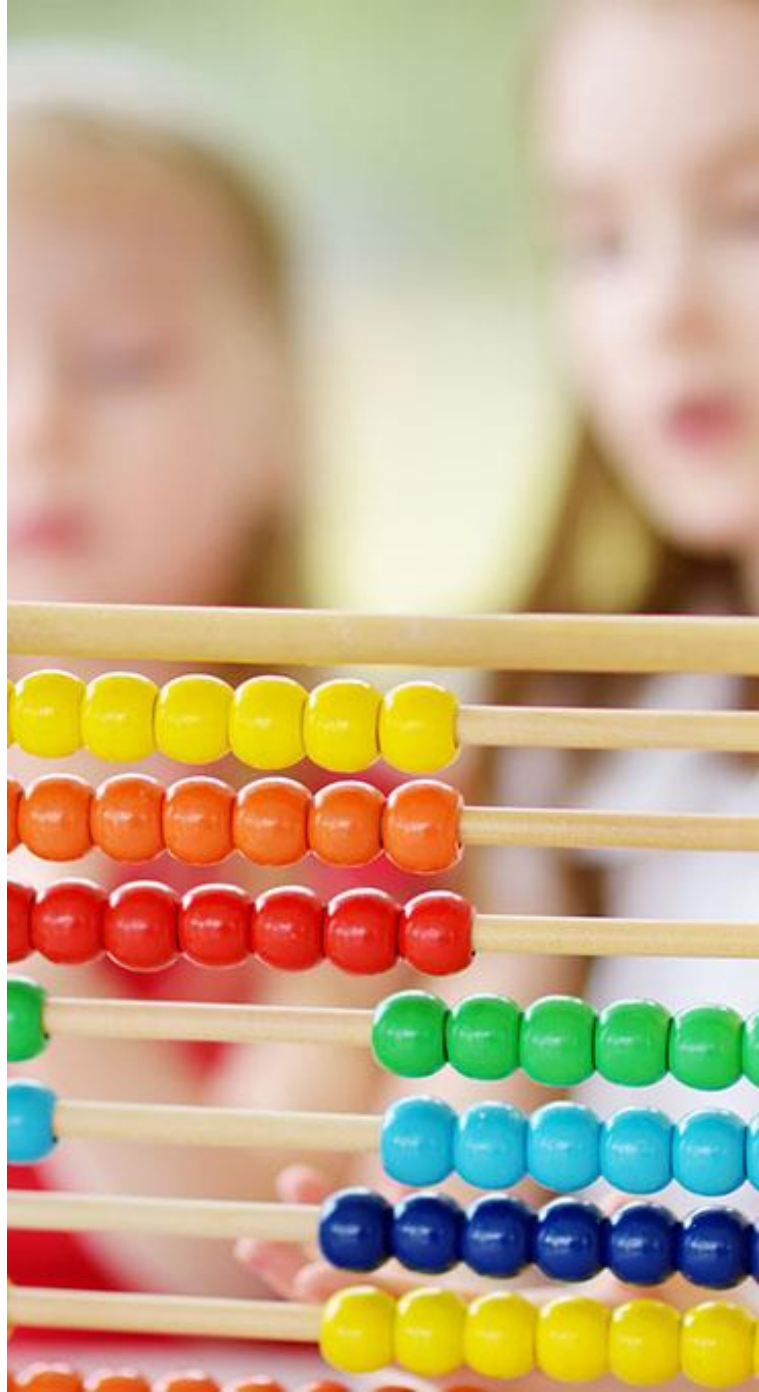
So, when they look for a childcare center, their solution is probably the same, "just Google it." Is your childcare software and technology advanced enough to keep up and respond to this need?

And what about your communication outlets? Do you allow parents to email, text or message you with questions about their child and their care?

To guide you in your next steps of overcoming today's challenges, here are the top challenges facing childcare centers.

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Challenges Facing Childcare Centers

Here's a look at some of the challenges that today's childcare centers face. We help you understand today's parents so you can better serve their needs.

01. COLLECTING TUITION

Today's consumers aren't used to having to write a check for things or keep track of payment deadlines. Automation has become so prevalent in all aspects of consumerism. That prevalence has led consumers to expect it in every business interaction.

Childcare providers need to keep up with payment collection styles and offer automated recurring tuition payments.

Automating payments through childcare billing software not only benefits parents, but the childcare center as well. Your business can save time in billing and following up on late bills with recurring payments.

