



The Camp Director's Guide to the Best Summer Ever

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CHAPTER 1

Maintain Your Camp

Having an outstanding camp is important to keep campers happy and coming back each year. You want them to have the best experience possible, and part of this experience includes:

- *Comfortable cabins*
- *Well-maintained restrooms*
- *Modern techniques and technology*
- *Tasty and nutritious meals*
- *A knowledgeable and caring staff*

The activities included in your camp experience are also incredibly important in keeping campers happy. The whole reason children come to camps is because of what you are offering them; the experience and environment that you create. Having a way to build reports to see which activities were favored and which were not can help a lot when trying to gain repeat campers. Choose a registration solution that allows you to build those reports.

Running a report can tell you if canoeing was more popular than rock climbing. That doesn't mean you have to ditch rock climbing, but maybe you should focus on canoeing when you go to market your camp the next year.



Wow Factors!

Wow factors are important. These are the big things that drive people to your camp. It is important to have at least one wow factor every year. This can be something like an activity that you've haven't offered before, or the acquirement of any brand new equipment. Of course, repeat campers are returning because they like what you did before, but nobody wants to have the exact same experience over and over again.



CHAPTER 2

Build Relationships

Building a bond and a relationship with the campers is important in bringing them back. If a camper felt no connection and did not have a good time, they are not going to come back.

Get to know your campers!

Children are used to getting attention from their parents. They are use to having their parents save the day when something goes wrong or having them be a part in every aspect of their lives. Because of this, it's important that you and your staff give the children individual attention they need to feel at home at camp.

When time permits, get to know the interests and personalities of each camper, and encourage your counselors to build bonds. Unless campers feel a connection to their counselor, they won't be getting the full camp experience.

Yes, there are a lot of names to remember. A good way to tackle this is dividing your camp into sections, groups, or teams based on age, education level, etc. Each counselor can then be assigned a manageable number of campers with which to become familiar. This allows for strong bonds to be made without overwhelming yourself and your counselors.

*Join their world before
making them join your
world!*

Anyone who's spent more than 5 minutes with children knows that they can be easily distracted. When kids are given tasks they may swerve into a different task of their choosing. For example, if a child is given the task of taking out the trash that day after dinner, and instead they're jump roping, don't just pull the child away from what they're doing and order them to take it out now. Instead, engage with them and make yourself part of their activities. This will build a bond and let the child know that you value them and what they like.

After engaging, you can (usually) coax the child away from what they are doing and get them to return to the task they were assigned. Counselors have a tough job, but a little understanding and some special attention goes a long way with a kid, whether they're a camper or your own child.

Don't be negative.

Children come to camp to have fun and be happy. Sure, some amount of learning and social skills will manage to find its way into their camp experience, but kids care most about having a good time. When they feel a negative energy their moods will change. And with kids, sarcasm is rarely a good thing, and it's no way to try and change behavior. Most children will take what you are saying to heart, and could really hurt their feeling. The last thing you want to do is alienated a camper.

Pay attention.

It's the counselor's jobs to see what relationships are forming, and which kids might need a little extra help building bonds with their fellow campers. Some kids take to new friends like fish to water. Others will require a bit more encouragement. The children that appear isolated or are not fully engaged in the activities might require a little more of your attention.

It is important to find out what problems the child is having. Engage with them. They need to feel that you are here to help them. If they're having trouble making connections in a big group, break those down into smaller teams. A lot of normally shy kids can really shine when they don't feel the pressure to perform in front of a large group. So, assist them in making friends with others. Cause happy children make for returning campers, and your efforts might even inspire some of them to one day be a counselor like you.

CHAPTER 3

Social Media Strategy



Having a strong social media presence is one of the top marketing tools today. It's important to utilize everything you can in order to market your camp to the right audience, and social channels like Facebook and Twitter can definitely help with that.

When you are marketing your camp, you're not actually marketing to the campers. The registrations come from parents, and those are the people that need to think of your camp as the best choice for their child. Studies have shown that people who are active on social media make for some great repeat customers, and a couple good reviews circulating the web can do a lot for a small business like a camp or after school program.

But don't get bogged down in knowing the ins and outs of every social platform. You'll probably want to pick 2 channels at most, as managing more than 2 can be a whole nother job in itself. There are a ton of them to choose from, each with a different audience and method to reach them.

Some of the top ones are:



Pinterest



Facebook



Twitter



Described as a “virtual pinboard,” Pinterest allows you to organize and share all the beautiful things you find on the web. Users can browse pinboards created by other people to discover new things and get inspiration from people who share your interests.

