



HOW TO BRING NEW BUSINESS TO YOUR PRACTICE



Five tactics to sustain your practice's growth, success, and relevance.

BY JESSILIN QUINT, OD, MBA, MS, FFAO

Shifts happen. Change is inevitable. COVID-19 threw us all a few unexpected curveballs, and now many of us are trying to think of ways to maximize profits to offset the unpredictable nature of the pandemic. Regardless of how big or small your practice, bringing in new patients or business is never a bad idea. Here are five ways to bring new

business to your practice to sustain your growth, success, and relevance.

NO. 1: ADDRESS A NICHE MARKET

A unique thing about eye care is that the profession is diverse and full of opportunities to expand clinical or optical services. Like many professions, eye care is also trending slowly toward specialization, which means there are

opportunities to add new depths to a general eye care practice or create an entirely separate specialized practice. Adding niche offerings can address specific needs that fill gaps for patients already in your practice and also easily drum up new business and patients.

Clinical specialty additions can include myopia control, vision therapy, specialty contact lenses, a dry eye treatment center, sports vision, ocular aesthetics, neuro-optometry or rehabilitation, pediatrics, geriatrics, and low vision. Many clinical specialty additions have low startup costs and do not require extensive addition of new equipment or technology straight out of the gate.

If you are not sure where to start, just pick an area that you are interested in or passionate about. To get started, research and read up on the latest trends in that specialty and reach out to colleagues involved in that specialty for guidance. Most eye care professionals are more than willing to help a colleague if asked. Also, in an age in which information is at our fingertips, it is easier than ever to find continuing education, specialty conferences, or other eye care providers who are experts in your topic of choice.



ENGAGE WITH THE COMMUNITY

Get involved in your community to increase awareness of your practice. Increasing awareness about your brand will bring new clients to your practice.

PARTNER WITH BUSINESSES

Cross-promote with businesses in your community to draw in your desired patient population. Create a buzz!

USE SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are easy and cost-efficient channels by which to tell people who you are and what clinical or optical services you provide.

OFFER NICHE SERVICES

Adding a niche offering can address specific needs that fill gaps for patients already in your practice and easily drum up new business and patients.

TACTICS FOR GENERATING NEW BUSINESS

OPTIMIZE THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Word-of-mouth referrals are an excellent source of new clients. Get your patients talking by creating a patient experience that shatters their expectations.

Optical specialty additions are another option. These can include virtual consultations with an optician, new frame lines aimed at reaching a new patient demographic, or hobby eyewear such as prescription ski or swim goggles. Consider the needs of your current patients and identify those that are not being met. If you are not sure, you can ask or survey patients or community members to get real-time feedback.

Once you have established your new niche offering, be sure to advertise it so that everyone will be aware of your specialty expansion.

NO. 2: PARTNER WITH A BUSINESS

Think about businesses in your area with customers you wish you had as

patients. Then consider teaming up with them to cross-promote each other. This could be as simple as advertising each other's services or partnering to host an event (virtual or in-person), giveaway, or contest. Create a buzz!

If your practice is focused on sports vision, for example, consider partnering with a local gym or sports team to promote an advantageous athletic connection. If you have a unique optical boutique, consider approaching a local wine bar to hold a tasting event showcasing trendy frames paired with wines.

Collaboration can often lead to a wider patient or customer base. Get creative, think outside the box, and don't be afraid to try something new. The opportunities are endless!

NO. 3: MAKE A SPLASH IN YOUR COMMUNITY

An impactful way to increase awareness of your practice or brand is to become involved in the local community. Increasing awareness about your brand will ultimately bring new business to your practice and, over time, can make you a local household name. That type of recognition has significant long-term value for everyone, especially your business. This goal can be achieved by volunteering, connecting with community leaders, or sponsoring local events or causes.

If you are new to a community, start simple. You can join the local chamber of commerce, networking groups such as Business Network



International, or service organizations such as the Lions Clubs International, Kiwanis International, or Junior League. From there, you can focus on local groups that align with your personal interests or business brand. It is important to have a presence so that when people in your community think of eyes, they think of you.

NO. 4: EMBRACE SOCIAL MEDIA

The term social media has become ubiquitous. It encompasses many platforms that provide unique opportunities for eye care professionals to engage with current patients, future patients, and their local community. Social channels offer easy and cost-efficient avenues to tell people who you are and what clinical or optical services you provide.

If your marketing or advertising budget is tight, consider using social media, as these platforms can be inexpensive yet effective modalities to showcase your practice. Popular social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, and Pinterest. Each tends to have a different audience demographic, which means you have opportunities to connect with multiple patient demographics to bring new business to your current practice.

Social media content should be unique, fresh, organized, and aligned with your practice goals. In a consumer-driven market, patients want to engage with their eye care providers in the online space, and they often make that connection before they even set foot in your office.

Patients also prefer to work with brands they know and trust. A great

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way to showcase your brand is through a social media platform that aligns with the type of new client you want to bring to your practice.

NO. 5: FOCUS ON THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Nothing brings in new business faster than referrals, especially word-of-mouth referrals. To guarantee you will have patients talking, focus on creating a patient experience that will shatter patients' expectations. The little things—such as communication, quality of care, patient education, office aesthetics, and every touchpoint or handoff encounter in the office—are important in the patient experience.

Communication between your

practice and the patient begins when the appointment is made and continues through pretesting, the examination, the optical, and checkout. Put yourself in the patient's shoes and do a health check on your practice to see what your current patient experience is like. Sometimes, small changes can make a lasting impression. If you have happy patients, don't shy away from asking them to post a positive review or refer their friends and family members to you. ■

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