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## Pro-Family Business Practices

Businesses and organisations can serve their clientele better by developing and employing family-friendly practices. Through creating a more customer-friendly environment and going the extra mile for families, it creates a positive impact on the business' bottomline to the customers, and attracts additional customers.

### Why Be Pro-Family?

Through a study that was conducted by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports in 2005, it is found that businesses with pro-family practices in place are "more successful and generate healthier bottomlines". Retail businesses showed a five to 10 per cent increase in their sales, while the F&B businesses achieved 15 per cent increase in sales. The study also revealed that households with young children "collectively spend S\$1.5 billion annually", and "spend a total of S\$820 million annually on non-grocery shopping". Other interesting details from the study are captured below.

	Retail		Food & Beverage	
	Grocery Shopping	Non-grocery shopping	Food courts, hawker centres & coffee shops	Fast food & other restaurants
Amount spent by young parents annually	S\$1.5 billion	S\$820 million	S\$1.2 billion	S\$720 million
% of parents who bring kids along	58 %	58%	50%	80% - 100%
% of young parents who are willing to switch to more parent-friendly places	33% - 54%	43% - 54%	15% - 16%	14% - 17%
Amount spent by seniors annually	S\$840 million	S\$300 million	S\$440 million	-
% of seniors who are willing to switch to more senior-friendly places*	9% - 14%	3% - 11%	13% - 17%	-

\* Although the % of seniors who are willing to switch to more senior-friendly places is lower, this % is expected to increase over time with Singapore's growing senior population.

When families, in particular those with children, feel welcomed and their needs are catered for, they would tend to stay and continue patronising and using the business or services. These customers would also help in promoting the business to their peers and families. Hence, employing pro-family business practices have its advantages that would benefit businesses.

The benefits include;

- increase customer satisfaction
- increase customer loyalty
- increase sales

## How to Be Pro-Family?

### Three Pillars of Pro-Family Business

Businesses can be pro-family by employing three key areas;

Infrastructure	Service	Strategy
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Space layout &amp; flooring</li> <li>2. Safety and security</li> <li>3. Cleanliness</li> <li>4. Access to information</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Greeting and send-off/Attitude</li> <li>2. Extra assistance</li> <li>3. Emergency processes</li> <li>4. Feedback</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mission statement</li> <li>2. Product and service mix</li> <li>3. Discounts and promotions</li> <li>4. Marketing</li> <li>5. Performance review</li> </ol>

#### 1. Infrastructure

- Space layout and flooring
  - Design a layout that is easy for customers to move around.
  - Have plenty of seats.
  - Provide easy access for strollers or wheel-chairs.
- Safety and security
  - Ensure that the layout keeps customers safe from falls or knocks, etc.

- Have level, non-slip flooring and ramps for pregnant mothers, elderly and the disabled.
- Cleanliness
  - Ensure that overall cleanliness is maintained.
- Access to information
  - Provide easy access to information for the customers.
  - Information presented should be easy to read.
- 2. Service**
  - Greeting and send-off/Attitude
    - Implement a cheerful service to make families feel welcomed.
    - Be friendly to families including senior citizens.
    - No discrimination.
  - Extra assistance
    - Provide thoughtful service and take initiative in meeting customer needs.
  - Emergency processes
    - Put in place the emergency procedures such as handling lost children, accidents and injuries, etc.
  - Feedback
    - Continuously obtain feedback from customers to constantly improve and meet their needs.
- 3. Strategy**
  - Mission statement
    - Incorporate 'serving families' in the mission statement.
  - Product and service mix
    - Offer something for everyone; the adults, senior citizens and children.
    - Make 'it' fun.
  - Discounts and promotions
    - Create family packages and offers.
  - Marketing
    - Target families in advertisements.

- Performance review
  - Review and refine strategies targeting families.

## **The Pro-Family Business Initiative**

The Pro-Family Business initiative underscores the potential business value that can be derived from targeting families as customers. Launched in 2006, this initiative is fully supported by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS).

