

# A GUIDE TO Marketing your early childhood education and care centre



Updated February 2016

## Table of contents

<b>1. What is marketing?</b>	<b>1</b>
Making the right impression	1
<b>2. Knowing your centre</b>	<b>2</b>
What to do next?	2
<b>3. ECMS service marketing assistance</b>	<b>3</b>
Background	3
ECMS corporate marketing initiatives	3
Individual service marketing initiatives	3
Suggestions for low cost marketing strategies	4
Marketing strategies that will incur costs	5
<b>4. What does ECMS offer</b>	<b>6</b>
Online marketing	6
Print marketing	7
Centre brochure	7
Promotional flyers / posters	8
Community notice boards (Real estate boards)	9
Outdoor promotions - vinyl banners, fence mesh or flags	9
Promotional items	10
Centre fundraising	10
ECMS Communications and Marketing team	10
.....	<b>11</b>
<b>5. Frequently asked questions</b>	<b>11</b>

# 1. What is marketing?

Marketing is a concept that means many things to different people. Most often people associate marketing with posters, brochures, or ads in the local paper. Whilst these are all components of a marketing strategy, alone these are just random promotional activities. However marketing encompasses so much more than that, and when we coordinate these activities into a strategic plan, the impact is far greater.

In the early childhood education sector and within ECMS, marketing is not just about increasing enrolment at your centre, it is a holistic approach incorporating community engagement, parent and stakeholder involvement and brand awareness.

In this guide, we will explore the important aspects of marketing that you should consider when marketing an early childhood centre.

*“Marketing is like building sand castles; you can’t do it once and expect it to last.”*

## Making the right impression

First impressions are very powerful and lasting. The perception of a centre is often created from the first contact (usually a phone call or visit) a parent has with the centre. Therefore phone manner, the language we use, the presentation of the centre, the information or documents supplied to families during their initial enquiries, are all important marketing tools that contribute to how a parent/customer perceives your centre. It is important to consider and evaluate a parent’s journey from the time they discover your centre, through their time at the centre till their child leaves your centre. In marketing terms, each interaction that a customer or parent has with us is called a ‘touchpoint’. Every touchpoint is part of the overall experience or story that a customer creates in their mind. There are lots of things you can do to make this story a positive one.



## 2. Knowing your centre

Before you actively promote your centre, take some time to arrange a discussion with centre staff (or at least the nominated supervisor and/or education leader) in conjunction with committee members/PAG members to review your centre's needs and marketing goals. It is worthwhile to consider the following:

- Understand the centre philosophy.
- Complete a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats). And determine what is your centre's point of difference?
- What relationships does the centre have with local community groups, such as Maternal & Child Health centres, local playgroups, local schools, other local family facilities? Consider how these relationships could be strengthened.
- Who are your stakeholders? How can you partner and work with them?
- How does the centre engage with the community and families?
- Does the centre have a strong working relationship with the local council?
- What are the main events or celebrations the centre will host or be involved in during the next 12 months?
- Complete the ECMS Service Marketing Checklist (<http://www.ecms.org.au/resources-parent-committees>), which will help you to develop your individual centre marketing plan.

### What to do next?

Discussing the above points and completing the ECMS Service Marketing Checklist will allow you to gain a clear understanding of your centre's current situation and the centre's needs which will allow you to plan the next 12 months effectively.

At this stage you should compile your findings from the SWOT analysis and the Service Marketing Checklist into a marketing plan. You can develop the marketing collectively with your committee/PAG and educational staff. ECMS has designed a Marketing Plan template to assist you in planning the next step. ECMS Communication and Marketing team is available to provide you with guidance in developing suitable strategies and support you with developing your marketing plan.

Your marketing plan will cover your centre's specific marketing goals and map out the strategies that will be used to achieve these goals. It should also indicate responsibilities and timings for the included marketing tactics.

