



CONTENTS

Part 1: Why Does Your Camp Need Marketing?	3	Part 6: How to Market on Twitter	28
Part 2: Applying Data and Registration Software	7	Part 7: The Art of Email Marketing Campaigns	32
Part 3: Tapping Into Social Media	13	Part 8: Perfecting Your Website	37
Part 4: How to Market on Instagram	19	Part 9: Are Discounts Worth it?	43
Part 5: How to Market on Facebook	23	Part 10: Low-Tech Techniques	43



PART 1: WHY DOES YOUR CAMP NEED MARKETING?

Especially if you're a small camp or a camp that's just starting to get serious about expanding its presence in your local community, "marketing" can often seem like a pretty intimidating word.

That's what all those huge businesses do, right? They spend billions of dollars making commercials, billboards and online ads that millions of people see. Obviously, you're probably not a billionaire, and your camp probably only has room for a few dozen to a couple hundred people! What can smart marketing possibly do for you?

Today more than ever before, marketing is no longer something reserved for the bottomless pockets of giant corporations.

Marketing is something all camps can take part in to grow, expand and improve.





Marketing is nothing more than putting yourself out there to get more people interested in what you have to say. When you spend so much time working on all the details of putting together the perfect camp experience, it can be easy to forget that not everyone thinks about these things the way you do. You know why camps matter—if you didn't, you wouldn't be spending so much time working with one!

But the thing is, a lot of parents don't see it that way... yet. You're over here asking, "How can I make my camp even better?" But they're still way over there, asking, "Why should my kids attend camp at all?"

Marketing's job is to bridge that gap. It's to show parents exactly why your camp will be such an incredible experience for their children, and convinces them they need to take action.

You don't need billions of dollars to show parents why that's true. You just need to be smart! Get the right tools, learn the right techniques, and show your community who you really are.

I promise that nothing we'll cover in this e-book is going to ask you to do anything crazy. All it's going to take is a willingness to learn and a passion for improving your camp.

So, what are you waiting for? Let's get started!





PART 2: APPLYING DATA AND REGISTRATION SOFTWARE

Especially if you're a small camp or a camp that's just starting to get serious about expanding its presence in your local community, "marketing" can often seem like a pretty intimidating word.

Strange as it might seem, one of the most effective tricks up the best camp marketers' sleeves doesn't actually have to do with advertising at all. It has to do with your registration system.

Good registration software can do so much more than just give parents a space to sign their kids up for camp. It'll also allow you to seriously boost your camp enrollment rates and perfect your other marketing strategies for years to come.

Solid registration is at the heart of solid marketing, and here's why.

Camp Waitlists Change Everything

For a lot of camps, it's not too unusual to have certain programs or dates that fill up incredibly quickly. That's exactly what you want, after all! But once one specific program you offer gets filled up, you have to ask yourself: What happens to all those parents who wanted that program and didn't get in on time?

This isn't just a rhetorical question. We actually have good data to answer it!

A small sliver of the time—about 28%—parents will stick around on your website and choose another option.

But most of the time that doesn't happen. Most of the time—58%, to be exact—they'll just click away and look for another camp!

With a waitlist, though, you change that whole equation. Suddenly, not getting into a particular time slot right now isn't the end of the world. Parents know how camps work—people change their minds, they get sick, other things come up. Just because you don't have the room this instant, that doesn't mean they're doomed forever!

And It's Not Just Parents...

Automated waitlists help a lot on your end, too. You don't even have to think about it—parents get automatically redirected to a waitlist whenever a slot is full, and they'll get automatically transferred back onto the actual attendance list the minute a spot frees up.

All that, and you didn't even have to do a thing!

Your plans can get a bit more flexible with waitlists, too. For instance, if you have a ton of people who want to sign up for one specific time, you might consider adding another session (if you have the resources for it, of course).

Also, if you have your waitlists set up as part of your camp software, you'll be able to gather all the info you need about your campers in advance, including payment information.

Your entire process just gets that much more streamlined, and if you want, you can even prioritize the campers you enroll from the waitlist based on whether or not they've input all the stuff they needed to.

That's more than just smart marketing. It's smart organization!



The 7 Steps to the Perfect Camp Family

Automated waitlists are just the tip of the iceberg, too.

The right registration software will revolutionize practically every other facet of your marketing campaign—giving you the data you need to draw in the traffic you want and the kids you love.

This might sound a little complicated, but good software actually makes data collection and interpretation a million times simpler than you think. You don't need any fancy degree in data science or marketing to take advantage of the information quality data can give you. All you need is the right setup!

Good registration software can do practically all the heavy lifting for you. Just plug the information in, and you'll be finding out more about how to improve your camp and your marketing campaign in no time.

All it takes is seven easy steps!



Step 1: Get the Right Data

Before we can really get this show on the road, the first thing you need to realize is that a strong registration setup can give you way, way more than just the name, phone number and email address of the people signing up.

Embed questions that will actually help you get an idea of the kinds of people you're dealing with and how you might be able to focus your marketing to take advantage of that.

Find out things like:

- The gender of the parent completing the application
- The camper's hometown
- The school the camper attends
- Where the parent found out about your camp
- The date the registration was completed
- Communities the camper is associated with (churches, sports, youth organizations, etc. Especially useful for more "niche" camps that focus on these sorts of things)



Step 2: Generate Reports

After you've collected all this information, it's time to start applying it. Build reports based on everything you find, even if you don't think it seems relevant. You never know what might turn up when you look at the bigger picture!

Drawing up all these reports might seem a little daunting, but it's actually super easy if your registration system comes with filtering software, since this lets you instantly sort out groups of people based on any data you can think of.

Pull all this data up into a report and download it in a format that works for you. **You now have access to a huge amount of information on your campers, and it's time to start analyzing!**



Step 3: Process Your Data

Take some time now to sit down and have a look at what all your reports have to say. Think about what all the data really means. Share it with your staff or trusted friends and family, and try to figure out the best way to act on what you're seeing.

You always want to be looking for trends in your data, so a good

first step is to try visualizing as much of it as you can into graphs and charts (good registration software should be able to do this for you).

The ability to actually see your numbers makes them a whole lot easier to understand!