When you choose iCare Software to serve as your accounting software for daycare business, we provide helpful tools to manage billing and accounting. For example, the software will notify you when credit cards are expiring so you can check in with your clients and never miss a payment.

02. MANAGING ENROLLMENT

Your primary function as a childcare administration team is to ensure that your childcare remains profitable by keeping enrollment full. You need an eye toward when children will move up from one classroom to the next and how to drive new enrollment interest in your center.

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Attendance sheets and teacher assignments can help. But managing enrollment on a piece of paper or spreadsheet is just not as efficient and doesn't provide as many insights as daycare software.

One of the greatest marketing tactics is referrals. A happy parent is much more likely to recommend your center to their neighbors and coworkers than one who feels disengaged from their child's care.

03. RECORD-KEEPING

Your childcare center most likely has rules around vaccination records and health information. You also need to know how a child is developing and what benchmarks they are achieving.

With so much information to detail, you need a safe and secure place to log and store the information.

Parents need peace of mind that the right processes are in place to protect their child's private documents, and you need easy access to the information to ensure compliance with rules and regulations. You must document emergency contacts, allergies and preferences carefully.

Preschool software makes record-keeping simple. With HIPAA compliance and a web-based platform, iCare Software keeps your important documents secure but accessible from anywhere when you need them.

04. COMMUNICATION

Today's communication channels make it possible to stay in close contact at all times. And because parents can update grandparents and friends quickly about what their child has been up to, they expect that same courtesy with you and your childcare center.

Having to call to check on a child is an antiquated way of keeping in touch. With texting, emails and mobile notifications, parents can see what their child is doing throughout the day and share in their care at a distance. A happy parent is a returning customer, which means you can't ignore this facet of your business.

05. BOOKKEEPING

You can't leave your finances until the end of the year at tax time and hope that all looks good. Regular checks into your profitability and opportunities can help you grow and succeed over your competitors. Good bookkeeping means knowing all money going in and out at all times.

Do monthly checks and see how you're tracking on your finances. The benefit of daycare center software is, you can see money in from tuition and money out from expenses all in one place. You won't need to import or sync data from anywhere else.

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06. STAFF MANAGEMENT

Knowing when to bring in substitute teachers and how to shift your teachers around to meet your student-to-teacher ratio can be a real challenge. Student absences, teacher sick days, and local school calamity days and holidays all make a difference. Keeping track of it all on your own is pretty tough.

Not to mention, you need to focus on teacher retention and job satisfaction so that you keep the best of the best. Parents like to know their child's teachers and build rapport with them at drop off and pick up. You want to avoid making too many shifts and changes when you can avoid it.

The easiest way to overcome this challenge is to use your childcare app to see a holistic view of your enrollment. When do you have children enrolling in your school and leaving so you can best manage your staffing and keep your teachers happy?

Although we just covered the many challenges facing childcare currently, the work you do is still incredibly important. Don't let these challenges get you down or forget that the work you do matters.

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How Technology is Changing. How We Run Childcare Centers

Technology is changing childcare centers, but it's truly for the better. From improved relationships to tracking developmental milestones, technology is making it easier for childcare centers to succeed and make a difference in the lives of children and their parents. To better understand how technology is changing how we run childcare centers, let's take a look at the major areas that technology is influencing.

COMMUNICATION

It's an ever-connected world, and parents want just that when looking at a childcare center. Yes, they want to know that their children are happy and safe while they're away at work. But it's also a special moment to get a text message with a photo of their child's activities. Calendar functionality also makes it easy to communicate important events at your childcare center. This way children show up for pajama day on the right day and parents know when to expect field trips and other deadlines you need to communicate. iCare Software features iCare Ding, which enables childcare centers to text parents simply by using the web-based application to take a photo or supply an update. Additionally, iCare's calendar gives you options to track internal events such as staff appreciation day as well as notify parents of important events.

DEVELOPMENT TRACKING

Childcare software makes it simple for teachers to track developmental milestones. While paper records can do the same thing, it's more difficult to reference these milestones on paper. With a beginning of the school year report, you can easily track how a child is doing learning along their milestones for their age. iCare's journal makes it easy to document and track what a child is learning throughout the year. The journal is also easy to share with parents, so they can follow along with their child's development. You can provide quarterly and annual reports to help parents understand what their child is learning.

ADMINISTRATION

Administration for childcare centers has never been easier than it is with childcare software. Track attendance within your childcare software and your automatically billing can bill clients correctly without you having to manually send those invoices. Direct deposit also makes it easy for parents to pay tuition without having to think about it. This makes for happier parents as it's a great service to them to simplify their lives.