A Marketing Plan template is available for you on the ECMS website [www.ecms.org.au/resources-parent-committees](http://www.ecms.org.au/resources-parent-committees)



### 3. ECMS service marketing assistance

#### Background

ECMS works in partnership with committees, parent advisory groups (PAGs), educators and local government to provide support and assistance in the area of service marketing. Our key objectives are to increase and maintain enrolments and engage with families and the community to ensure the ongoing success and sustainability of all of our services.

The ECMS Communications and Marketing team is available to assist all ECMS centres in developing strategies to meet the individual needs of your service and the local community.

Our aim is to be a helpful and productive resource to all centres that we manage, and to empower committees and parent advisory groups to embed their centre within their local community and to engage in positive relationships with local business, education facilities and the general community.

#### ECMS corporate marketing initiatives

ECMS undertakes a range of corporate marketing strategies to enhance the ECMS brand, to communicate with our audiences and to strengthen our partnership with stakeholders.

Our annual and ongoing initiatives include:

- Online marketing including, paid search marketing, remarking, social media communication.
- Ongoing website updates (including service profile pages, open day events, parent resources and ECMS news).
- Regional marketing campaigns focusing on service promotion in geographic regions.
- Parent and community information sessions.
- ECMS AGM (May).
- Regular parent and stakeholder electronic newsletters.
- Parent Survey (July/August).
- Romp and Stomp Fun Day for Children (October).
- ECMS family handbooks (issued at the start of each year via all services).



#### Individual service marketing initiatives

ECMS recognises the tremendous local community knowledge posed by the educators and families at each centre. Therefore, we value and rely on the contribution and input made by educators, committee members, PAGs and families.

The ECMS Communications and Marketing team is here to assist you in promoting your service and enabling you to strengthen your connection with your local community.

ECMS Communications and Marketing assist each service with the following marketing initiatives:

- Developing marketing plans as required.
- Designing and developing marketing collateral, items such as centre specific brochures,

flyers, posters, and business stationery such as business cards, letterhead etc.

- Designing and developing promotional material required for Open Days (and major celebrations such as milestones, redevelopment/expansion). We are also in the process of developing templates for committees and PAGs to utilise for other events such as fundraising, fetes, movie nights etc.
- Event management for service openings.
- Managing each centre's web profile page on the ECMS website.
- Promoting services, events, enrolment opportunities via various social media platforms.
- Booking and designing print advertising for local newspapers and various local publications (as required).
- Liaising with local government to promote centres via their networks and publications
- Organising parent information sessions - promoting early learning across all areas.
- Assisting with public relations activity, developing editorial with educators or committee to promote centres (as required).
- Developing mailout campaigns local networks engaging with local playgroups, maternal and child health centres, playcentres, libraries etc. (as required).
- Assisting with various design requirements, establishment of templates, centre signage (as required).

We strongly recommend that each committee and PAG regularly discuss the marketing needs of your centre at meetings. Often services feel that their enrolments are doing well for the year and therefore they do not need to participate in open days or community events. However, we recommend that services remain connected to the local community and participates in these types of events and activities to maintain the connection to future prospective families for the longevity of the service and its brand.

ECMS Communications and Marketing team suggests each centre considers the following marketing strategies to retain or enhance their profile within their local community:

- Participate in set council open days. If your council does not have a set day, arrange your own centre open day. We suggest the best time for open days is around March/April/May.
- Participate in local community events and festivals.
- Establish local networks, engaging with local playgroups, libraries, maternal and child health centres, playcentres, libraries etc.
- Engage with local schools, especially the schools that children from your centre will attend in future years.

## Suggestions for low cost marketing strategies

- Produce service brochures via ECMS. Distribute service brochures or flyers to local playgroups, maternal and child health centres, playcentres, libraries, gyms, swimming/sports centres etc. ECMS does not charge you to design and develop your brochures or flyers. The only costs involved are printing costs, which comes out of your marketing budget.
- Include a small ad in a local community/family newsletter produced by your local school, sports club, children's club (such as gymbaroo), etc.
- Establish a Facebook page, to inform local families of events, special days and about the achievements of your centre. (Be mindful of the information that is posted on this type of social media and develop clear responsibilities and a policy for managing this page). Refer to the ECMS Social Media Policy.
- Run a paid social media campaign via Facebook and others - boosting posts and running Facebook adverts provides is a low-cost means of reaching a broader audience.