Step 4: Improve Your Camp Based on What You See

Now that you've processed all that data, you can now move on to taking meaningful actions to improve the way you run things around camp. This might mean little changes, or it might mean big ones—it all depends on what the numbers say!

Here are a couple basic questions you probably want to think about

- ✓ Which camp sessions were the most popular? Which were the least popular?
- ✓ What problems cropped up that we can solve?
- ✓ What concerns, if any, did my campers/parents have? How can I resolve them?
- ✓ Where are most of my campers coming from (hometown, church, school, sports, clubs, etc.)
- ✓ How are most of my new campers finding out about camp?

Step 5: Start Marketing!

OK, so you now know who your customers are and what they want to see. And that's about all you need to run a top-notch marketing campaign!

Armed with this kind of knowledge, you can focus your efforts far, far more effectively than ever before. You know where to target your boosted Facebook posts, for instance, and you probably know what areas it might be most worthwhile to focus on during outreach events.

Now that you know your customers a little better, you'll also likely be able to come up with more persuasive and effective ads and posts.

All it takes is getting the right data and knowing how to use it.

Step 6: Update Your Application

Now, make no mistake here—your job doesn't suddenly end once you figure out this year's marketing strategy. Learning more about your customers and their wants and needs is an ongoing task! Once you're done with all your data collection and processing, odds are good that you'll be left with a couple questions you

weren't able to answer with the information you have right now. It's all just part of the process. Update your application as much as you can, and repeat next summer!

Step 7: Repeat

And that's about it! Repeat these steps over and over every year, and your marketing campaigns are guaranteed to improve.

As you continue throughout the years, keep in mind that your target audience is not nearly as static as you might like to think. The group of people interested in a camp like yours is going to change a good bit from year to year, and you always need to keep on your toes.

Don't ever assume you know everything there is to know about your campers and their parents. Just keep adapting, questioning, and improving, and that perfect camp family is sure to follow!



PART 3: TAPPING INTO SOCIAL MEDIA

Another invaluable technique for improving your camp is by tapping into the power of social media.

In one way or another, almost all of us some kind of social media in our spare time. We know how it works in our personal lives. We know what we want to share about ourselves, how often we want to share it, and how we want to react and relate to our friends.

Once we start getting into the world of business, though, things become a little more complicated. The way you present your camp online is a lot higher-stakes than whether or not you decide to post those pictures of last weekend's beach trip!

It's not just your friends who are looking at your camp social media accounts. It's everyone. Anyone with an internet connection can see the things you post online, and that's a lot of pressure.

Still, it's important not to let yourself get scared off by the risks of

working with social media. Sites like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter can offer a unique opportunity for a camp like yours, and it's something you definitely want to take advantage of.

Don't let yourself be intimidated. At the end of the day, social media is nothing more than another tool—all you have to do is learn how to use it!

Why does my camp need to be on social media?

Practically everyone is on social media these days, and that includes your campers. Having an online social media presence gives you the ability to interact with your kids in a whole new way! You can connect with them at their level, showcasing all the best parts of your camp to current and potential campers alike.

Social media gives you the chance to show off your best self. By sharing pictures, videos, blog posts, and new camp information online, you can do two hugely important things.

First of all, you maintain a sense of community with past campers. You want your kids to remember your camp and to really look forward to coming back to it each year.

Don't let campers slip away! Keep them excited, and remind them why they loved camp so much.

Social media goes beyond keeping up existing relationships, too. It's also a great way to start up new ones! By pushing out materials onto a variety of social media platforms, you seriously improve your chances of being seen by future campers or their parents.

They click through your posts, they start thinking about camp—and before you know it, they're gearing up to go!

Of course, that's how all marketing is supposed to work, but social media is different from traditional marketing platforms. It doesn't cost you anything, for starters. With the exception of boosted posts (which we'll touch on in a little while), everything you post online is completely free of charge.

In addition to this, good social media posts can create the perfect first impression on prospective campers. **They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and the pictures you post on social media often give people a much better understanding of what your camp is really about than them just hearing about it from someone else.**

All in all, social media really is a camp's best friend. It keeps old campers coming back, and draws new ones in!

Marketing's "Rule of 7"

Another thing to keep in mind as you're thinking about your social media campaigns is a concept in marketing called the "Rule of 7."

There's a lot of advertising in today's world. It's on TV, it's online, it's in magazines and newspapers and radio stations. Almost every waking minute of our day, we're practically swimming in these giant fish bowls of marketing—and to account for this, we've all built up some pretty powerful filters.

We'd all go insane if we took the time to consciously think about all the advertisements we see, and that's why good marketing campaigns are both incredibly important and incredibly tough to pull off. It's not enough for somebody to hear about your camp just once. In fact probably won't even remember hearing about it! It's all filtered out, just like anything else.

If you really want to get your message out there, research suggests that you're going to need to tell the same thing to the same person seven whole times. Seven!

Sound like a lot? It is—and that’s exactly why social media campaigns are so vital. Online platforms give you the ability to push out a huge amount of content, all of which increases the chances of somebody seeing you, thinking about you, and taking action.

Social media enhances communication

In addition to its advantages from a traditional marketing perspective, social media also offers a great way to keep up lines of communication and trust between parents and campers alike. It gives everyone involved in your camp a safe space to communicate with you and with each other, and it can also be a wonderful way to keep up the friendships your kids are sure to make at camp.

It’s also a highly effective way to get word out about new programs you’re considering offering. Post ideas online, and open up the floor for sharing, discussion, and feedback.

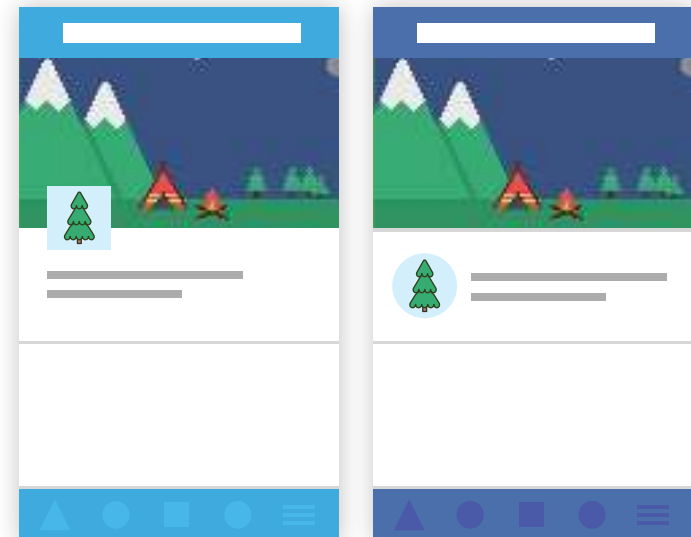
Social media is simply the perfect platform for maintaining a positive and useful connection with the people any business cares about most—its clients!

