



Understanding your options

A marketing masterplan for chiropractors.

BY ROB BERMAN

YOU'VE SEEN CHANGES IN HOW YOU CODE AND BILL FOR services. You've seen changes in reimbursement. And you've seen changes in the software you use to run your practice. So of course it makes sense that there are changes in the world of marketing as well.

As with the other aspects of making a business work, it's important to keep up with trends and changing consumer behaviors. And not all patients are the same—you need to tailor your message and your medium to best match your target demographic. Keep this in mind as you consider the following marketing strategies.

Print advertising

Make your advertising stand out so you don't look like every other chiropractor. Study the words of John Wannamaker: "Half the money

I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don't know which half." Numerous studies show that single ads aren't effective. You need to run a consistent series of ads to break through the clutter and resonate with the reader.

Color ads are generally more expensive than black and white ads, so spend your precious advertising dollars wisely. That extra money for color could be used with another marketing strategy or tactic, thus improving the odds of achieving your goals.

In-office marketing

Patients will pass through your reception and waiting area during each visit. Your treatment rooms or treatment bays are additional places to display messages. An LED message board by the front desk can scroll through short messages to alert

patients about educational or treatment opportunities.

Posters, brochures, and reprints of your bylined articles can lead patients to consider other services you provide. How about a flat-screen TV looping educational videos? You can create your own loop or ask one of the companies that specialize in them to customize a video for you.

It's even easier to list your services on the back of your business and appointment cards. Patients will think about how the services can help their friends, family, and themselves.

Networking basics

People like to conduct business with people they know. You are in the "business" of chiropractic care. So meet your future patients and referral sources at chambers of commerce events, and while you are speaking at local community gatherings and

MARKETING MATTERS

regional carnivals, festivals, and other places you can address a crowd.

What about the physical therapists, massage therapists, acupuncturists, and yoga instructors near you? These connections can be multipliers to your marketing. And these professionals are already working with patients who could benefit from chiropractic and are interested in improving their health.

Don't forget to network with other chiropractors who have specialties different from yours. Instead of competition, see them as a source of referrals.

The golden rule of networking is "give before you get." Be prepared to help others first. Your goal is a relationship—not a transaction—with the people you meet. Effective networking takes time, but it is a proven way to form and build profitable and lasting relationships.

Online tools and techniques

Website: You may remember when websites were basically online brochures. The static and boring nature of those websites does not engage today's customer. Your website should be easy to navigate and contain relevant information. A quick test is to ask: Is your Yellow Pages rep designing your website?

Many patients will "shop" you by visiting your website. The internet is what the Yellow Pages used to be—the go-to resource to find providers of services. It's unlikely you'll be first engaging patients in person or on the phone, especially those born in the 1980s onward.

Use technology to meet them with video. A smart phone is all you need to create a video of you welcoming potential patients while explaining your healthcare philosophy. Add more sizzle by filming a video tour

of your practice. The first time they walk in your doors will actually be the second time.

The proliferation of smartphones and tablets means that many of your website's viewers will be using a small screen. Your content, graphics, and look and feel need to be mobile friendly. Avoid stock photos that look like those on other chiropractors' websites.

Blogging: Unlike advertising, blogs (short for "web logs") are effectively free. Your blog should be on your website and promoted in your Facebook posts.

For length, 250 to 300 words is enough for a blog post. You can write even less if you have a video to share. A few button clicks can post your updates automatically on Facebook and LinkedIn. If you like to use Twitter, you can grab short parts

MARKETING MATTERS

of your post and tweet them (with a link). Search engines like Google rank websites higher when they regularly add new content.

As patients and other interested parties subscribe to your posts, your emails won't be considered spam. Your blog sends a regular reminder to your patients that your practice is there to help them.

Blog topics can include health-care tips, chiropractic care, various modalities, and wellness. Think of the keywords and phrases your patients are searching for online

Ebooks: Your ebook content is mostly written already if you've been blogging regularly. Combine your blog posts and add some graphics to create one or more ebooks. Then offer the ebooks as downloads on your website in exchange for the reader's contact information (usually a name and email address). These names can be added to your potential patient list.

Facebook: Share photos of your new equipment or before-and-after photos for nutrition and weight-loss programs. Make special offers

available only to your followers on Facebook.

Use Facebook to hold a conversation. Solicit feedback about your practice to gather quotes and testimonials you can use in your marketing materials.

YouTube: Post your videos on YouTube and link to them in your blog posts, ebooks, and website. You can use videos posted by distributors and manufacturers to demonstrate their products or tools you use.


Text messaging: Use text messaging to confirm appointments or create new ones. It can help you fill open time on the schedule when a patient cancels. Text news about upcoming talks or educational events you're holding. There are apps for this.

Review sites: There are many sites like Yelp and Angie's List where consumers rate providers. Consider the more medically oriented ones like ZocDoc, Healthgrades.com, and Wellness.com.

Potential patients can find information about you on these sites. Is

your information complete and up to date? What are reviewers saying about you? *Tip:* Acknowledge each positive review with a call, personal note or email. If you spot a negative review, acknowledge that there was an issue. Take the review as constructive criticism with a chance to improve and grow, not as a complaint.

Bringing it all together

All plans start with step one. You need to take action to cause a reaction. Writing the perfect marketing plan is great, but it won't add one more patient to your practice. Write down your ideas and then implement them. Change course if you develop a better idea or if a particular tactic or strategy is not performing up to your expectations. Marketing is as much an art as it is a science. 



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