- Hold an open day or open evening. Make sure you have plenty of time (at least 4 weeks) to promote such an event to ensure the best possible attendance.
- Organise a free real estate/community notice board in a prominent local area. (If the area selected is council land you will need to organise a permit, please note that council locations fill up quickly, therefore please organise this at least 6 months in advance to avoid disappointment).
- Organise for a local newspaper reporter and photographer to attend a special event at your centre so that they can produce an article about your wonderful centre and what it offers the community, in the local newspaper. ECMS staff will support you to write a media release (if required). Be aware that free publicity this is entirely at the discretion of the media editor and is not a guaranteed form of publicity.
- Advertising via your council. A number of local council's produce reference documents, newsletters etc. that you might be able to advertise in or include an editorial about your centre.

ECMS Communications and Marketing team will assist you in producing a range of free or low cost marketing collateral to use for various promotional needs. In the event that you do have additional funds available for marketing the service, ECMS can recommend a marketing plan and budget that is designed to deliver the greatest return for your investment.

## Marketing strategies that will incur costs

If your service requires an enhanced marketing campaign, depending on your budget you might like to consider the following options:

- Advertising in the local newspaper – ECMS receives great rates for both the Leader and Weekly newspapers. (Currently we receive 30% discount on Leader newspaper advertising rates due to our large buying power so it is worth going via ECMS when you plan to advertise in the paper).
- Advertise in other local publications such as your “Your Child in (your local area)” magazine.
- Digital marketing campaigns including targeted online advertising and paid search marketing campaigns via websites such as Google, BabyCentre, Careforkids, etc.
- A flyer/brochure letterbox drop distribution targeting your local area. ECMS can provide you with quotes from a number of letterbox distribution companies. Please keep in mind that you will also need to consider the cost of printing large numbers of flyers or brochures to utilise this type of service.
- Organise an information event at your centre. These types of promotions can work really well if you can engage a well known presenter such as Kathy Walker, Catherine Hydon or a local presenter, and target the event to parents of young children. This type of event allows families to attend your centre, meet the staff and become familiar with what your centre offers.
- A radio campaign can be effective if you have a relevant local radio station in your area or are willing to partner with other ECMS services to promote collectively.

## 4. What does ECMS offer

ECMS offers a range of marketing solutions tailored to the specific needs of your centre. Our team of experienced and professional staff will analyse your needs and recommended a marketing approach that delivers the best possible solution within your budget.

In order for ECMS to provide quality marketing assistance while maintaining low operating costs for our centres (thus not increasing your service costs), we have implemented a number of standardised promotional documents.

Below we have outlined a number of available marketing solutions/approaches.

### Online marketing

In recent years online marketing has grown in both popularity and reach. Most organisations now use a variety of online marketing tactics to inform, sell and engage with their customers. Online marketing is constantly changing and developing, ECMS works with digital marketing experts to implement strategic and effective online campaigns.

Currently ECMS promotes all services via the following online incentives:

- Online paid search marketing, incorporating Google Adwords and Google My Business. (Also known as Search Engine Marketing SEM) This allows our services to be displayed at the top of search results when a person searches a variety of keywords associated with early childhood education and the services we manage. The paid search marketing extends to Google, Bing and Yahoo.
- Social media marketing. We promote our services and events via a variety of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Re-marketing campaigns. Re-marketing is a technique which allows us to continue to promote our services via banner ads to an audience who have searched for terms relating to our industry or our services.
- ECMS website. This allows us to showcase each service highlighting their education and care philosophy, their program and enrolment process. We also provide news updates, events, and resources to families and committees. The content on our website has been optimised to deliver the highest possible search ranking results.
- Email campaigns. ECMS continues to engage with and inform our families, stakeholders, partners and peers with updates on organisational and services achievements and news via our regular email campaigns.