RELATIONSHIP IMPROVEMENTS

Some childcare centers may feel like they're always looking for new clients to fill the parents and students who cycle out of their center. But with improvements to technology, you can better showcase the importance of your center and the value you bring the family on a regular basis. As you have more open and constant communication with parents, you might see an increase in your retention rates. This is because parents who feel a strong connection to their child's teachers and childcare center are less likely to shop around for other childcare centers. If you're avoiding adding technology to your childcare center, now's the time to take another look at how it can improve your childcare center.

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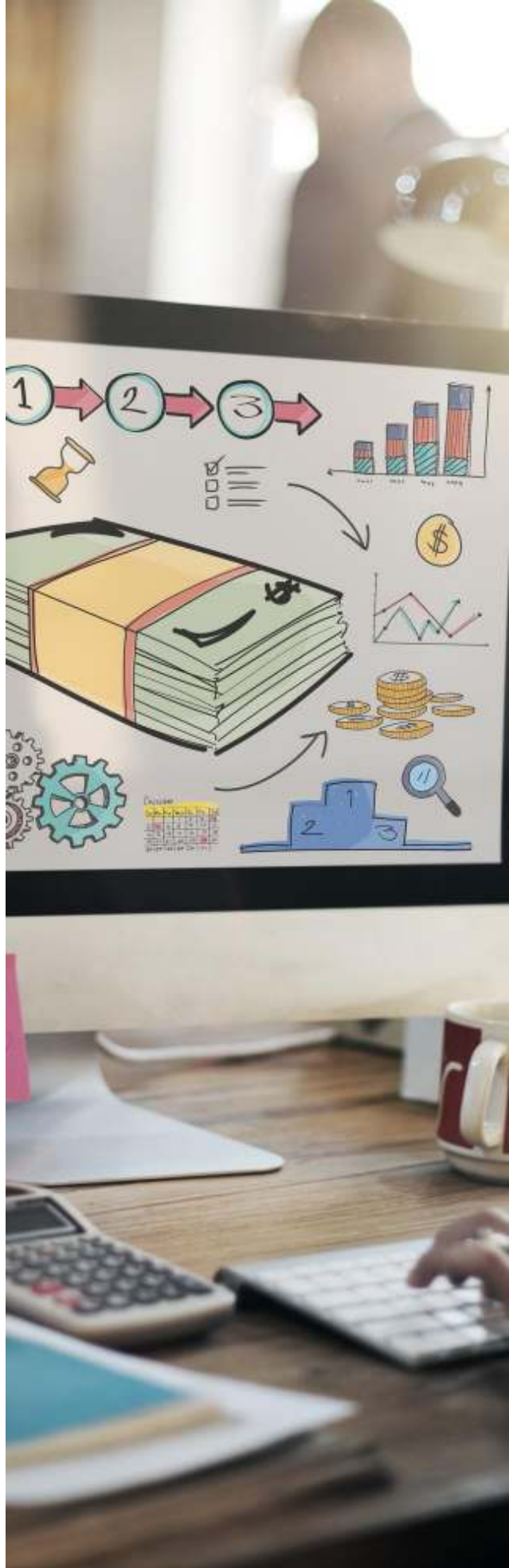
How Technology in Childcare Centers Enriches Learning

As our world becomes more technologically advanced, the childcare industry needs to also keep up with the latest technologies. Many technologies used in childcare centers enrich early learning experiences for young children. Technology also increases the efficiency of day-to-day functions, helps keep kids safe and boosts parent engagement and satisfaction. Now let's talk about how parents and teachers benefit from the use of technology and its impact on child development.

ENRICHING THE PARENT'S EXPERIENCE

Many parents are not confident in understanding child development during their child's first few years. At that time, most parents are too busy simply adapting to their new lifestyle caring for a human other than themselves. This process takes time, as we all know. But what a lot of parents don't know is the unrealistic expectations people have for children at extremely young ages. Parents often share that if they had known more about developmentally-appropriate behavior for each age, parenting would have been different. They would have parented better, stayed calmer, yelled less and most likely would have had happier children. Understanding what is developmentally expected can make those early years of parenting that much easier. Expecting too much from these little people usually results in frustrated children and disappointed parents. Once a parent learns about appropriate behavior for each age, they usually become surprised at just how smart, talented, and well behaved their little ones really are. Parents whose children attend a daycare business with good communication tools and technology gain a better understanding of their child's development. The more parents and teachers interact, the more seamless care is from the childcare center to home.

