



7 Creative Summer and Back-to-School Marketing Ideas



As summer hits its peak (yeah, it's hard to believe) and the back-to-school buzz begins, this is the perfect time to refresh your marketing. It's also a great time to connect with your customers in meaningful, fun, and creative ways. And you don't have to be a retail shop to "sell summer" or "back-to-school."

No matter what your industry, aligning your brand with what your customers are already thinking about can drive real results.

Hot Ideas for Greater Revenue (and attention!)

Here are creative campaign ideas to help your business stand out this summer and fall, along with practical tips to execute them effectively.

1. Host a "Back-to-School Bash" or Summer Send-Off

If your business has space (or can partner with one that does), consider hosting a themed event. A "Back-to-School Bash" with games, school supply giveaways, local entertainment, or teacher discounts can bring families through the door and build brand awareness. Likewise, a "Summer Send-Off" can attract attention by celebrating the last days of summer with frozen treats, live music, or even outdoor games in your parking lot.

Collaborate with other nearby businesses to co-host the event and cross-promote it across your social media channels. This helps reach new audiences while sharing costs and planning efforts.

2. Launch a Limited-Time Summer Discount or Bundle

People love a good deal, especially during the busy (and expensive) back-to-school season. Create a time-sensitive summer discount or bundle that aligns with your offerings.

For example:

- Retail stores can offer “Fill-a-Bag” sales where customers get a set discount on whatever they can fit in a branded tote.
- Salons or spas can offer “Fresh Start” packages for students or teachers.
- Restaurants can offer “Family Meal Nights” with discounted pricing to make back-to-school dinner stress-free.
- Bakeries can pitch “End of Summer” discounts for parents celebrating the return of kids to school. For businesses that ship their goods, remind parents to send goodies to their college kids.

Make the promotion feel exclusive by offering early access to your email subscribers or social media followers.

3. Celebrate Teachers and Students

Educators and students are top of mind during the back-to-school season, and many businesses miss the opportunity to show appreciation. Offer a special teacher or student discount week. Consider spotlighting a local educator on your social media or partnering with a school to donate supplies or a portion of proceeds from a sales day.

You could even host a “Nominate a Teacher” campaign where customers submit entries to win a free product, service, or gift card for a favorite educator. It’s a feel-good effort that also builds engagement and goodwill in the community.

4. Embrace Email Campaigns with Personality

Email marketing remains one of the most effective ways to reach your audience, especially when it’s tailored, timely, and fun. A “Countdown to School” series can feature daily tips, products, or services to help parents prepare. A weekly “Summer Spotlight” campaign could highlight best-sellers, introduce new items, or share behind-the-scenes business stories.

Be sure to include vibrant visuals, a strong call to action, and, if possible, a promotional incentive. Even a small exclusive discount for email subscribers can drive sales and signups.

5. Run a Social Media Challenge or Giveaway

Tap into the power of user-generated content by launching a back-to-school photo challenge. Ask followers to post photos with your product, tag your business, or use a branded hashtag. Offer a prize for the best or most creative entry, such as a gift card or back-to-school care package.

Don’t forget the social media trends. Do a riff on the popular “first day of school” post for your business. Do a summer wrap-up post. Spend some time on Reels and TikTok to learn what’s trending and do your version of the same.

This type of campaign increases your online visibility, encourages customer interaction, and creates a sense of community, all at a relatively low cost.

6. Offer a “Summer Internship” Experience for Kids or Teens

If appropriate for your business, create a camp, mock internship, or one-day shadow experience for older kids or teens. This can be educational, engaging, and a great way to connect with families in your area. Share the experience on your social media channels to showcase your business’s commitment to youth and education.

It doesn't have to be formal. Let a student "run" your store's Instagram Stories for a day or give them a behind-the-scenes look at your creative process. It's fun, memorable, and builds brand loyalty with future customers. Invite a student you know to come in and talk about your business, give a behind the scenes tour, or taste a new offering.

7. Partner with Local Schools or Organizations

Form partnerships with local schools, PTAs, or youth organizations to create mutually beneficial campaigns. For example, offer a discount to parents when they bring in a school supply item to donate, or sponsor a school's first-day breakfast or teacher welcome kits. Adopt a classroom. These partnerships can often be promoted through the school's own communication channels, giving your business exposure to a wider (and relevant) audience.

The summer and back-to-school seasons offer a natural opportunity to energize your marketing. It's not just about promotions; it's about getting more personal with your customers. You know what's on their mind and you're there to show them you get it.

Finally, your Chamber of Commerce is there to help. Ask them for assistance, ideas/introductions to help you partner with other businesses, campaign ideas, and/or promotional support. They love seeing their businesses thrive, and they'll cheer you on every step of the way.

[Christina Metcalf](#) is a writer and women's speaker who believes in the power of story. She works with small businesses, chambers of commerce, and business professionals who want to make an impression and grow a loyal customer/member base. She is the author of [The Glinda Principle](#), rediscovering the magic within.

Medium: [@christinametcalf](#)

Facebook: [@tellyourstorygetemtalking](#)

Instagram: [@christinametcalfauthor](#)

LinkedIn: [@christinagsmith](#)