Social media helps build your brand

One important thing to remember when using social media is that everything you post online contributes to your business’s brand.

Every pic, video, or silly tweet you put up online is an extension of you and your image, so consistency is key here. You’re basically creating a virtual persona for your camp, so you want to keep yourself recognizable across all of your accounts.

You always need to be on the lookout for regularity and potential slip ups. For instance, you want to keep the same logos and color scheme across all your online profiles. Things like that make a difference!



Laying ground rules for social media

Social media can be a powerful tool in the right hands, but as they say, with great power comes great responsibility. Even as they present opportunities, all online platforms also come with risks. This is particularly true if you have a lot of young people on your staff.

Before you get your camp up and running this year, you want to have some written guidelines for how you expect your staff to be acting online during the off season.

Do you want your staff to be able to maintain relationships with campers outside of camp, or is it not worth the risk? What kinds of things do you want your staff to be posting on social media? Should they be required to keep their accounts private? What kind of consequences will there be for breaking these restrictions?

You want to have answers to these questions from the get-go—no matter how much you might love your staff during camp, people act differently during their free time. You need to figure out what kind of balance you want to strike between your staff continuing in their role as mentors, and your staff keeping your camp image respectable and appropriate.

Unfortunately, there aren't really too many simple answers here. You're going to need to give this some serious thought, and be sure to keep your staff informed of any changes to your policies.

Better to get this sorted now than when it's too late!

What social media should you be using?

After you've answered all these tough questions, it's now time to move on to the fun stuff—your camp social media accounts! There's practically no limit to the amount of online opportunities camps can take advantage of. **As a general rule, anything your campers are on, you can be on, too!**

That said, some forms of social media are more effective than others.

For instance, you should always keep in mind that videos and pictures tend to be a whole lot more engaging than plain text. While blog posts do have a place in online marketing (something we'll get more into later on), if you could share just one thing on social media, you'd definitely want it to be your pictures.

That's why, while sites like Facebook and Twitter have their place, **Instagram is the single most effective social media account for just about any camp.**



PART 4: HOW TO MARKET ON INSTAGRAM

There are several reasons why Instagram is the ideal online platform.

First of all, it's insanely popular—300 million daily users, with over 60 million photos posted every 24 hours [can design these stats with # and icon]. Brands in general see way better engagement on their Instagram accounts than on any other social media—on average, more than their Facebook and Twitter accounts combined!

Second of all, young people love Instagram. Over 90% of its users are under 35, and guess what that means? A ton of your campers are already going to be on it!

You want to be wherever your campers are, which makes an Instagram account a must for any tech savvy camp coordinator.

How to Market on Instagram

When it comes to ideas for camp Instagram accounts, there's pretty much no limit to the amount of different things you can try.

The whole idea is to highlight anything visually appealing. Social media users in particular tend to fixate more on pictures than on words, and that's exactly how Instagram is designed to work!

It's a good idea to come up with some recurring "themes" for your posts in advance, just so that your page can keep up some sense of direction and consistency. These can be pretty much anything, but if you're looking for inspiration, **here are some examples that many camps have found useful:**



Arrival Day



Activities Around Camp



Image of the Day



Camper Interviews and Testimonials



Camper Spotlight



Staff Spotlight



Meal Spotlights



Camp-centered Quotes

Try out some of these, or come up with your own!

Maintaining Your Instagram's Day-to-Day

Once you've figured out a plan for what you mostly want to use your Instagram for, it's now time to get out there and start posting. As with all social media, always remember that your Instagram account is really there for entertainment. That means you have a whole lot of artistic liberty!

Even though you've come up with a general plan, you don't want to let yourself feel too constricted. In fact, people appreciate variety in Instagram accounts—they'll get bored if all the posts look the same.

So if you see anything that you find moving inspiring, funny, beautiful, etc. throughout the week, don't be shy. Just post it! Some companies make the mistake of coming across as super stiff or unnatural on their social media accounts. Above all, you want your Instagram to feel engaging and authentic.

Post and comment frequently. If potential campers and their families think of you as approachable, they're automatically going to feel more positively towards your camp.

It's a subconscious thing—even though we all know that the way you act online doesn't always mirror the way you are in real life, your online presence is often people's first impression of your

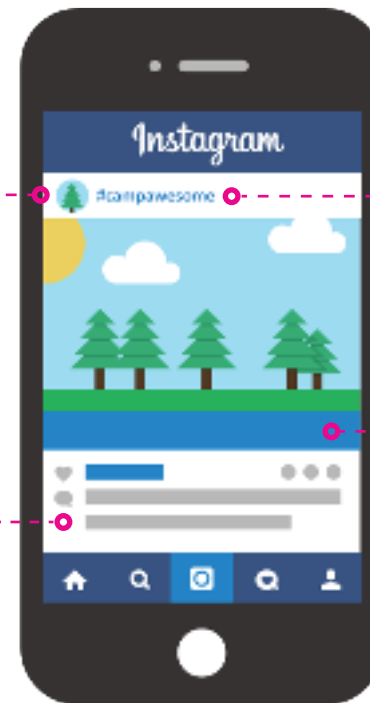
camp. If a kid comes across your Instagram and finds a vibrant, engaging feed chock full of pictures, videos, and more, they get a taste of the energy and positive vibes you give off to your campers!

Choose a great profile picture! Consider your logo or a scenic shot of your camp.

Your username should match any other social media profiles you might have, like Twitter and Facebook. The name should be the name of your camp.

Include your camp #hashtag and any other hashtag that makes sense. Consider using hashtags with the name of your city or other camp specific hashtags, even #camp and #summercamp!

Take a great picture of your camp - whether it's nature, a staff member or camper. Have fun with filters!