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TEACHERS USING TECHNOLOGY IN CHILD CARE CENTERS

Similar to parents, there are many teachers who might also need some guidance when it comes to understanding developmental milestones. When teachers become inundated with curriculum and lesson plans, unfortunately many times, developmental milestones begin to fall behind. This often leads to a similar dilemma where students become frustrated and teachers become disappointed. Once teachers are given more knowledge and guidance for each developmental age, their job becomes easier and the students benefit greatly. That's where Journal templates in childcare software are extremely helpful. They aid teachers in documenting important milestones with pre-filled information. All it takes is a click and the child's record is updated to include the new milestone. This is also a great tool for maximizing subsidy payments and complying with state-issued development guidelines.

PARENTS, TEACHERS AND CHILDREN

Technology can strengthen relationships between parents, teachers, and children. In both situations, this is where one of the helpful features of the iCare childcare management software program really comes into play for parents, teachers and most importantly, the children. Using journaling categories based on age, teachers and parents will understand where a child is at developmentally and where they should be at any given time. The journal templates help illustrate child development milestones and what to really expect at each age group. For parents and teachers, a childcare app guides them through each stage of development for a better understanding of child behavior, and therefore, more realistic expectations and better learning outcomes for the children. Many daycare and early childhood learning centers have had remarkable results from using a childcare software program. It's easy to see why. Having developmental specialists at your side through this childcare software program helps give teachers and parents the confidence they need to foster growth and development for each individual child.

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What is Childcare Software and Why Does it Matter?

WHAT IS CHILDCARE SOFTWARE

Childcare software can truly transform your childcare center in many ways. It is a digital tool that enables you to manage all aspects of your business from classroom management to interactions with parents.

So why does it matter? Using a childcare app impacts various aspects of your business. But it also opens communication channels between you and parents. It helps you track child development in a secure platform.

To help you understand the various areas that childcare management software touches in your business, let's take a look at the areas of benefit to your business.

BILLING AND FINANCE

Childcare billing software can make your billing processes so much simpler. You can program each client's billing to be unique either based on attendance or a set part-time or full-time fee. Then, you can bill that client automatically via direct deposit.

You won't spend all your precious time looking to see who has paid and who hasn't. Plus, you won't have to send invoices at regular intervals. Additionally, when all your billing is handled within one system, managing your finances is simpler as well. You can run reports to see how you're doing and where you need to make changes with your budgeting.

You'll also save money over using a third-party billing system, such as Square or PayPal. These third-party systems charge fees per transaction. iCare Software uses ACH to take payments to decrease your payment processing fees.

CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

You get the chance to open new communication channels to your clients when you add preschool software to your center. That's because you can text parents and share photos all within the application.

Photos will help parents see the value you bring to their family through their child's education. When you share photos, parents can also feel good about their decision in which childcare center to send their child to.

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DEVELOPMENTAL TRACKING

Within the journaling section of your daycare app, you can track a child's developmental milestones so you can spot when something seems off. Doing this on paper makes it much more difficult to spot trends or lack thereof. You can be a true partner in raising amazing children when you pay close attention to where a child should be and where they might be struggling. This can help parents seek help if children need it and keep children on track.

SIMPLER ADMINISTRATION

If you have mounds of paper sitting on your desk to help you decipher which classrooms are full and which ones can accept new students, it's time to toss out this old way of doing things. Daycare center software helps you see at a glance what capacity you have for bringing on new students. Now you can see gaps in your classrooms before they become a financial drain on your business, so you can start marketing to fill those gaps.

SECURITY

You may be nervous about adding daycare management software to your center because of the need to keep your files secure. You can choose a daycare software program that is HIPPA-compliant for storing medical information, such as allergies and vaccinations to ensure you're covered. A good childcare software will have strong timeout functionality and secure login credentials to enter the system. iCare Software is a web-based app that is HIPPA-compliant for medical records and secured by a login for each member of your staff.

CALENDAR COORDINATION

If you get tired of printing calendars and sending them home with students only for them to never reach parents, you need better software. Software will make it easy for you to coordinate your calendar with your staff and parents. In our daycare software system, you can have some events only show to staff while others show to staff and parents. This way you can stay in touch and up to date with all of the happenings for all groups.

