



# DRIVE REPEAT VISITS

## Unlocking Powerful Marketing Strategies

By Brandon Willey

**B**owling and family entertainment centers have a unique opportunity to be at the heart of their local communities and connect with customers in a meaningful way. To thrive in today's environment, operators need to engage families, create memorable experiences, and build strong community connections.

I recently sat down with Chuck DeMonte of Raydius.co to explore some effective marketing strategies that will help maximize your outreach and bring more families through your doors.



Chuck DeMonte

### Engage the Community

Visibility is a key component when it comes to engaging your community. DeMonte emphasizes that, "Location-based entertainment (LBE) venues often underestimate the importance of awareness, which sits at the top of the marketing funnel. To attract visitors, they must first know about you." One of the most authentic ways to promote your center is by **encouraging user-generated content**. Invite families to share their experiences by posting pictures and tagging your center on social media. Consider creating a unique hashtag and incentivize participation by offering small rewards, like discounts or free game cards, to those who share their experiences. This type of content not only expands your online reach but also turns your visitors into active brand advocates, giving them ownership of their experience.

**Local family influencers or parenting bloggers** can also be valuable partners for your LBE venue. Invite them to visit your center, create authentic content, and share their experiences with their followers. When families see that a trusted voice in their community loves your entertainment offerings, they're more likely to check you out. Whether they post videos of their kids having fun on your lanes or reviewing your latest attraction, it's a direct opportunity to build your credibility.

**Tip:** With their consent, capture videos of families sharing their favorite moments at your center. It's one thing for you to say your center is fun, but it's far more compelling to hear it directly from happy guests.

"Engaging the community through social media is the best way to achieve mass awareness, and it strengthens other strategies like paid advertising," DeMonte mentions. He asserts that social media platforms like **Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok** are powerful tools for connecting with your customers. By sharing photos and videos of the fun experiences your center offers, you allow families to visualize the excitement waiting for them. Another fun idea is showing behind-the-scenes moments: clips of your staff setting up for a birthday party, creating a themed event, or even just enjoying the energy of a busy day. Personal, candid moments allow families to see your center as more than just a business—it becomes a warm, welcoming space for them to create memories.

### Embrace Seasonality

Organizing **themed days or seasonal celebrations** can be an effective way to bring families to your center. Imagine how much fun families can have during a "Superhero Day" where everyone is encouraged to come dressed as their favorite hero, or a "Back-to-School Bash" that celebrates (or mourns) the end of summer. Seasonal events such as Halloween parties, winter holiday celebrations, or Easter egg hunts or breakfast with

# Competitive Strategies

the Easter Bunny also give families a reason to come to your center beyond the usual offerings. Seasonal events are fun for families and provide opportunities for themed decorations, specialized promotions, and exciting social media content.

**Fundraising events** offer another way to boost attendance while helping out your community. Schools and nonprofits are always looking for fun ways to raise money, and your center is the perfect venue. DeMonte reflects, “Families are already looking for something to do so don’t miss out on your chance for your center to be that place to support their community.” By offering special rates for schools to host fundraising events, you strengthen community ties while also introducing new families to your center.

**Tip:** Timing is everything. According to DeMonte, “Taking advantage of seasonal promotions is one of the easiest wins you can get in marketing.” Align your promotions with school holidays, long weekends, and local events. A “Back to School” discount for families could help boost slower weeks when summer ends, while “Summer Fun” passes can make your center the main venue for families during the extended school break.

## Build Partnerships

Partnerships with other local businesses can benefit everyone involved. For example, collaborating with daycares, pediatricians, or toy stores allows you to cross-promote and create mutually beneficial opportunities. Imagine a daycare sending home a flier with discounted passes to your venue or a pediatrician offering discount vouchers for a fun day out after a successful check-up—these kinds of partnerships create a network of support that drives families to your location.

Getting involved with local schools, community festivals, or sports teams can be a valuable way to gain visibility and goodwill. “Sponsorships show your investment in the community and create positive associations with your brand,” DeMonte continues.

Another opportunity is to host charity nights at your center where a portion of the proceeds is donated to a local cause. DeMonte feels that this type of partnership shines a good light on your brand locally, it helps your community, it creates buzz and gets more visitors in your doors.

## Create Urgency

**Email campaigns** are a direct line to your audience. Use emails to share tailored offers, updates on upcoming events, exclusive deals, and seasonal promotions. “We all have big piles of to-dos and sensory overload with all the emails, social media, text messages, and other daily stimulants,” DeMonte adds wistfully. He urges the need to make your audience feel special by providing them with early-bird deals or exclusive content. The key is to create a personal and valuable connection, offering overwhelming value that feels unique and tailored to each guest.

DeMonte reiterates that if you want someone to come to your center, you have to give them a reason to stop what they’re doing, ignore distractions, and take the initiative.

## Limited Time Offers

Limited time offers can create a sense of urgency that encourages families to visit sooner rather than later. For example, offering a deal like, “Book a birthday party within the next 30 days and receive a free game card,” adds an incentive to take immediate action. Use phrases like “limited spots available” to emphasize the scarcity of the offer, encouraging families to book now before they miss out.

While digital promotions and distribution are essential, perhaps more importantly, you must make sure families are aware of your promotions while they’re in your center. Prominently display exclusive offers and upcoming events on digital screens or posters. Utilize interactive kiosks or QR codes that lead to a landing page where guests can learn about deals or sign up for emails to receive special promotions.

## Reward Loyalty

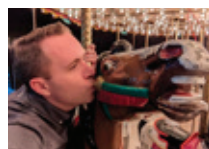
DeMonte states definitively, “Retaining a customer is always easier—and more cost-effective—than acquiring a new one.” He encourages centers to reward loyalty by creating a membership or rewards program that allows families to accumulate points for visits, birthday parties, or game card purchases. These points can be redeemed for discounts or exclusive experiences. A well-structured rewards program can make families feel appreciated and give them a reason to choose your center over others.

**Word of mouth** is one of the most powerful tools you have. Encourage referrals by creating a program where families who refer other families receive a discount on their next visit or an extra perk for an upcoming booking. When your current customers become advocates for your center, your customer base grows organically, and each new visitor already has a positive impression before they even walk through the door.

DeMonte explains, “Implementing programs to encourage repeat visits can significantly boost your revenue. A visitor frequency increase from 1.25 to 1.5 or greater visits per year can have a substantial impact on your top line.”

He adds that everyone loves to feel like a **VIP**. He suggests creating a club that offers frequent guests first access to new games, attractions, or exclusive bowling hours in your center. For example, opening an hour earlier or staying open an hour later for VIP members can make families feel like they have special access to something fun and exclusive—a perfect incentive to encourage frequent visits.

At its core, running a successful bowling entertainment center isn’t just about offering fun attractions and great experiences—it’s about connecting with your guests and becoming a valued part of the community. By engaging your community on social media, embracing seasonality, building strategic partnerships, creating urgency, and rewarding loyalty, you can make your center a go-to destination for fun. ●



Brandon Willey, ICAE, is co-founder of the LBX Collective and Premier LBX Group, co-host of The LBX Daily Show, and founder and CEO of Hownd. Brandon has an intense passion for the attractions industry and extensive knowledge of location-based entertainment. Brandon is the former chair of IAAPA’s FEC Committee and now sits on the North American Manufacturers and Suppliers Committee. You can connect with him at [LinkedIn.com/in/bwilley](https://www.linkedin.com/in/bwilley).