



SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICES FOR MONTANA CHILD CARE BUSINESSES

1. Research your audience

You can't build a following without knowing who you're trying to attract.

Dig deep into the following questions:

- Who are your customers?
- Where do they hang out online?
- Where do they work?
- What do they care about?
- Do they already know you?
- What do they think of you? Is it what you want them to think?
- What content do they need to see to believe that your business is worth their money?

Pro tip: Defining your target audience is more than demographics or a generic, stereo-typical persona. Include their motivations, inspirations, and pain points, and how you're the perfect solution.

2. Build a presence on the right social media networks

You don't need to be on every platform to succeed, including jumping on the newest, hottest app just because everyone else is. Before opening a new account, ask:

- Do I (or my team) have the time to create relevant content for a new platform?
- Does the purpose of this platform fit my brand?

And the most important question:

- Does my audience spend time here?

Focusing on creating thoughtful content for fewer platforms will always serve you better than posting generic content across every platform.

3. Strive for authenticity and highlight your strengths

Your business is unique to your community, and you need to show it off! Try and create original content that creatively showcases your business to your target audience.

4. Be intentional with designs and content creation

- Make sure any photos of children are approved by parents/guardians and a media release form is signed and documented. Ensure all staff are aware of permissions for sharing photos.
- Photos of people tend to perform better than just graphics or text.
- Use consistent colors and fonts. (2-3 fonts, 3-4 colors)
- Short-form videos (under 30 seconds) are more likely to get more engagement (likes, comments, etc.)
- Use unique hashtags
- Tag partners and engage with other organizations and businesses when appropriate.

5. Audit your performance

Learning why your content performed well (or didn't), is important so you can build repeatable processes for successful campaigns.

Here's how to do that:

- Run a monthly social media audit.
- Experiment with posting content on different days and times.
- Survey your audience to ask them what they want.
- Use analytics to find your top-performing content.

6. Develop consistent brand guidelines

You need two types of rulebooks for your team:

1. Visual style, tone, and voice brand guidelines
2. Employee social media guidelines

The former ensures your branding remains consistent and recognizable to your audience in everything from visuals to caption style, punctuation choices and overall feel.

Brand guidelines cover things like:

- Child care or childcare?
- Which hashtags will you use?
- Sources employees should use for content vs. ones they shouldn't (example: Use Zero to Five MT for up-to-date information!)

Employee social media guidelines, on the other hand, provide structure to your employees on what topics may be off limits to post about when representing your company — even on their personal accounts. This eliminates confusion, encourages employees to share positive content, and establishes clear consequences for violating terms, which can save you from legal troubles down the road. These guidelines should be incorporated into a policy that is included in your Employee Handbook.

7. Schedule your content in advance

Coming up with content right before you need to post it is a recipe for burnout.

Planning your social media content allows space to create high-quality content, logically put together campaigns and seek collaboration and feedback from your team.

8. Ask your audience for feedback

Make a point to directly engage your audience. Ask for their opinions and ideas, or fun questions to get to know them better.

Run a quick Twitter or Instagram Stories poll, link to a web survey from your social accounts, or just ask people to leave a comment with their response.

By allowing your customers the space to tell you what they want, you can—unsurprisingly—deliver what they want.

Pro tip: The primary purpose of social media is to forge connections and create a community online—so do that. Feedback doesn't always have to be about product features. Focus on building a community first.

9. Remember that social media is a customer service channel

Yes, promotion and engagement are a huge part of why you're on social media, but at its core, social media is not just about social networking — it's about making your customers happy.

10. Respond promptly to DMs and comments

Besides tagging you in a post, users are also messaging you or leaving comments on your social media posts with customer service inquiries. Those important comments are easy to miss.

Pro tip: Flag DMs and comments that require an urgent response. Whichever tool you use, ensure you have a way of assigning conversations to keep things organized and deliver the fastest response times.

11. Don't ignore criticism

You don't need to entertain obvious trolls, but you do need to respond to your customers and fans, even if it's an uncomfortable interaction.

Coach your team on how to handle negative situations and offer solutions to angry customers. For criticism of company actions or values, ensure everyone on your team knows how to respond in a kind and—let's face it: legal-department-approved—way Will you respond in the comment section, direct message or take the conversation off of social media entirely?

Pro tip: Always take the high road and approach every interaction—positive or negative—with a solution-oriented mindset.

12. Have a crisis communications plan

Whether it's backlash you receive, or it's hazardous Montana weather, you need to have a plan for dealing with crises:

- Who on your team will lead the response?
- What will your response be?
- How will you make sure everyone gets the message who needs to?
- Will you make a public statement about it?
- Will you change the policy or action that people are upset about? And if so, how will you announce that?

13. Have a content approval process

It's always nice to have a second pair of eyes on any content representing your brand. This isn't mandatory however, and we recognize some businesses don't have the time or staff to do so.

14. Optimize content for each platform's requirements

One of the reasons you shouldn't cross-post the exact same content on every platform is that each platform has its own image/video size or character count specifications.

15. Use tools to achieve more

There are multiple [social media apps](#) to help out with design tasks. If you don't have a design team, you can easily create graphics with [Canva](#) or [Adobe Express](#).

16. Check your accounts daily

Even if you don't post daily, ensure someone on your team is logging in to respond to comments and DMs, and check for potential spam.

Quick response times aren't only appreciated, they're expected. Globally, 83% of customers expect a response to a social media inquiry within 24 hours, and 28% expect an answer within one hour.

Pro tip: Like it or not, social media continues to shape expectations for businesses to live up to—or risk losing out to the competition.

17. Check out competitors and similar businesses

The best way to get new ideas is to see what others are doing, and if they're doing it well. Take some time to explore social media accounts of other child care businesses in Montana and other states to see what inspires you!

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