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How to Get Better Results From Your Childcare Software

If you added childcare management software to your center but haven't seen a huge change, you might not be using it to its full advantage. Getting through the initial implementation phase for childcare software can be exciting, but then you lose focus and go back to your old habits of managing your center on paper.

We have recommendations for how to reboot your digital efforts to make your childcare center great and raise amazing children. Here's how to get the most out of your investment in childcare management software.

TRAIN YOUR TEACHERS

Your teachers will use your childcare software every day. Having them be up to speed on how to best use it is important in the success of your implementation.

Set aside time to train your teachers. You can choose a classroom each day to sit in on and observe your teachers' interactions and usage of the technology.

Are they doing attendance on paper or in the tool? If they aren't using your software, your automatic billing could go wrong on the backend for part-time children. Additionally, your records may be incomplete in the case of an audit or lawsuit from a parent.

Encourage teachers to use every opportunity to make a journal entry about what the child learned or how they showed growth and improvement during that day's lesson. This helps showcase the benefit of your childcare center to parents and record a child's developmental trajectory to ensure they're on track. This makes you a partner in the child's growth.

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SHARE WITH PARENTS

One of the greatest benefits of childcare software is that it helps you connect with parents in a new way. While providing updates on a child's development and growth at pick up and drop off is important because it's face-to-face communication, little updates throughout the day and school year via text messages and photo sharing build relationships with your parents.

During art time, you can easily snap a photo using the web-based application and tag a child so that a parent gets a text message sent directly to them. Now the parent is a partner in the learning experience and can have meaningful discussions with their child about what they learned that day.

By building these relationships with parents, you ensure that they are pleased with the care their children receive and the service that you provide. This means they'll stay at your center and you won't have to constantly be finding new clients.

CONSULT WITH YOUR CHILDCARE SOFTWARE COMPANY

If it's been a few months since you implemented your childcare software, it may be time to contact your childcare software company to review your setup and ensure you're using it to its fullest.

Discuss how you do your invoicing, what you share with parents, how teachers are using the application and whatever else you have questions about. If your software doesn't have great customer service, it may be time to switch.

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Running a Childcare Business Successfully is Easier With a Childcare App

Childcare businesses take so much time, effort and management. And it's tough to know how you are managing your childcare compared to competitors.

At times, administrators might feel hopeless or desperate in finding better balance in their lives. Plus, you want to improve your childcare finances.

But managing a childcare center shouldn't feel that way. You can feel fulfilled and happy with your daycare business while also being financially stable.

Feeling Good About How You Are Managing Your Childcare

To feel good about how you're managing your childcare center, you need to audit some processes. Take a hard look at the following areas of your business to know how you're doing.

HIRE THE RIGHT TEAM

Trying to do it all can create a major feeling of burnout and stress. With the right team behind you, delegation can simplify your to-do list while still operating an outstanding childcare center.

A marketing expert, accountant and human resources manager can make a large difference for larger childcare centers. Perhaps these individuals spend just a couple hours a week in the office doing these functions while spending the rest of their time teaching, so you don't need an enormous staff.

Staffing teachers can be the most stressful function as a childcare administrator, but it doesn't have to be. Childcare management software can make it simple to use attendance data to inform staffing decisions. Knowing how many children will be at your childcare center each day makes it so much easier to staff.

MAXIMIZE YOUR CHILDCARE SOFTWARE

Childcare administrators sometimes think that using a separate finance and accounting system from their daycare software makes sense.

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While you might have had such a system before adopting a childcare app, it's in your best interest to merge all of your digital needs under one platform.

When the various areas of your childcare work harmoniously, your ROI improves, and you can spend less time pulling over information from one system to another. Staffing, supplies ordering, communicating with parents and so much more will be simple the more you integrate it all under one roof of technology.

DO SOME NETWORKING

Childcare networking is an important skill to master.

Sometimes business owners are afraid to network because they might give away their trade secrets and lose their competitive edge. In reality, only the childcare centers within a close proximity to yours are likely to be your true competitors.

So, attend some conferences. Reach out to centers you've seen that you respect or would like to emulate. Start improving and streamlining your center based on best practices.

You can't learn best practices without opening yourself up to new thoughts, new opportunities and the experience of childcare veterans.

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SURVEY THE PARENTS AT YOUR CENTER

If you want to know areas of improvement or things you should be doing more of, ask your customers. Parents will more than likely be happy to share their thoughts to help you improve. Their opinions are extremely valuable so take the time to listen and make tweaks.