Experian ranks Pinterest as the third most popular social network in the US, totaling 10.4 million users and having more than 21 million visits since 2012. And according to comScore, visitors have increased by 2,702% since May 2011 and 145% since the beginning of 2012. That’s a lot of pins. Oh, and perhaps the most important stat for camp directors is that some 50% of Pinterest users are said to be parents. That’s the half of Pinterest users who you want to take notice of your camp.

1. Focus on an angle.

Your goal is to gain repeat customers. Use Pinterest to show the fun exciting things you have. Use it to show different ideas that you are looking into adding to your camp. Use Pinterest as a visual to show off your camp.

2. Use original content.

It is okay to use examples of ideas that you want to add to your camp, but don’t forget about original content. Make sure you are pinning things that are at your camp that you took. Use photos from the summer before to advertise the things that you can do.

3. Organize.

Make sure that you organize your pictures into boards. You want to make it easy for parents of campers to look and find.

4. Be social.

Pinterest is a social media site so engage. Repin other pins, follow other people and comment.

5. Description.

- It is important to create an amazing description so you can make your camp sound that much better.
- Utilize keywords for good SEO. The more keywords in your description you use the better people can find your stuff when they are searching. But remember, do not overcrowd your description with keywords. Keep it to 2-3 keywords per description.
- Keep your descriptions to no more than 200 characters. You want to keep it short and to the point so people will read it.
- Include the URL to your website. Make sure the URL to your website is in the description so if people want to know more they do not have to go searching for it. They can simply go the website in the description.



According to Facebook, as of 2015 they have 936 million daily active users and 798 million mobile daily active users. So it's no surprise that Facebook is one of the top social media sites. Having Facebook allows you to connect with people you know, who they know, and even folks you've yet to meet. This is a good place to connect with parents to acquire repeat campers.

On Facebook, you can share photos from previous years (with parental permission, of course). And Facebook's algorithm loves pictures almost as much as parents do, which means that posts with pics will get seen a lot more than those with just text.

Not to say that what you write isn't important. You'll want to highlight all the fun and exciting things that your camp provides to keep the parents interested. Frequency is key. You'll want to post regularly enough so that people don't forget about you, but also don't get annoyed with seeing your content. For small to medium sized camps, a post a day is generally a good rule of thumb.

Facebook also has Facebook Ads, which is where you can really attract more potential parents and campers. You can "boost" your posts to be shown to a wider audience of your choosing. You can select the age range, location, and interests of users you want to see your ad. Of course, you'll need to pick which posts are worth boosting and which are not. If you're trying to attract new and repeat customers, boost posts announcing when registration starts, or those that highlight the activities you'll be offering in the coming year.



Twitter can be considered a kind of micro blog. It's a small conversation tool that allows you 140 characters to say whatever's on your mind. It's best for when you're trying to direct people to view content on your website, or when trying to start a direct conversation between yourself and your customers.

Twitter allows you to follow other users, tweet (post), favorite (like), retweet (repost). You can tweet about things you posted on Facebook or your blog with a link directing your twitter traffic to that post. You can interact with your audience by posing questions like: What would you like to see differently next summer? What is the activity your child enjoyed the most? Twitter is all about direct engagement.

Connections formed on Twitter are often stronger than those made through other social channels, as Twitter users are generally more engaged with the people and brands they follow. A good measurement of how your content is doing on Twitter isn't necessarily the number of followers you have, but how many of them favorite, retweet, and reply to your posts.

How to use Twitter



Follow people.

Follow the parents and campers that have been apart of your camp. Most Twitter users will follow back someone that follows them. Don't expect people to just know that you're on Twitter now. It's your job to go and engage with them.

Talk.

After you built a good follower base, start tweeting. Talk about things that have to do with your camp or camps in general. Mention your accomplishments, link to good reviews you've received, and highlight the most popular aspects of your camp.

Drive traffic.

Use your Twitter to drive traffic to your other social media sites, blog and website. Mention your blogs in your posts or your website, and include links to deeper content. You want to make it easy for people to find out what your camp is all about. Having a link to click will create more engagement with your audience.

Connect.

Connect your twitter to your website and blog. Make sure you are advertising your twitter by having links and icons posted somewhere on your website and in any email you send out.

Share.

Share photos and videos in your tweets. Don't rely on just your words to sell your camp and engage followers. Photos and videos are what people notice first, and they have a much higher rate of engagement than your standard 140 character message.

Organize.