## Print marketing

Based on experience, ECMS has developed a suite of marketing collateral which can effectively promote you centre.

**Please Note:** ECMS does not charge for graphic design when you utilise our design templates. Here within you will find details of promotional collateral we recommend and can assist you with.

## Centre brochure

There are two versions available a single fold brochure or a bi-fold, both versions are double sided and fold down to a DL size.

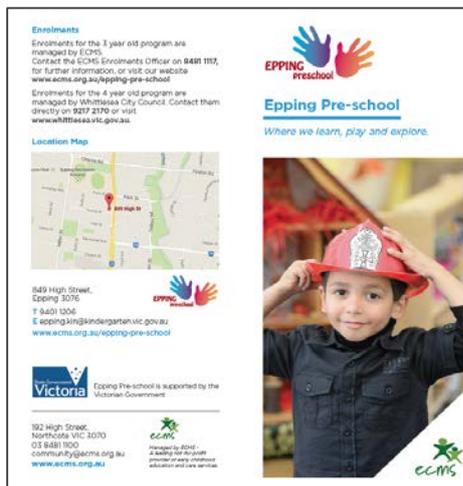


A single fold brochure

Example of completed artwork

Front cover

Internal pages





An A4 bi-fold brochure  
 Example of completed artwork

Back panel

Front cover

Internal pages



**Associated costs:** ECMS will design the brochure of your choice. Your input for content and images will be requested.

We will design one brochure per year per service. We can also print up to 100 copies free of charge. (These will be printed on our office colour laser printer, on office stock paper 90sgm). **If you require more or gloss finish brochures, these can be outsourced and will be charged at cost (quote will be provided).**

## Promotional flyers / posters

ECMS can design a variety of flyers to enhance centre utilisation. These include initiatives such as; letter box drops, Open Day promotions, major centre milestones, new centre opening or expansion of service. We are unable to design flyers for every event your centre will hold, therefore we have developed a range of simple templates that you can utilise to promote a variety of events, these are available at [www.ecms.org.au/committee-and-parent-advisory-group-toolkit](http://www.ecms.org.au/committee-and-parent-advisory-group-toolkit)

A5 flyer (21 cm high x 14.8cm wide)

A4/ A3 flyer or poster

Examples of completed work (not to scale)



**Associated costs:** ECMS will design two flyers/posters of your choice, per year.

We can also print up to 200 copies in total free of charge for the year. (These will be printed on our office colour laser printer, on office stock paper 90sgm). **If you require more or gloss finish output, these will be outsourced and will be charged at cost (a quote will be provided).**

## Community notice boards (Real estate boards)

In most cases committees are requested to make arrangements with real estate agents. ECMS will produce the artwork and will assist with council permits if required.

**NOW OPEN**

**Oakhill Family Centre**  
Long day care for children  
3 months to 6 years of age

**ENROL NOW**

**OPEN NIGHT**  
Thursday  
12 March  
6pm to 8pm

Enrolment enquiries phone 8470 8118

Managed by ECMS - A leading not-for-profit provider of early childhood education and care services. 192 High Street (PO Box 382) Northcote VIC 3070  
T +61 3 8481 1000 E ecms@ecms.org.au W www.ecms.org.au

Average size 1690mm wide x 1900mm high (the actual size will be determined by the specifications of your real estate agent)

**Quantity produced:** ECMS will produce one community notice board artwork per year.

## Outdoor promotions - vinyl banners, fence mesh or flags

There are a number of options available for outdoor promotions, if you require one of these products it is best to discuss this with our marketing staff.

**Quality childcare and kindergarten**

Places available enquire within or call: 9388 0777

Thinking Kids Children's Centre  
A collaboration between CCE and ECMS

Thinking Kids Children's Centre is supported by the Victorian Government

Managed by ECMS, a leading not-for-profit provider of early childhood education and care services

**Associated costs:** Product cost will vary depending on size and quantity, please speak to our staff to obtain a quote.