The happier your parents are, the more likely you are to get referrals and the less likely you are to see large turnover and keep recruiting new students to your center. A roadmap for the future will help you feel hopeful for the future and success for your childcare center.

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5 Ways Technology Promotes Parent Involvement and Family Engagement

It's another normal day at your childcare facility or school. Parents hug their kids goodbye. And they hope that everything goes well while they're at work or out for the day. In contrast, when the kids stay with grandma for the weekend, the parents get regular updates throughout the day. The work days are long without their little ones.

Technology can help improve parent involvement and family engagement with regular communication.

This opens doors for parents to talk with their children after school about the activities they enjoyed. And parents can provide learning moments and engagement opportunities for any trouble spots the teachers mentioned.

Here are five ways technology engages families in childcare.

01. KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Technology opens doors for two-way communication throughout the day between parents and teachers. For example, when a parent drops their children off for childcare, they might mention their child hasn't seemed normal or might be struggling with something.

Teachers can ease this concern with a message a few hours later saying the child is eating and playing normally. Or a teacher might express concern over abnormal behavior during the school day. The parent can watch for this behavior throughout the evening and report back on it. It's a partnership that helps raise amazing children.

02. SHOWCASE APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY USE

Children can learn the benefits of using technology from a young age. Seeing proper technology use from a young age can help teach them discipline.

Instilling in children an enjoyment for educational mobile applications can be a great benefit. Instead of just playing any mobile app games, they'll enjoy games that enhance their lifelong learning.

03. ENHANCE BUT DON'T REPLACE IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS

Remind your educators to use technology as a tool to enhance relationships. But never forget that nothing beats face-to-face time with parents at drop off, pick up and open house nights. Technology is a great tool to keep the conversation going all day long, but does not serve as a replacement.

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04. ENGAGE CHILDREN THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Show and tell can be difficult for preschoolers to remember why they brought in an item or what story they were going to tell. Parents can get engaged in their child's education by taking photos and videos of their children presenting show and tell that can teachers can play in the classroom.

This gives parents a role in education and pride in what their children are learning. The videos and photos can also be a great keepsake as a reminder of what their children learned at your facility.

05. USE TECHNOLOGY TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS ALL AT ONCE

If you have an online forum or email listserv, you can share tips on books children enjoy in the classroom so parents can read them at home too. You can also share information about good educational mobile apps and board games that can encourage learning to happen outside the classroom as well.

To maximize your childcare facility's engagement with families, implement childcare management software. iCare builds customer loyalty, helps facilitate education and simplifies administration for facility managers.

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5 Tips on Saving Paper in Your Childcare Center

By lowering your expenses, you can increase your revenues at your child care center. Printing out paper records and parent information can end up costing you a hefty fee. While it might not seem like much each month, it accumulates annually. This problem is especially large for centers with high enrollment. The easiest way to reduce paper is to invest in childcare management software. The less you print, the more readily available your information is from anywhere, anytime. And you won't be calling in a maintenance company for your printer, purchasing ink cartridges or buying reams of paper as often. And a bonus of printing less paper is that you can be an <u>eco-friendly childcare</u>. Here's a look at ways to save paper in your childcare center.

DIRECT DEPOSIT FOR A CHILD CARE CENTER

Not only does invoicing cost you money in printing and mailing, but it is also a time-consuming activity that you can eliminate when you move it to a digital practice. Direct deposit enables you to charge parents based on scheduled intervals and eliminate the task of invoicing and printing. Direct deposit through a childcare software is safe and secure. Parents can easily see what they've been charged and why. You can also offer a variety of attendance options without spending time worrying about how to handle invoicing. This opens the door for you to have a larger or fuller enrollment, which enables you to maximize your profits.

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ONLINE CALENDAR

You need to keep your teachers, administrators, and parents on board with your events and activities, such as pajama day. After all, no one wants to show up in their pajamas on the wrong day. But printing off calendars and placing them in children's backpacks are becoming antiquating and unnecessary. An online calendar makes your childcare center more agile. You can post any school closings, fun activities and special holidays so your staff and parents are kept in the loop at all times.

DIGITAL REPORT OF A CHILD'S DAY

Sharing what a child did for the day is an important aspect of keeping parents happy with their childcare choice. You can highlight circle time activities, the child's mood and behavior and what they ate for lunch and at what time. These are all great and helpful details for parents to know. But printing off a review each day for every parent is expensive and time-consuming. Teachers can enter information about a child throughout the day. For infants, you can share when their diaper was changed, when they ate and how much, information on their sleep schedule and more. Parents will then get updates throughout the day and feel more engaged in their child's care.

