

4 Tips for Building a Child-Oriented Business Model



Thinking back 30 years ago when I first began my childhood art enrichment business at my kitchen table, I would've never have imagined that the children's enrichment industry would become as popular or competitive as it is today.

Many child-oriented business owners are drawn to the business category because they not only do they enjoy working with children, but they are also pursuing a passion project that is both rewarding and lucrative.

Personally, I chose to build a child-oriented business because as a mother, I felt fulfillment in investing my time into a program that helps children learn and as an entrepreneur, I wanted a business model that I could grow over time and leave as a legacy for own children.

When growing my business, I want franchisees who aren't just looking for a casual way to get involved but also want a strong business, where they can make a very good living while doing good in the community and loving their job. While developing and operating a business that specializes in working with children is rewarding, it's not always easy.

I've found that the key to differentiating a product or service in this burgeoning industry is leveraging the inherent characteristics within a child-oriented business model. You can use them as tools to highlight the strength of your business, whether you offer after-school art classes, sports activities or other enrichment programs.

Here are four considerations to take into account when building up your child-

oriented business:

1. Contrast your concept through competition

When competing in a market targeting a very niche customer base, it's important to embrace and market your key differentiators. It's also crucial to be aware of your competitors' selling points and what characteristics other brands are using to distinguish their concepts. Use that knowledge to your advantage and fine-tune your concept and/or programming to cater to the needs or interests of your audience.

Plan your programs with customers in mind – choose convenience as a distinguishing factor for your brand. By associating your brand with convenience, which is a quality most parents seek out when choosing an enrichment program for their children, your concept will automatically align with the segment of busy parents who need a program that aligns with their schedules and thus, increases your chances of being sought out.

The Young Rembrandts program makes it easy for schools to set up a class and parents to register. Our franchisees provide registration services, manage all classes, provide teachers and all the supplies.

2. Leverage local marketing tactics

In any business, it's important to know your local market inside and out. Depending on your business' market, your target audience may be smaller than you think, and using a narrow marketing approach can be the most efficient use of resources.

As the owner of a child-oriented business concept, you know the business and target audience, but like many things in life, there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to marketing parents across markets that vary in size, location and demographics.

If you're a franchisor, you should have the tools and strategies prepared to help your franchisees market their business successfully. But, the benefits of being a franchise system aren't one way – learn from your franchisees, gather best practices from high-performing areas and share them system wide.

3. Keep an updated tech toolbox

As technologies evolve, our goal as a franchisor is to create efficiencies for franchisees so they can remain focused on their business without redundancies. Franchisees want to know the quickest, easiest way to use platforms and systems to drive sales. Not to mention, advanced technology updates and support are huge perks in the eyes of prospective franchisees, especially for concepts that have been around for a while.

As a franchisor, I've found the best route when it comes to implementing new technology advances and platform changes across the system is to position

innovation and new systems as added tools, rather than as replacements.

The more we can share ways to use technology to train franchisees and support them in training their own staff, we're able to free up time and resources for franchisees to focus on the growth of their business and to do spend time in their community and with their families.

Leverage technology as a value proposition to your customers too, keeping in mind that regardless of what programs/services to your child-centric business concept offers, parents are ultimately seeking convenient, streamlined processes to register/enroll/sign up and have all the information necessary for them to get on with their days.

4. Commit to quality and your core focus

In the modern age, there's often pressure to experiment with trends. Stay committed to your concept's foundation and value. And, as the saying goes, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Over the 30 years Young Rembrandts has been serving children, I have found that when we truly focus on our concept/product and making sure kids really understand and absorb the material, the happier the customers (both parents and children) will be.

At the end of the day, kids will always be kids, and are inherently similar on a developmental level across generations and cultures. They are hungry – they want to learn, they want to be successful. And parents talk – positive word-of-mouth as a result of a clear commitment to children's wellness will grow your business's reputation.

As you grow your business concept, I encourage other child-oriented models to keep focused on the kids at the heart of their business, as that is truly the main ingredient for building a robust child-oriented business.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CEO Bette Fetter founded Young Rembrandts in Elgin, Illinois in 1988. Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, Young Rembrandts has become a recognized leader in art education, offering a curriculum focused on teaching children to draw, using demonstration and a structured step-by-step process. Young Rembrandts teaches more than 40,000 students ages 3 ½ to 12 years old each week in 31 states and four provinces.