PART 5: HOW TO MARKET ON FACEBOOK

Although Instagram might be the most effective social media site when it comes to marketing your camp, it's pretty much expected these days that any legitimate business have a Facebook.

Your “About” page is the go-to spot to find information on who you are as a company. Be sure to fill out all the information it asks for on there. Some especially important details to include are your website (if you have one), your physical address, your contact info, links to other social media profiles, and the ages you work with.

Whew—that's a lot of info! That's how it should be, though. It's everything a parent or camper might want or need to know!



Remember Your Branding

In addition to a solid “About” section, any Facebook page worth its salt is going to have a bright, engaging cover photo and profile pic. Don’t skimp on these! **These pictures are basically the “face” of your camp on Facebook, so you want to be sure they accurately represent who you are and what you stand for.**

Images that include your camp scenery and campers doing fun activities (swimming, hiking, playing, etc.) are always solid options. Don’t forget to include your logo and use some colors/fonts that tie in with your website and other marketing materials.

Remember, any content your camp pushes out should mesh with the rest of your brand.

Link to Your Registration

Links to your registration forms are another must-have for any good camp Facebook page.

Always be sure to include a deadline for each new session. In fact, it’s often a good idea to set these up as Facebook events—that way, you can invite people to come and sign up for your camp before it’s too late!

Events in general are also a fun way to drum up **enthusiasm about your business**. Think about putting together a ‘welcome’ event or some kind of event that will get people excited for your upcoming season and show everything your camp has to offer.



Remember, Content = Advertising

One of the great things about putting together strong social media accounts is that they basically amount to free advertising. Posting doesn't typically cost anything, and if you're creating content that people who follow your page will want to like and share, you're basically having your customers market for you!

Now, you do have to realize that shareable content doesn't mean just anything. Don't post text-only messages like "Camp starts in 3 WEEKS" or "Can't wait to see you guys!!" It's great that you're excited to get camp up and roaring, but that kind of content just doesn't generate much traffic!

Before Camp

- ✓ Share pictures of previous campers having fun
- ✓ Share photos of places around camp
- ✓ Share videos of your staff members working with campers from previous sessions
- ✓ Share "behind the scenes" style pictures

During Camp

- ✓ Post daily photos of everything happening at camp. Be sure to tag your campers or their parents if it's relevant to get them to like, comment and share your photos and posts
- ✓ Share pictures of campers having fun
- ✓ Post videos of campers saying a few words about their favorite part of camp or their favorite activity from the day/week
- ✓ Share photos of projects campers are working on
- ✓ Give parents shout-outs in your status updates

After Camp

- ✓ Continue to post photos and videos of your previous session, with an emphasis on missing camp and wishing you could go back
- ✓ Share status updates from campers after they've returned home (with a focus on how fun camp was!)
- ✓ Share photos of camp along with information on your next session—session dates, registration deadlines, etc.
- ✓ Share "behind the scenes" pictures or updates on your staff and what you're all doing now that your campers have headed home

Above all, just keep yourself approachable and engaging. Don't flood your feed with a ridiculous amount posts, but look alive! These status updates can make or break your camp's online image.

Is Boosting Facebook Posts Worth It?

If you go on your organization's Facebook page, you'll see that you have the option to "boost" your posts for a certain amount of money. Boosting posts makes it more likely that you'll be seen by a specific group of targeted Facebook users.

Whether or not taking advantage of this option is going to be worth it, it's tough to say. There's a lot of variability on a case-by-case basis, and the only way to really be sure is to try it out and see what results you get. It all depends on you, your budget, and your audience.

At the very least, it'll probably be worth your while to at least try out boosted posts once or twice and see how they work.

Facebook lets you select specific groups to target with your posts, so you can be fairly confident this is going out to people who might be interested in what you guys do!

There are a lot of different targets you can aim at, but one group that it's often really effective to focus on is the friends of your followers. Targeting these people means that your ad will be showing up on the feeds of folks who might not otherwise hear about you, and they'll be more likely to take you seriously since they can see their friends use you, too!

Pro tip about boosting posts: Make sure to limit your target group based on the geographic area your customers are likely to be coming from. If your camp is in Miami, you don't need a Facebook user in New York to hear about you.





Scheduling Facebook Posts

Using an online social media scheduler is a great way to make the work of posting to your various social media posts even easier.

Any service that will allow you schedule your own posts in advance by time and date is worth your time! Many of the options out there are free or very low cost (think \$10 per month!)

These services make it way, way easier for you to remain consistent about pushing out content! You can also create 1 post and have that same post push to Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook which saves even more time.

If you can just find a couple hours at some point to sit down and queue up some posts, it'll save you the hassle of trying to remember to do that every day and week.

You could probably use those extra couple minutes once all the craziness of camp starts up!



PART 6: HOW TO MARKET ON TWITTER

While Twitter is typically not as effective as Instagram or Facebook for getting the right people excited about your camp, it can still be a great way to both get your business more exposure and connect with campers.

First of all, Twitter is not the same thing as Facebook.

You don't want to post long or wordy posts. The best way to share on Twitter is with an image, short amount of text and/or a link to a blog post or other webpage. People will engage more if there is a visual, and if it's easy to understand what your post is about when just glancing at it.

The Art of Hashtags

In addition to your tweets themselves, one of the biggest parts of curating an effective Twitter account is mastering the art of hashtags.

Basically, every time you use a hashtag, you increase your visibility. Each time a person clicks on a hashtag in any given tweet, they'll get linked to a feed of all the tweets from everyone in the world using that same hashtag.

How can this work for you? Well, think of it this way. Let's say a Twitter user is interested in camp and searches for, say, #camp. They're going to see a feed of all the tweets from everywhere in the world using that same hashtag—and if a post from your camp catches their eye, you might have just snagged your next customer!

Try messing around with camp-related hashtags. For starters, some obvious ones are:

- #camp
- #summercamp
- #kids
- #friends
- #counselors
- #campcounselor
- #adventure

As a supplement to these popular hashtags, you should also have a look at the Twitter feeds at local newspapers or community organizations. **There might be some local hashtags out there that'll help you focus on customers in your area in particular!**

Picking a Camp Hashtag

You're probably also going to want to come up with a hashtag that's specific to your camp. It doesn't have to be anything fancy—if you're Camp Awesome, just use #campawesome or something similar—but this will really help you clean up your act on Twitter.