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EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

It's important to put emergency contact information at your teacher's fingertips at all times. Printed sheets in every classroom though are not ideal. You have to reprint these sheets every time a child joins or leaves your childcare center. This makes for a great deal of wastes paper and leaves room for error if your team forgets to print a new sheet on a child's first day. Move your emergency contact information to your daycare software. In case of a technology glitch, you could always have one master emergency contact information file you keep in a secure place in the office. But this way you don't have to update it for every room.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Newsletters are great because they keep your clients updated on what is happening at your childcare center. But printing and mailing these newsletters is cumbersome. Move your newsletter to email so you can still share these fun stories and tidbits with parents without the cost and wasted paper. Preschool software can help you manage your email list to make your newsletter simpler to send.

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Preschool Attendance Software for Accurate Documentation

Preschool Attendance Software Success Tips

Implementing world-class attendance tracking software at your center won't automatically make your attendance tracking accurate. You should set the following rules and guidelines to help your software succeed.

1. SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

A new process will be an adjustment for parents too. Start with a policy that clearly states what parents must do each morning when they check in their children and then at the end of the day when they check out. Without a policy that parents sign when they enroll at your center, it will be difficult to enforce strong practices so be sure these are in place from the beginning.

2. CREATE CLEAR AND CONCISE ATTENDANCE TRACKING TEMPLATES

Good templates in your childcare software make management easier. These templates should clearly indicate where parents sign, date and place the time of day. Keep these templates consistent over time to ensure parents are placing the information in the correct boxes. This will make your administration of the process easier.

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3. WHEN USING PAPER PREPARE MANY SHEETS

If your preschool is still using paper for attendance tracking, it's important that you print and store many copies in a binder. That way, you'll never run out during a crucial time. You'll want to have several copies of your attendance sheet prepped and ready to go to ensure you don't run out of space in the middle of drop off in the morning, which might just be your busiest time of day. Keep all attendance records in a tidy binder and file them week-by-week or month-by-month depending on how large your attendance is and your own record-keeping policies.

4. ENSURE ACCURACY OF THE SIGN IN/OUT SHEETS

With clear expectations and templates, youu2019re now equipped to manage the process. Have a staff member at the entrance ensuring compliance with the attendance policy for parents and ensuring they are completing all required fields before leaving. Provide a digital clock near your timesheet (digital or paper) to ensure the times input are accurate and always make sure a signature is present. Without a signature, your timesheet will be worthless. Your staff member should be well-trained in how to ensure accuracy, but also a friendly morning person. After all, don't forget that these are your clients who you want to welcome and treat with the utmost service.

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5. KEEP GOOD DOCUMENTATION

You'll want to file and store your attendance records according to your records retention policy. Check your licensing documentation to see if there are requirements for how long these materials must be stored securely. If your license does not set forth requirements, you may want to talk with legal counsel about best practices to ensure you're covered in the case of needing to prove attendance.

6. GO DIGITAL WITH CHILDCARE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Digitizing the process will reduce errors and administration time to manage the process. If that paper process sounds exhausting, there is another way. You can completely digitize the attendance tracking process with daycare software from iCare Software. Our technology allows for face-recognition to check children in and out. This ensures only approved caregivers can pick up the child each day, time stamps will be completely accurate, and you no longer have to be concerned about how to securely store and manage paper records on an ongoing basis. iCare Software also enables you to follow the child throughout the day with journaling, photos and messages to parents so that you can also share what the child did between sign in and sign out. You could spend hours each week to ensure accurate attendance tracking and record keeping, or you could spend as little as 10 minutes one time to configure iCare Software for strong attendance record keeping with added benefits to you and the parents you serve. Learn more about the process of implementing iCare Software in our getting started guide.

7 Tips On How To Run a Successful Daycare

Some people hate the idea of being "trendy." It's a word that implies that something is here one day and gone the next. But if you're avoiding certain childcare trends in your center, you might be the one that's here one day and gone the next. To help you stay up to date and competitive in the market, here are the 7 little changes that will make a big difference for your childcare center.

1. **Clear curriculum planning and communication of that curriculum to parents**. Preschool education is being sought after more and more, often viewed as the new kindergarten. Parents want to know that their children's knowledge on letter recognition, colors, numbers and more will match that of their peers when it comes time for more formal schooling. Therefore, you need to make your curriculum clear and communicate with parents on where their children are at as far as meeting their benchmarks for the year.