## **The Pro-Family Business Pledge**

As a first step to show their commitment to pro-family business practices, organisations can undertake the Pro-Family Business Pledge. The Pledge is created to “establish greater awareness of pro-family dimensions”. Businesses who have undertaken the pledge can then opt to be audited for the Pro-Family Mark.

## **Membership Privileges**

Members of the Pro-Family Business initiative will have the benefit of media coverage as part of the publicity effort in promoting the initiative. They will also receive regular updates on news, programmes and campaigns on families. Members can then take the advantage to plan marketing and promotional packages to coincide with pro-family initiatives such as the National Family week, school holidays, etc., apart from window sticker and counter display to show their commitment towards welcoming and serving families.

More information on the pledge can be obtained from the following website:

- <http://www.mbp.org.sg/pledge/joinUs.html>

## **The Pro-Family Business Mark**

The Pro-Family Business Mark signifies the success of the organisation that adopted and implemented pro-family business practices. The Mark underscores the “potential business value

that can be derived from targeting families as customers". Businesses will be awarded with the Mark when specific standards relating to their strategy, service, infrastructure and business outcomes are met. The Mark will also help businesses in building a foundation to meet the Singapore Service Class requirements.

## The Pro-Family Business Mark Framework

The PFB Mark is open to businesses from all sectors. It comprises four broad dimensions;

### 1. Strategy

Businesses should be able to express clearly their business strategy that targets the whole family. They should also define the various customer segments that they are targeting at serving. Businesses should also be able to showcase the products and services they have in line with this strategy.

### 2. Service

Businesses that are committed towards adopting the pro-family business practices should put in place systems, processes and procedures that are in line with the strategy. They should also provide training and equip their staff with the necessary and appropriate skills to serve their customers well.

### 3. Infrastructure

Businesses will need to develop and build an infrastructure that meets the needs of their various customer segments.

### 4. Results

Businesses should also track the results and outcomes of the approach and deployment of their strategy via performance reviews. These reviews will ensure that their business operations, in particular their products and services, are always meeting the standards and satisfying the needs of their customers. It is also an opportunity for businesses to identify areas that can be further improved, developed and explored.

## Applying for the Pro-Family Business Mark

Applicants will need to address and meet a total of 46 specific requirements. Applicants will first have to undertake a self-assessment on their performance using the Pro-Family Business Mark Self-Assessment Tool.

The tool can be obtained from the following:

<http://www.mbp.org.sg/webdocs/MBP/pdf/PFB%20Mark-%20Self-Assessment%20Form.pdf>

More information on the Pro-Family Business Mark interpretation guide can be obtained from the following website:

- <http://www.mbp.org.sg/webdocs/MBP/pdf/PFB%20Mark%20Interpretation%20Guide.pdf>

More information on the application for the Pro-Family Business Mark can be obtained from the following websites:

- <http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/applyMark.html>
- <http://www.mbp.org.sg/webdocs/MBP/pdf/PFB%20Mark-%20Application%20Guide%20and%20Form.pdf>

## Benefits of the Mark

The Pro-Family Business Mark distinguishes and recognises pro-family business practices. Businesses, which adopt such practices; re-aligning their strategy and offering products and services that target families, will receive national recognition.

## The Pro-Family Business Grant

The Pro-Family Business Grant is offered by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, providing “immediate impetus” for businesses to consider becoming pro-family. The grant is offered to encourage businesses to employ pro-family practices and catering to the need of families.

Businesses can use the grant to defray the costs of creating “pro-family” products and services, such as;

- business consultancy

- infrastructure costs
- training and development
- implementation costs

## Eligibility

The grant is eligible for all businesses that offer services or products that are relevant to families. These businesses need to satisfy the following conditions;

- registered or incorporated in Singapore
- have at least one outlet
- have products/services that are “pro-family”
- targets or plans to target families as customers

## Value of Grant

The Singapore government will be co-sharing up to 50 per cent of the costs incurred for approved projects. This is subjected to a cap of S\$20,000 per organisation, regardless of its number of outlets.

