



SUMMER THAT SELLS

Packages and Passes That Fill Slow Days

By Brandon Willey

Summer brings the biggest demand shift of the year for bowling and other location-based entertainment centers. Kids are out of school, families have time, and the “what are we doing today?” conversation happens every morning.

That’s the opportunity. Your weekends are likely humming already. The real revenue lives Monday through Thursday, late morning to late afternoon, when the doors are open, the bills are running, and too much of your space is sitting idle.

That’s exactly why summer tempts operators into the most common off-peak mistake: trying to fill slow hours with discounts and deals. It feels logical; slow days need traffic, and lower prices drive traffic. But that thinking leads straight into one of the most common and costly mistakes in the business.

WHY DISCOUNTING TRAINS GUESTS TO WAIT

Guests start treating the discount as the real price, which trains families to wait for weekday specials. The downstream effect is brutal: weekend attachment rates soften, the average per cap slips, and the promo becomes your permanent best seller. If you’re winning traffic but losing price integrity, you’re leaking margin, not building weekday demand.

There’s also a more subtle problem: discount culture changes how guests think about your venue. Once they’ve been trained to wait for a deal, it’s hard to get them back to paying full price. You’ve essentially reset their expectations, and that’s a very difficult thing to undo.

The better path is what some operators call value engineering. This means keeping your rack rate intact while creating offers that feel like a genuine win for the guest, without ever cheapening your core pricing.

PRICING PSYCHOLOGY THAT PROTECTS YOUR RACK RATE

A few simple shifts in how you frame and present offers can do a lot of heavy lifting. Start by anchoring guests to value rather than price. You need to frame bundles, like “Includes a \$X value!” so guests are comparing what they’re getting, not what they’re saving. When you want to sweeten a deal, offer a “bonus” rather than a “discount.” People love getting something extra, and it avoids the trap of resetting their price expectations. Package the experience in terms that feel premium with perks like reserved lane time, express check-in, and exclusive access rather than falling back on percentage-off language that quietly signals your product isn’t worth full price.

You also need guardrails. Set a price floor and treat your rack rate as something worth protecting. If a weekday package is always available and always cheaper, it becomes the new default price, and your regular pricing loses credibility fast. Run weekday offers in four-to-six-week windows, then rotate to something fresh. Urgency evaporates the moment guests figure out the same deal will still be there next month.

You can spot discount training early if you watch behavior. If guests are clearly delaying visits until weekdays to “get the deal,” weekend attachment rates or the average per cap starts falling, or the promo becomes your permanent top seller, then that is your signal to tighten constraints, refresh the concept, or replace it with a new value-forward program that protects peak pricing.

HOW TO STRUCTURE A WEEKDAY OFFER THAT WORKS

The best weekday packages tend to follow the same basic blueprint. They start with time fences that clearly separate the weekday offer from your regular programming, such as Monday through Thursday only, before 5 p.m., or a specific booking window. That boundary signals to guests that this is a distinct product, not a cheaper version of what everyone else is paying on Saturday. Pair high-perceived-value items like arcade credits, a souvenir cup, or a prize pack with controllable food items that won't put stress on your kitchen. And don't forget to layer in those experience perks that feel premium but cost you very little.

Keep the terms simple. Complexity kills conversion and frustrates staff. Clear start times, firm capacity limits, and defined blackout dates make the offer easy to sell and easy to deliver. And pay attention to what you call it. The “Weekday Explorer Pass” reads like a product worth having, while the “Weekday Discount” reads like you're struggling to fill the building.

PROVEN FORMATS THAT ACTUALLY SELL

You don't need a long menu of summer offers. A few strong formats, executed consistently, will outperform a dozen mediocre ones every time:

- **The Weekday Family Bundle.** A fixed lane or attraction block, one add-on activity, arcade credits, and a food item. It answers the “what should we do today?” question with a complete outing rather than leaving families to piece it together themselves.
- **Lunch + Lanes.** Removes the friction of combining an activity and a meal into one decision. Keep the food menu tight and batch-friendly to protect your kitchen during the midday rush.
- **Punch Passes.** Three- or five-visit passes with weekday-only constraints, a clear expiration date, and a small reward for completing the full pass. They build visit frequency without discounting every single trip, and a completion incentive keeps **guests coming back to redeem.**
- **The After-Camp Special (2 p.m.–5 p.m.).** Timed to match childcare pickup, this window is a natural fit for a light, fast, easy-to-staff offer. Rotating weekly themes, mini tournaments,

or leaderboard challenges turn it into a communal experience rather than just a deal. And it's just the kind of thing kids ask to come back to.

MARKETING IT WITHOUT THE COUPON VIBE

How you present these offers matters just as much as the offers themselves. Lead with identity-based language like “Summer Club,” “Camp Legends,” or “Weekday Fun.” Names like these position the program as something guests want to join, not just redeem.

Keep the execution clean on your end. Create a one-page cheat sheet for staff, limit the menu to three to five offers at a time, and use consistent naming across signage, your website, and phone scripts. When everyone says it the same way, it feels intentional instead of improvised.

Next, put your promotion where weekday decisions are actually made. Start with your own channels: email and SMS to your database, including lapsed guests who may just need a summer nudge to return. Expand outward to school and daycare newsletters, community Facebook groups, and local corporate partners who can share family perks with employees. Meet families where they're already planning their week.

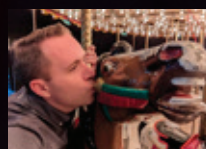
Finally, build a simple internal promotion calendar so the program stays fresh without becoming chaotic. Launch early to establish momentum, refresh mid-summer with a new theme or bonus challenge, and close with a “finish strong” push that encourages punch pass completions and tees up fall bounce-backs. A clear rhythm keeps the energy up and the execution manageable.

BUILD WEEKDAY HABITS THAT OUTLAST SUMMER

The weekday traffic is there. Families need something to do, and if your offer is well-structured and well-priced, you're going to get a share of it. The question is whether you capture it in a way that builds real value over time, or whether you train guests to expect less and wait for deals.

Summer is short. The families are out there right now trying to figure out what to do with their Tuesday. If your offer is easy to find, easy to understand, and feels like a value rather than a discount, a good chunk of them are going to walk through your door.

Done right, summer becomes the season where you build weekday promotional and operational habits that last into fall through leagues, memberships, and school-night bundles. ●



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