



Adopting a parent perspective

Childcare provision is a competitive market. The amount of choice is vast and most parents will consider a number of providers in their search for the solution which ticks the most practical and emotional boxes for themselves and their child as individuals. So why do so many nurseries focus on promoting the excellent quality of their care, their varied activity programmes and their caring staff; when from a parent perspective, these are basic requirements provided by the vast majority?

For individual nurseries striving for full occupancy, the key to success is to give parents reasons to choose their particular nursery. For the parent who has visited three or four different providers in a short space of time it is easy to get mixed up trying to remember the differences between them later. Obviously you have to assume that you are ticking the boxes for all their basic requirements: is the nursery clean, are the staff welcoming and friendly, do the children look happy etc. However you also need to give parents positive reasons to remember your nursery – which means being different or better than the rest. So how exactly do you do this? First you must adopt a parent perspective.

Put yourself in the shoes of visiting parent. Choosing childcare provision can be a difficult and emotional experience, especially for those who doing so for the first time. Feelings of fear, guilt, and stress are all very normal.

Many parents are understandably fearful about leaving their child with strangers. It isn't just as simple as whether their child will be properly cared for: parents will worry about their individual child, and whether he or she will be happy and actively enjoy coming to nursery. Nurseries are very different environments to the home, and although parents know that many children find them stimulating, fun and sociable, they

will still be wondering whether their child will too.

Guilt is an extremely common and powerful emotion for parents when embarking on family-free childcare for the first time. Parents will be thinking about what they will be missing when separated from their child, and feeling guilty about not being involved in their day or seeing their milestones and triumphs.

Actually making a choice of nursery can also be stressful. For many parents, choosing to place their child in a nursery is a logical decision driven by financial pressure to work, often with a 'return to work' date looming on the horizon. Time pressure coupled with having to make a decision about a subject you know very little about can therefore be extremely stressful.

Making things easier for parents

When marketing their services to parents, nursery managers should consider how they address the specific concerns of parents faced with making an emotional as well as practical decision.

For many nurseries, differentiating their business from others is not just about their marketing messages it is also about the actual services and support offered to parents. This is one of the many reasons why so many nurseries invest in 'value-adding' services such as parental webcams, CCTV and fingerprint door access. These are very practical and memorable ways of demonstrating to parents your commitment and dedication to providing the best environment possible, as opposed to just meeting minimum legal requirements.

Interestingly, parental webcams also go a long way towards

practically alleviating some of the negative parental emotions involved in the decision-making process. All the nurseries using NurseryCam parental webcams enjoy full occupancy, some having done so in the first year of opening. Parental webcams enable parents to view their child in the nursery environment, and see for themselves that they are happy, relaxed and enjoying themselves. A bit like a 'virtual open door policy', parents with internet access can 'drop in' on the nursery at any time and check on their child. Not only does this help address feelings of guilt and worry, it helps parents to feel more involved in their child's day, and importantly, it enables the nursery to actively demonstrate its quality of care, rather than just talk about it.

Make sure parents remember your nursery

When fighting for the ultimate vote from parents, nurseries can achieve excellent results by adopting a parent perspective as part of their marketing strategy. There are many ways to do this – but whichever you choose, make sure you avoid the 'me-too' approach and find ways to stand out from the rest. ■

- If you would like further information about parental webcams, CCTV or security for your nursery, please visit www.nurserycam.co.uk, or contact NurseryCam Ltd on 01334 751688 or email info@nurserycam.co.uk.

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