



TOP TIPS FOR DEVELOPING A PRACTICE MARKETING PLAN



Use both internal and external strategies to reach your goal.

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Whether you are opening up something new or trying to reinvent your existing practice after COVID-19, an effective marketing plan can be vital in your overall success. Is your practice currently following a marketing plan? In my experience, many practices fail to plan a specific marketing strategy. Whether this is due to lack of awareness or other factors, I am here to tell you that, with a plan, there is much that you can do even without a huge time or financial investment.

Where do we start? There are many options out there, so this process can be overwhelming. My aim in this article is to provide you with a basic framework, quick action items, and the confidence to get started immediately on a plan for your practice.

INTERNAL VERSUS EXTERNAL MARKETING

All marketing efforts can be divided into two general categories: internal and external. Internal marketing is marketing to existing patients or those who have already come in

contact with the practice. External marketing is targeting new patients—basically targeting those who know nothing about you.

INTERNAL MARKETING Writing to Colleagues

Communication with your referring doctors is extremely important. Sending messages about their patients' progress is not only helpful, but it keeps you on their radar when future potential referrals arise. Fortunately, with computers and electronic health record (EHR) systems,



we no longer need to put pen to paper. The letter-writing process can be completely automated.

QUICK TIP: Review your current EHR system for letter templates. Confirm that your system can auto-populate the assessment and plan as well as the referring doctor's contact information. Be sure this system is connected to your fax number so that sending letters does not become burdensome and is nothing more than a few clicks from within the EHR.

Juicing Up the Waiting Room

Patients can easily spend 20 minutes or more in your waiting area (although in the current era this may not be the case). This is a captive audience that we must recognize. Artwork and televisions showing the news are taking up valuable real estate on your walls. Signage in this area should be educating patients on your products and services.

QUICK TIP: Download YouTube videos that discuss products or services that your practice offers. Put these on an SD card with other fun videos (comedy shorts, optical illusions, etc.). Once you have 2 to 3 hours of content, you have your own TV channel that you can loop on your waiting room TV.

Recognizing High Value Patients

There are different ways to define a high-value patient. He or she may be a patient who spends a lot of money

in your office, a patient who frequently visits for therapeutic reasons, or a patient who has been with the practice for many years. Regardless of how you define high-value patients, you should expend extra effort to make sure these patients feel appreciated and valued.

QUICK TIP: On a monthly basis, take an hour to write handwritten thank you postcards to a group of high-value patients identified by your office staff.

EXTERNAL MARKETING Using Mass Media

Mass media marketing is the traditional or historical form of reaching new patients. This type of marketing includes radio, print, and television advertising. Mass media marketing does not require the potential customer to do anything other than see or listen to your advertisement. These types of ads require a lot of repetition and can be costly.

QUICK TIP: Over the next few days, pay close attention to advertisements you see on TV or hear on the radio. Note if any of your local competitors are advertising on these platforms. If so, consider contacting these types of media outlets, as this may be an effective form of marketing in your area.

Using Social Media

Social media platforms allow you to connect with potential audiences in order to drive traffic or help build your brand. There are multiple social media platforms, and each offers its

own way of getting you in front of your target audience. Although basic marketing efforts on social media involve no cost, an effective campaign often requires financial investment.

QUICK TIP: Do not try to be all things to all people on social media. Think of a specific service or product you want to market and define what the average target patient looks like. Knowing your target audience will help you know on which social media platform you should focus your attention. Understand that Facebook traditionally has a high-earning user base, the majority of Instagram users are millennials and GenZs, women vastly outnumber men on Pinterest, and LinkedIn's user base is generally well-educated.

Using Influencers

Using influencers is an effective way to leverage someone else's popularity as a way of promoting your own products or services. This technique depends on the concept of social proof. Although the potential customers you wish to reach may not know anything about you, they may be more willing to try your products and services when they know someone whom they trust is endorsing you.

QUICK TIP: Find friends or family members with a good following on Instagram. Ask them to post a picture of themselves in your office. Make sure they tag your office location.



Using Organizations

Like influencers, many large organizations have large followings. If an organization is comfortable associating itself with you, obtaining its endorsement can be an effective way to expand your network.

QUICK TIP: Reach out to a vendor you work with for an endorsement. Get that company to list your practice on its website as an “Authorized Dealer.”

Using Community Involvement

Positive involvement in your community not only showcases your good character, it also potentially opens you up to new patients. When you attend charitable events in your community, be genuine. Yes, your efforts may potentially drive traffic to the office, but your

QUICK TIP: Offer free vision screenings to a local school or little league sports team.

primary goal should be to give back by participating in these events.

There are many ways to effectively market your practice. Like anything else, a good plan is a good first step to success. Hopefully this article has provided you with some helpful tips for creating an effective marketing strategy. Good luck! ■

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