Use your camp-specific hashtag every time you make a post, and if your kids are posting about camp, get them to do the same! These hashtags will make it way easier for Twitter users find all the posts connected to your camp.

Another advantage to choosing a custom hashtag is that you'll be able to see every time anyone tweets about you. Always respond to these tweets! It's good for people to see the "real person" behind a social media account, and engaging with your audience is a sure way to get them engaged in return.

Hashtags also make it easier for you to incentivize people to talk about you on social media. Try offering a small discount to people who use your hashtag. You'll be able to see whenever they do, and you'll also be able to private message them a discount code in return (your registration should be able to take care of this discount automatically when they register).

Hashtags Outside of Twitter

One final thing to remember about hashtags is that, even though they're most popular on Twitter, they're not limited to just this one site.

Instagram and to a lesser extent Facebook also use hashtags, so you can take what you learned from Twitter and apply it on these accounts as well.

Just keep in mind that people use each of these sites differently, so a post that worked really well on one of them won't necessarily work as well on the others!





PART 7: PERFECTING YOUR WEBSITE

In addition to social media, curating the perfect website is one of the most important steps to creating a stand-out online impression.

Websites are often the first place people go to find out more information on who you are and what you stand for, so it pays to get them right.

This isn't quite so easy as it sounds, though. Research has shown that it takes the typical visitor somewhere between just three and six seconds to decide if they're going to stay on your site or leave, so talk about first impressions!

To pull your visitors in, you need to make sure your site is looking as attractive as possible. How you want to do this is up to you—some awesome photography, a snappy slogan, sleek web design, etc.—but the point is, it needs to look good.

If it's confusing or isn't immediately pleasing to the eye, you'll be losing traffic—and potential customers!

Here are a couple characteristics of a great camp website:

- ✓ It's easy to navigate
- ✓ It includes your mission and what you're all about
- ✓ It has an easy way to begin registering or a separate page with your registration embedded in it
- ✓ It has pictures and videos of camp
- ✓ It has parents and camper testimonials
- ✓ It has obvious and easy-to-find links to social media pages
- ✓ It has a contact form and an easy way to find out how to get in touch via email, phone, etc.
- ✓ It's mobile optimized

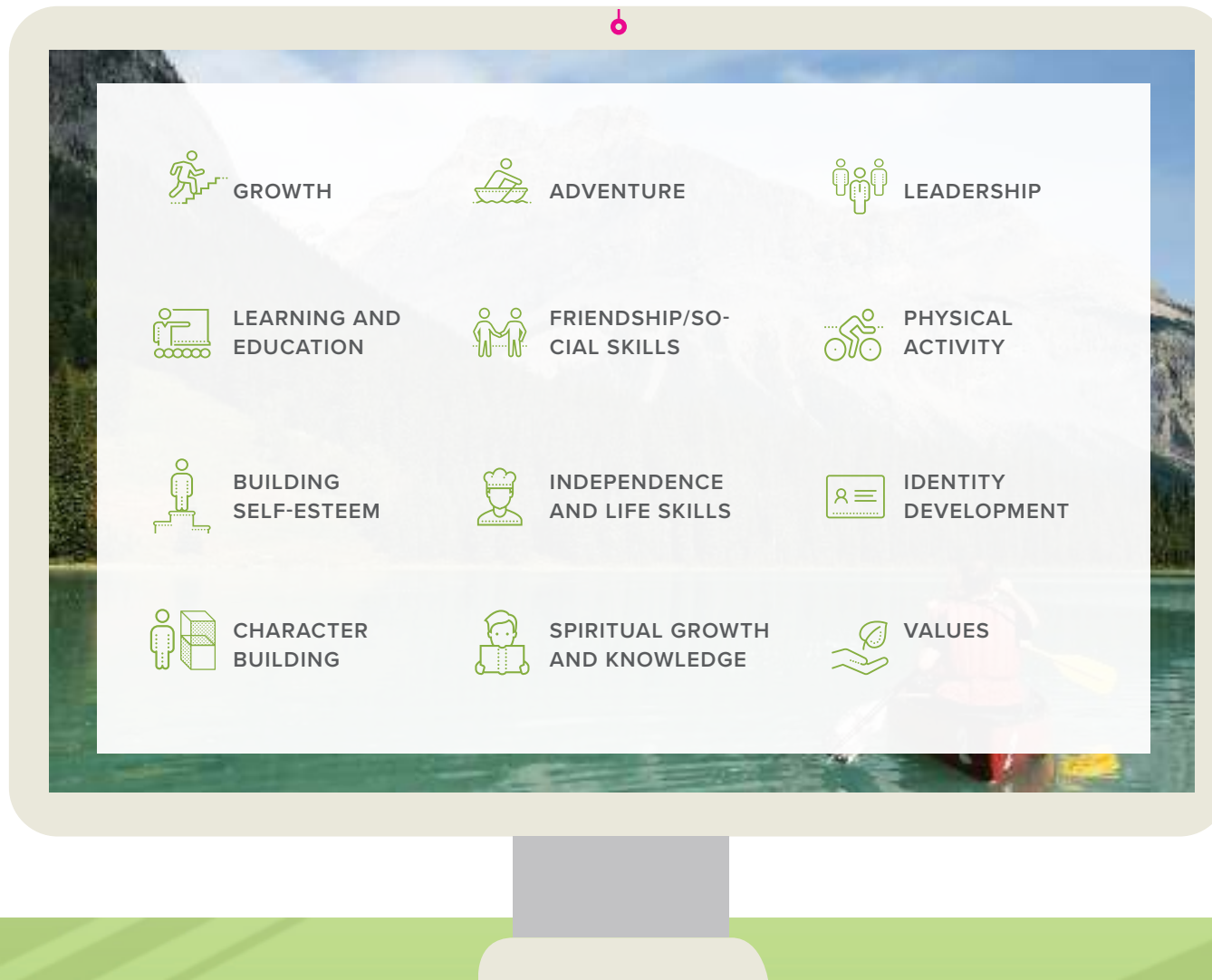
The more of these you have, the more people will enjoy using your site, and the more likely they'll be to stick around!