2. **Social skills and problem-solving tactics.** No parent wants to be called to the principal's office regularly for children who struggle to interact with their peers. Provide time throughout the day that allows for independent play, 1-on-1 play and group play so that children learn these different dynamics.

3. **Offer flexible meal options**. Parents are super busy. Sometimes they end up at your facility with not enough formula or a forgotten lunch for their toddler. Set yourself apart as a premier center with outstanding customer service by helping to fill these gaps when they happen. Keep a variety of formula on hand so a parent doesn't have to rush back during their lunch break to bring you more. Have a simple lunch option for your toddlers that you can keep on hand to help parents out on those hectic days.

4. **Update your facility**. Yes, updates can be expensive, but if your books are all missing pages and your carpet looks like it hasn't been cleaned in a year just because it's so old and stained, it's time to make some serious changes to your facility. Parents will notice these minor changes and be more likely to talk about you to their friends and colleagues in a positive way if they see constant improvements to the environment that they leave their children in.

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5. **Hire true teachers and not just babysitters.** If you're marketing yourself as a preschool center and telling parents that their children will reach a certain proficiency level in learning, ensure you have the right staff to make this happen. There are some astounding childcare providers out there who have no idea how to help a child through learning a new skill. These individuals are not ideal for your center if you're marketing yourself as more than just a caregiver. Be sure you're truly hiring teachers who know how to manage a classroom.

6. **Evaluate the security of your facility.** The trends in school safety are sad because schools have become a target for tragedy over the last few years. Experiencing tragedy at your facility is a reality you don't want to face, so take some time to review the security of your facility, including regular background checks on your staff. You might even want to pay a consultant to come in as an expert to review your facility for vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities could be something as simple as an accounting software hack or as devastating as an intruder seeking to harm one of your students.

7. **Add technology to your facility through childcare software.** Parents are constantly connected. On their mobile phones they can easily go from checking work email to catching up with family and friends on social media. With this ever-connected mindset, parents expect to be connected to their childcare providers much the same way. Provide parents with the tools to do so by adding childcare software to your facility to be able to message and share photos with parents throughout the day. The childcare centers that are most successful are those that are constantly growing and learning from what's happening in the industry. Your childcare center could even lead the way when it comes to trends if you're constantly looking for ways to improve.

iCare

Expert Tools Successful Child Care Business Owners Love

As a childcare center, preschool or Montessori, you face unique challenges with monitoring your financial health. A key to long-term success though, is strong finances and understanding how fluctuations in enrollment can affect spending and budgeting.

We have some tips to help you manage this key aspect of your business.

Invest in a good system that will help you track your finances.

Some organizations lean on software such as QuickBooks, but childcare management software is tailored specifically for your business and often for the same price as standalone financial software, you can reap the benefits of added functionality to help you run your business. iCare Software not only helps you with budgeting and finances, but also enables you to set up automatic bill pay so that you're never left in the lurches by parents who forget or are tardy with paying for their childcare.

Know what you have to keep enrollment at.

Know your overall expenses including teacher salaries, supplies, technology and rent, and how many students it takes to offset those costs. Be sure to do adequate recruiting throughout the year to ensure enrollment stays at a healthy level. Employ marketing tactics by partnering with local companies to have a day with a booth in the lobby where employees can learn more about your facility, promote materials within local doctor's offices as women start to plan for their baby's arrival, employ local search marketing on Google, Bing and Yahoo, and network whenever you can. These simple marketing tactics can ensure you aren't left hoping for an enrollment to help you balance the books at the end of the month.

iCare

Run regular reports.

At the end of each month, use your childcare management software to run a financial report to ensure you stay up on the health of your finances. Allow yourself time at the beginning of each month to carefully go through the report to ensure everything looks to be in line and to plan for the month ahead. This is when you can set up special marketing campaigns to add to enrollment as needed or review staffing levels should you need to lower expenses.

Employ the assistance of a financial advisor.

Have a financial advisor that you can trust and call upon as needed. Each year at tax season review your financial position with your advisor. Advisors can provide insights and tactics to help ensure you have a successful year ahead. They can also tell you what to look for in your finances and provide insights into what you're seeing on your reports.

SCHEDULE A DEMO

Schedule a demo to see iCare Software and its robust tools. We customize our demos to meet your needs so that we never waste your time. Learn about our free setup, data transfer and onboarding.

Call to schedule your demo at 978-266-0224.

Or visit our website to book your demo at iCareSoftware.com

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