## Promotional items

ECMS can assist your centre in arranging a number of promotional items such as balloons, pencils, magnets. Please ensure that you contact the Marketing and Communications team well in advance to arrange quotes, artwork and determine the production lead-time.



## Centre fundraising

Fundraising activities are an important aspect of each kindergarten / preschool. Committee and PAGs work in consultation with the educators to determine how much fundraising is required and what type of fundraising activities the centre should organise.

For ideas and suggestions about fundraising please refer to the ECMS website committee resource page: <http://www.ecms.org.au/resources-parent-committees>

Please remember that every fundraising activity is an opportunity to promote your centre to your local community and potential families.

## ECMS Communications and Marketing team

Our team of marketing and communication professionals are here to assist you, please feel free to contact any of our members with your questions or feedback.

### Angie Farrugia

General Manager,  
Communications and Marketing  
P: 8481 1102  
E: [afarrugia@ecms.org.au](mailto:afarrugia@ecms.org.au)

### Eva Brennan

Services Marketing Manager  
P: 8481 1125  
E: [ebrennan@ecms.org.au](mailto:ebrennan@ecms.org.au)

### Kate Jeremiah

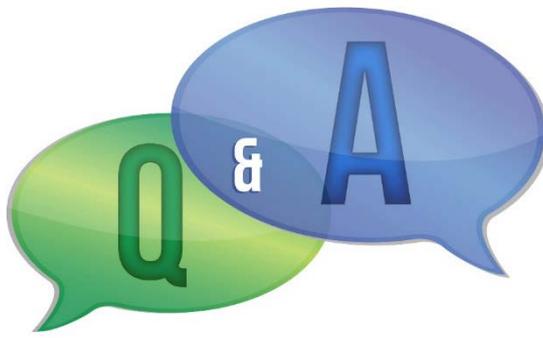
Communication and Events  
Coordinator  
P: 8481 1124  
E: [kjeremiah@ecms.org.au](mailto:kjeremiah@ecms.org.au)

### Tanya Almeida

Services Marketing Assistant  
P: 8481 1106  
E: [talmeida@ecms.org.au](mailto:talmeida@ecms.org.au)

### Fran Kent

Marketing Assistant  
P: 8481 1129  
E: [fkent@ecms.org.au](mailto:fkent@ecms.org.au)



## 5. Frequently asked questions

Q: Who do I contact at ECMS to get assistance with my enquiry?

A: If you have a basic question please feel free to call and chat to any of the ECMS Communications & Marketing team by calling us on ph: 8481 1100. If you require our team to create new or update any existing marketing/promotional document please complete our communication brief and email this to [marketing@ecms.org.au](mailto:marketing@ecms.org.au). Our communication brief can be accessed online at <http://www.ecms.org.au/resources-parent-committees>

Q: How do I arrange for new flyer/brochure to be made up for our centre?

A: Complete the ECMS communication brief and email this to our Communications & Marketing team at [marketing@ecms.org.au](mailto:marketing@ecms.org.au) along with any images you would like us to include.

Q: How can I update our webpage on the ECMS website?

A: Please email your requested changes to [marketing@ecms.org.au](mailto:marketing@ecms.org.au) and one of our staff will update your webpages.

Q: What time frames can I expect from ECMS for marketing request?

A: ECMS is a not-for-profit organisation and although we have a highly experienced team of marketing staff to assist you with your needs completion of your request may take some time. We recommend that you contact our department as soon as possible and will advise you of time frames that are relevant to your individual request.

Q: I would like to organise an event to promote our centre, can you give me some tips?

A: ECMS can assist you with advice on preparing a range of events. Refer to our guide entitled "How to prepare a successful event" which is jam-packed with hints and tips on event management, this document is available online at <http://www.ecms.org.au/resources-parent-committees>