Remember, one of the most commonly-asked questions on camper parent forums is, "Why should my kids attend camp?" And as with all marketing, your website's job is to give parents an answer.

If you're looking for more resources on how to convince parents summer camps are a great idea, the American Camp Association has a comprehensive handbook that delves into these ideas more thoroughly.

Here are some of the top reasons for attending camp you can highlight on your site:

A lot of these reasons double as buzzwords that will attract parents and search engine bots alike, so don't be shy to sprinkle them around.



You also want to keep in mind the kind of people you're trying to market towards. Do you just provide a childcare setting, or do you have a more specific angle—religion, sports, outdoor activities, etc.? You want to include these kinds of keywords, as well.

Overall, just think about your website as your online storefront. You want search engines to find you, you want people to click on you, and you want your content itself to let “shoppers” know what they're buying and why they should care.

Curating a Camp Blog

A camp blog offers a fantastic addition to any camp website. It's a great way to document all the fun stuff that's going on at your camp and let your passion for your work shine through!

Blogs also succeed from a broader, internet marketing viewpoint as well. You always want to increase the number of pages there are on the Web with your name and camp address attached. And by including some of those key terms we mentioned above, you'll make it that much more likely for your link to pop up when people are looking things up online!

Every blog post you write is another opportunity for somebody to find your business and fall in love. You blog is basically an online portfolio of all the amazing stuff that happens

at your camp, and it can really give your future customers a glimpse into who you are.

Great Post Ideas:

- ✓ Sharing photos
- ✓ Sharing videos
- ✓ Writing “news article” type posts (“Why kids should attend camp,” “Benefits of bunking with your peers,” etc.)
- ✓ Personalized camp updates
- ✓ Staff spotlights—introduce your staff to your readers
- ✓ Camper spotlights—highlight and honor your campers (gets campers and parents reading your blog, and commenting and sharing with their friends on social media. Once again, free marketing!)

Above all, you want passionate, engaging writing that'll attract SEO bots and keep customers coming back for more.



PART 8: THE ART OF EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

Although social media is probably one of the flashiest and most attractive ways to get potential customers psyched about your camp, email marketing campaigns can be more powerful than you might think.

Using email as a camp marketing tool makes sense when you think about how many email addresses you likely have in your directory. It's more than just your campers or your current parents—it's everyone. Anyone who's ever shown any interest in your camp has probably had to put their email down somewhere.

Use this to your advantage! If you've got this all stored in the right registration software, you'll be able to easily filter all the current campers and parents from potential ones, allowing you to more effectively target your online campaigns.



Integrating Software into Your Campaign

Finding the right software really is critical, here. If you're stuck trying to sift through some massive Excel sheet every time you want to send an email blast, the odds of you actually running an effective email campaign are slim to none. Very few people have that kind of patience!

If you can get the proper software, though, pushing out good marketing materials is going to be a breeze. Imagine being able to store everything in one place without even having to think about it—all of your templates and all of contacts, which you'll be able to instantly organize based on any category you can think of.

With the right software, you also won't have to always be stressing about finding the time to send out your next email. You'll be able to write these messages any time you want—days, weeks, even months in advance! Your software will shoot everything out for you when the time comes, and you won't even have to click "send."

Better still, good software will send emails to specific people at specific times. For instance, if somebody clicks on the link to your registration forms but stops halfway through, you can send out a reminder the next day to nudge them to finish. It really works!

Agile software integration means you can have so much more

planned out in advance than ever before. It's more efficient, and it can be a huge weight off your chest.



Personalize Your Emails

So, you've set up a system for automating your emails. You're saving a ton of time and energy, but there's just one thing: Nobody is reading what you have to say!

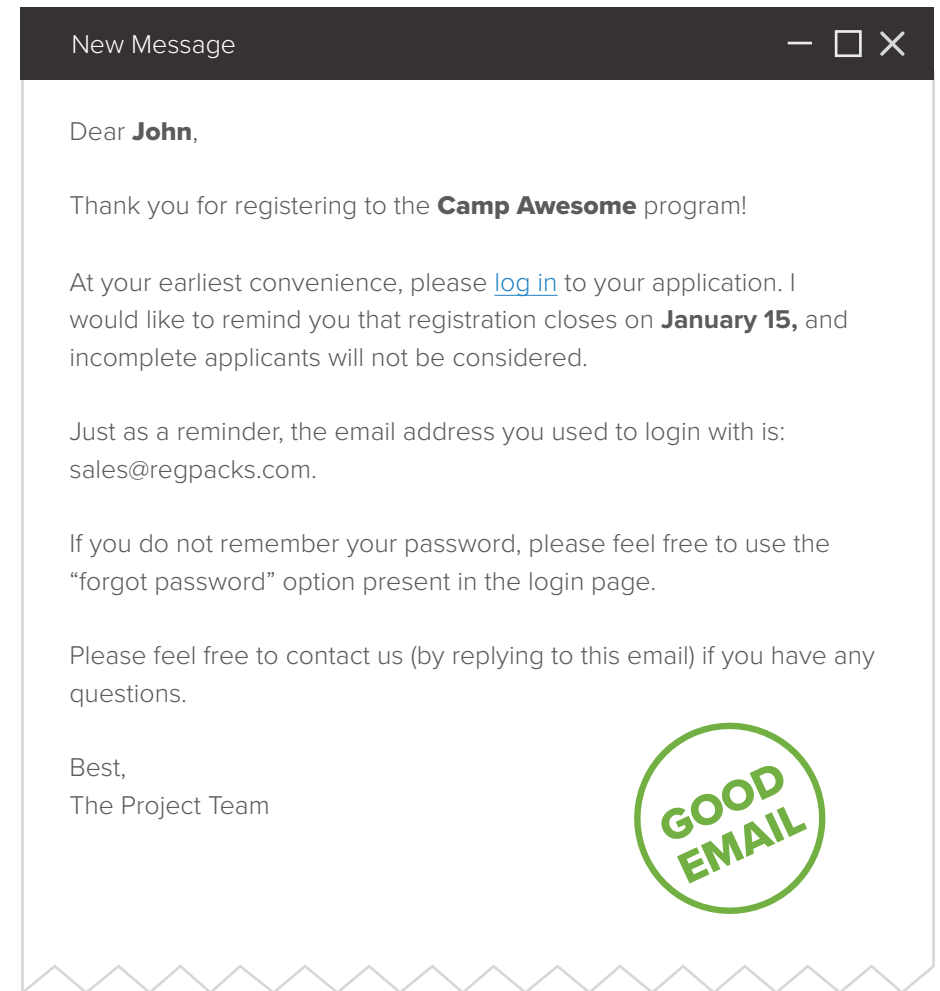
The amount people actually click on things that show up in their inboxes is a common complaint in the marketing world. We're all busy people, and if we see something in our inbox that doesn't immediately catch our attention, there's a good chance we'll never get around to reading it. That's just how people work.