The qualifying costs include;

- business consultancy fees
- infrastructure costs
- training and development fees
- implementation costs

## Things to Note

1. Approved projects must be completed within one year, effective from the date of approval.
2. Organisations that apply for the grant must also apply and successfully attain the Pro-Family Business Mark for at least one of its outlets, in order to receive the full grant amount.
3. Businesses and organizations that have obtained the Pro-Family Business mark or have taken the Pro-Family Business Pledge before 1 April 2007 can still apply for this grant to create more “pro-family” products and services.

4. There is no closing date. Applications are accepted throughout the year.
5. The grant does not cover projects that have commenced and completed.

More information on the grant can be obtained via the following website:

- <http://www.mbp.org.sg/grant/index.html>

#### **Sources:**

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Sim, M. (2008, May 18). It pays for companies to adopt family-friendly ways. Retrieved September 10, 2009, from <http://www.asiaone.com/Business/Office/Learn/Story/A1Story20080516-65539.html>

The framework. (n.d.). Retrieved September 10, 2009, from <http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/theFramework.html>

Why apply for the Pro-Family Business Mark? (n.d.). Retrieved September 10, 2009, from <http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/whyApply.html>

## Case Study

### Snow City

Snow City is an indoor snow amusement park located in Singapore. The facilities of the 3,000 sq-metre centre is spread over two storeys, with almost half of its area covered with snow known as the Snow Chamber.

Families are an important target audience for the centre. The centre positions itself as a centre of recreation and edutainment. It aims to introduce the concept of snow and cold climates in an entertaining and educational way to families. As such, Snow City has rolled out its business strategies, plans and even products and services to be aligned to the pro-family business strategy.

In 2007, Snow City undertook an upgrading project to improve its entire centre. The revamp included new products and services to meet the needs of families. In February 2008, the centre also opened up a café in the amusement park. The move is to address the lack of sitting areas for adults, while waiting and watching their children play. With the new café, family members can enjoy light meals and hot drinks while waiting comfortably for the children.

Snow City has also undertaken great considerations in planning the access and layout of the centre. Convenience for families and other visitors are their utmost priority, in ensuring that customers have an enjoyable time while at the amusement park.

### McDonald's

McDonald's first restaurant in Singapore was opened in 1979. Today, over 100 McDonald's restaurants are located all over the island. One of the commitments of McDonald's is "ensuring that families will always find McDonald's to be a place where they are warmly welcomed and can enjoy tasty meals at great value".

To fulfil its commitment on pro-family practices, McDonald's offers menu choices for kids, provides services in managing kids' birthday parties, and hosts family edutainment programmes which aims to promote family bonding. The fast food chain is also committed towards 100 per cent food and toy safety. Its restaurants are also equipped with non-slip flooring, and furniture with rounded edges, to ensure the safety of its customers, in particular the children and elderly. In recent years, McDonald's have also moved a step forward in providing free broadband WiFi

access for its customers, to further provide a comfortable dining experience.

**Sources:**

McDonald's. (n.d.). Retrieved September 10, 2009, from [http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/bp\\_mcdonalds.html](http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/bp_mcdonalds.html)

Sim, M. (2008, May 18). It pays for companies to adopt family-friendly ways. Retrieved September 10, 2009, from <http://www.asiaone.com/Business/Office/Learn/Story/A1Story20080516-65539.html>

Snow city. (n.d.). Retrieved September 10, 2009, from [http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/bp\\_snowcity.html](http://www.mbp.org.sg/mark/bp_snowcity.html)

**Articles may be delivered to clients, upon request.**

**Books are available at the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.**

## Recommended Readings

Pro-family business guide. (2006). Singapore: Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.  
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