You can organize your followers into lists. Have separate lists for customers, potential customers, repeat campers, etc. This allows you to see the tweets from just those members on a separate timeline, making it much easier to keep up with your target audience.

Use Hashtags.

Research and use popular, camp-related hashtags in your tweets. Hashtags make searching for specific content on Twitter a lot easier. For example, #SummerCamp is a popular hashtag used by camp directors and parents alike. But be sure to not crowd your tweet with too many hashtags, or they'll end up looking like an alien language. You'll want to limit them to 1-2 per tweet.

A blurred background image of a workspace. In the foreground, a silver laptop with the Apple logo is open on a wooden desk. To its right, a black smartphone lies flat. The background shows a wooden chair and a white brick wall, all out of focus.

CHAPTER 4

Emails

Acquiring campers' email addresses is extremely important. Having addresses allows you to market to the parents directly. You can notify them when registration is opened, make them aware of any deals and discount, ask for feedback, and invite them to camp-related events that you're hosting or attending. Email is really key to creating repeat campers, and online registration software like RegPoint helps store email addresses automatically as soon as they fill out a registration form online. You can also input the addresses manually if you've acquired a bunch of paper lists over the years.

Having all the addresses in one place allows you to send mass emails to the entire group or a segment of that group, and save those emails as templates to send again next year.

The Keys to Bulk Emailing

Personalize your emails. If they think it's spam they won't open it. Choose a Subject line that gets right to the point, like "Camp Registration is Now Open" and avoid sales-y phrases like "free" or "act now" to ensure that your email won't get flagged by Google or another email service.

Make sure the information in your emails is accurate and is actionable. In any email you send out you need a Call-To-Action (CTA). Tell them what you want them to do. If you want them to register for your camp, tell them that and how to do that and maybe include a "Register Today" button that links to your site or registration form.

Always provide your website in the email. Your website is your online home, and you want to give people clear directions to your home so that they can find their way when they're ready to take action.

Don't put information in an attachment. Most people read their email on a mobile device, and they're not likely to click on anything that needs to open in a separate application. Make sure whatever you want them to see is in the body of the email.

Make sure all your social media buttons are displayed in your email. If people want to check out your Twitter and Facebook, make sure your social channels are easy for them find.

Don't make your email too long or full of huge pictures. Keep it short and sweet. Like this tip.



The important thing to remember when sending emails...

...is that you shouldn't bombard customers or potential campers with too many. Eventually, people might get annoyed and unsubscribe for your list or block you altogether. So, go easy on those emails. One a month is a good place to start. And if you're gearing up for the big camp season, one email per week is probably the most you want to send.

A photograph of three people sitting on a rocky outcrop in a forest, looking out over a misty valley. The people are seen from behind, wearing outdoor gear. The forest is dense with tall evergreen trees, and the valley below is shrouded in mist. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

CHAPTER 5

Marketing Incentives

Repeat customers feel like loyal veterans and want to be treated as such. Offering discounts to repeat campers can greatly increase their chances of returning, and there are a host of discounts you can offer.

Additionally, some online registration solutions like Payscape Registration have a discount feature included within the software, so the lower price is automatically reflected in the total at sign up.

COMMON DISCOUNTS:

Early Bird

"If you register by this date, you get X% off!"

Returning

"If you are a returning customer, you get X% off!"

Group

"Register one child, get the other child for X% off!"

It is all about personalizing and making your customers feel special!

Easy Online Registration!

Remove paperwork from the registration process. Payscape Registration is an all-in-one online registration and payment software solution for camps, schools, universities, associations, nonprofits, events, & more.

*All-in-One
Camper Account
Management*

*Camp
Management
Tools*

*Secure
Payment
Solutions*

Find out more at Payscape.com/registration

See how Payscape Registration compares against its competitors!

				
Personal Representative with direct phone number & email	×	×	×	✓
Customizable registration profiles	✓	✓	✓	✓
Customizable Reporting	✓	✓	×	✓
Advertising-free profiles	✓	×	×	✓
Personalized subdomains	✓	✓	×	✓
Unlimited users & permission settings	×	×	×	✓
1-1 personal setup tutorial plus continual onboarding support	✓	×	×	✓
Perfect for:				
Camps	✓	✓	✓	✓
Events	×	×	✓	✓
Sports & Gyms	×	✓	✓	✓
Educational Institutions	✓	×	×	✓
After-school Programs	×	×	×	✓
Non-profits & Churches	×	×	×	✓

Disclaimer: Information presented is research-based done on behalf of Payscape and represents software features as of or before 12/1/2016.