Don't worry too much, though. While there are a lot of different ways to increase reader engagement, some of the most effective ones are often the simplest.

For example, I heard somewhere that the sweetest sound a person will ever hear is the sound of their own name. This definitely holds true in marketing. Start an email "Dear Valued Customer," and you already know how many parents are going to want to read that!

Always start your emails with the name of the person you're addressing. People are a whole lot more likely to listen if they feel like you're talking to them, personally.

Automating emails can also help with this, since you'll be able to filter out specific groups of people to market to. Tweak what you're saying and how you're saying it based on your audience. You'll be surprised how far that'll take you!



Get to the Point

Now, just because you suddenly have the time to write great, personalized emails whenever you want, you do have to realize that this doesn't give you have free reign to make your emails as long as you want.

Your customers are busy people, and email is a busy platform. We're all working with tight schedules and crowded mailboxes, and your audience definitely doesn't have time to wade through lengthy marketing emails if they can't see any good reason to.

This is why great campaigns always get to the point within the first few words.

Remember that your emails are showing up in people's inboxes. Think about what emails look like when they show up for you. Think about the ones you click on.

The first thing your eye always goes to is the subject line. Is this email something I actually want to look at, or is it just glorified spam? Spend some time to put together a subject line that really draws your readers it.

It should basically summarize your email in a couple brief, snappy words.

Also don't forget about the preview text to your messages. Email

clients typically grab the first 50 to 90 characters of your message and put it up next to the subject line, so always be sure that this part of your email is just as engaging as the subject. It makes a difference!

Keep Campers Coming Back

When we talk about marketing, a lot of the time you're probably thinking about expanding your business by reaching out to new customers. And that's great! You always want to be broadening your horizons and expanding your reach, and finding new people is an important part of the job.

But as you're reaching out to all these future customers, that doesn't give you an excuse to neglect your current campers and their parents.

A lot of campers are probably only coming to your camp about once a year, and a year is a long time for young people! Memories fade, people change, and if you're not careful, your campers might forget just how much fun they had at camp.

Your emails can help keep your retention high! You still don't want to ramble too much, but your campers need to be reminded a couple times a year about their family back at camp.

Keep that excitement alive, and those campers will keep coming!



PART 9: ARE DISCOUNTS WORTH IT?

Discounts are a tricky creature when it comes to effective marketing. On the one hand, they mean you're lowering your rates and your profit margins in the hopes of bringing in new customers. On the other hand, though, they're giving potential customers an incentive to act now—instead of just waiting around a couple weeks and possibly forgetting about you.

So are discounts effective, or aren't they? And what kind of discounts should a smart camp marketer be considering?

Unfortunately, like so many other things in marketing, the answer to these questions is simply, "It depends."

To be sure, a lot of people like discounts, and much of the time they're a highly effective tool. Recent research suggests that over two-thirds of consumers say digital coupons improve customer loyalty and have a positive impact on

a brand's image, and about 90% of people will redeem a digital coupon within just a couple days.

But there are a lot of variables to take into account. Everything depends on your customers and your marketing!

Early Bird Discounts

For many camps, early bird discounts can be a great way to increase registration and establish a steady cash flow early on. This is nice because you have a better chance of pushing people who are on the fence to commit to registration. If they think they probably want to go and know that they can save money by registering in the next couple days, they might just go ahead and go for it!

Of course, you do also have to keep in mind that a lot of people taking advantage of these early bird discounts were often already going to sign up for your camp, discount or no. It's always a tradeoff!

How Should You Implement Early Bird Discounts?

There are a couple different ways you can go about applying early bird discounts.

The most obvious solution is to simply give a discount to parents

who register before a certain date. This works well a lot of the time, although you of course have to weigh the amount of income you're giving up against the amount of customers you're drawing in.

Another option is to give access to the most wanted sessions for a limited amount of time.

And finally, another really successful "early bird" type technique is to give away camp gear to people who register before a specific date. This can come in the form of practically anything you might be able to buy at your camp store (shirts, pins, etc.). It's fun, and it gets people wearing your logo and getting the word out there early in the season!

When Should Camp Registration Start?

There are a lot of different schools of thought when it comes to deciding just when, exactly, to kick off your camp registration.

Some camps just make registration coincide with the dates of their camp. Next year's registration kicks off with the first day of camp this year, or maybe the last day of camp. The idea is to catch campers and camper parents while they're still excited about camp and jazzed to go next year, rather than later, once the excitement has worn off.

Other camps open up registration in early December so that families can use camp as a Christmas gift, while others push registration back to Black Friday to cash in on the shopping frenzy.

There's no one "right" way to go about doing this, so it's best to just try a couple things out and see what works best.

Referral Incentives

In addition to early bird discounts, another strong strategy for drumming up more business is through referral incentives. Try offering a certain percentage off a family's registration fees if they can get someone else to register this year. Everybody loves a good deal, and this will get your customers out there, encouraging people they know to sign up so that they can save a quick buck.

Friends are often a whole lot more persuasive than anything you could say!

You can also offer a certain dollar amount off a family's balance due for every referral they get. Depending on how much your camp costs, this might be anywhere from \$20 to \$200. Additionally, you'll probably want to consider sibling discounts and group discounts, as well. This can rope in whole bunches of people from churches, schools, sports teams, etc.—just have them to register as a group, and they'll get that money off!



Other Discount Options

Other discount options to try out involve a little bit more of a personal touch.

Say somebody emails or calls you. You have a really good conversation about your camp, and they seem interested, but not quite 100% convinced. Try offering them a discount code to finish winning them over!

You can also try offering first-time registration discounts to score new customers, or help build customer loyalty by sending out unexpected coupons to customers. If they've been paying for your camp for a few years now, shoot them an email thanking them for their loyalty and offering 10% off (or something like that).

This wins people over big time!

These are just a couple suggestions. Don't be afraid to try a couple discount strategies of your own. It's all about winning people over, and tricks that work vary a lot from case to case.

Using the Right Software

Regardless of what kind of discounts you settle on, you're going to need to make sure your software is actually equipped to deal with money the way you want it to. Your software should be able to:

Top Camp Software Features:

- ✓ Offer amount-based discounts
- ✓ Offer percentage-based discounts
- ✓ Have a discount apply to either a specific purchase or to the entire cart
- ✓ Handle discount codes
- ✓ Trigger discounts when someone completes a certain action (like when they add a certain product to their cart or perform an action by a certain date)
- ✓ Display the amount saved **after** a discount is applied.

You really need to be able to trust your registration system with these things. Discounts can rapidly become a huge hassle if your software doesn't work properly and charges people the wrong amounts, so you need to be 1,000% sure your system is actually capable of supporting your discount strategy!

Online Payments

In addition to those basic functions listed above, good registration software will also be able to handle online payments.

People don't want to be redirected to any kind of third-party site when they're making a purchase. Research shows that 27% of customers will simply click away if this happens, which comes out to a massive loss on your part!

Don't be sending people off to PayPal or their physical checkbooks when they're trying to seal the deal. Just get a registration system that handle online and integrated payments.





PART 10: LOW-TECH TECHNIQUES

So far, we've mostly been talking about online options for running effective marketing campaigns.

And there's a good reason for that—online strategies are often both cheap and effective, and it's sort of expected for you to have a decent online image.

Still, there are quite a few low-tech techniques out there that can help you just as much as a lot of these online strategies.

There's no substitution for tech savvy, but good old-fashioned marketing tricks are often a great supplement to your efforts online.

Word-of-Mouth Marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing is a great example of this.

We all have networks of friends and family that we rely on to find out better ways to do things. It just makes sense—after all, who are you going to trust more, some random advertisement, or a living, breathing person? The people we're closest to know us and our needs. That's why we trust their recommendations so much!

A real person can get through to people far more effectively than any ad in the world.

We trust our networks for recommendations about where to eat, what movies to watch, what products we might find helpful... and, most importantly for us, where we might want to send our kids off to camp!

Word of mouth is great for marketing because it's both effective and free.

So, how are you going to take advantage of this?

One way, of course, is to just make sure your campers come home raving about their experiences. But more than that, it's important that you and your staff take the time to talk to your satisfied customers and kids. By keeping in touch with camper

families even after your camp is over, you can make sure they never stop talking about how much they enjoyed their experiences with you.

Encourage families to spread the word to people they personally know, and also to give testimonials on your website, Yelp, or anywhere else you're collecting reviews.

Get Word Out Through the Schools

Local schools in your area can be another terrific marketing resource.

Where better to find students who would be interested in your camp than at their schools? While the answer to your efforts might not always be “yes,” it never hurts to reach out to a school's administration and see if they might be able to work with you to talk about your camp.

You might be surprised how often schools are excited to work with you!

Both of you are after the same thing, really: helping kids learn, grow, and live their lives to the fullest. Schools know this—and if they don't, it's just up to you to convince them!

Connect with Schools:

- ✓ Build a relationship with the local schools—stop by, send an email, etc.
- ✓ Ask if it's OK to post or provide the school with printed material advertising your camp
- ✓ Ask about school newsletters and see if they'll include information about you
- ✓ Run a booth at school events - there are many events throughout the year and schools are always looking for help, volunteers and sponsors
- ✓ Participate in or sponsor a fall festival fundraiser, holiday event, or other school community event
- ✓ Simply talk with parents!

Don't get discouraged if a couple of these methods don't work—some school administrations will be more accommodating about this sort of stuff than others.

Still, there are probably at least a couple different schools in your area with kids and parents who would be very interested in what you have to say. Never be afraid to reach out and see what will work.!

Don't forget the power of printed materials

Although printed materials are always going to be more expensive than their digital counterparts, they still have their place.

Here are a few ideas for how to use printed materials to advertise your camp:



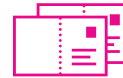
Design and print bumper stickers for existing camper families

Everybody loves free merchandise, and if they like the sticker and love your camp, parents will be happy to drive around town with your logo on the back of their car. They get a sticker, and you get a whole new outlet for advertising!



Print out t-shirts to use as giveaways

T-shirts are a magic thing. Personally, I know that if somebody gives me a free, comfy, custom-designed t-shirt, I'm going to be wearing that thing! If you can afford it, giving away t-shirts to existing camper families, at local events, and around local schools is a great way to increase visibility.



Print out postcards/flyers

The cool thing about physical postcards is that they tend to stick around. If you print out flyers with your camp enrollment and contact information and pass them around at events, schools, or local businesses, people are more likely to pay attention and start seriously thinking about your camp.





Always Stay Positive

Wherever you decide to go with marketing, there's a Japanese proverb that I think holds really true. It goes, "Fall down seven times, stand up eight."

Suppose a man is on the way to someplace important. Does it matter how many times he trips up on the way there, so long as he gets there in the end? Of course not!

In the same way, it doesn't matter if one of the things you try simply will not work. It also doesn't matter if two of them doesn't work, and it doesn't matter if three don't work, or four, or even more than that.

While it's somewhat true that the more marketing tricks you can pull off, the better, the reality is that having just one or two things fall into place just right is often all you really need to grow your camp, reach new families and keep your retention rates high!

Fall down seven times, stand up eight. Nobody needs to know how many of your tactics "failed." In fact, nobody cares! If anything you're doing is enough to get through to people, you're doing your job.

CONCLUSION:

Marketing is tough stuff, but if you know what you're doing, you're already way ahead of the game.

Hopefully these tips have given you some inspiration for the next direction you want to go in with your camp's marketing campaign. With the right work ethic and the willingness to learn, anything is possible.

But don't just take my word for it. Get out there and start marketing!

