

[IMAGE]

Patient Reactivation Done Right

By Rob Berman and Cindy Donaldson

Most practices we work with have an archive of "lost patients" who are no longer active for a variety of reasons: cost, don't think they "need" your services, moved out of area, unhappy experience, change in insurance, lack of a personal connection, or even death. When you calculate the average lifetime value of your patient, the lost revenue on these archived patients gets astounding.

To determine that number, use this simple formula: (Average cost of a treatment session) x (Average number of treatment sessions over a monthly/yearly period) x (Average retention time of patient)

Depending on the age of your practice and the size of your inactive patient database, bringing back even 20 percent of those patients could result in a six-figure income boost! Here's the process to garner the best results.

Scrub Your List of Inactive Patients

welcome back - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Remove anyone who has moved out of town, passed away or whom you know there is no possibility of their return. If you haven't kept accurate records, now is the time to begin that process. More than likely someone in your practice knows why 80 percent of your patients left.

Determine a Budget

Go back to your average lifetime value of a patient. If that value is \$4,000, for example, is it worth spending \$50 to get them back? Probably. Review your profit-and-loss statement, look at your current marketing budget – where can it be adjusted? There is no set amount in this area; you need to spend what feels comfortable to you.

Create a Strategy

After your budget is firmed up and you know how many past patients you are going after, now is the time to create the strategy or the "how." We suggest a multi-pronged approach that includes direct mail, email marketing and phone calls.

Direct-mail postcards: The secret here is multiple drops over a specific period; a minimum of four postcards over a six-month period is ideal. For the first round, you want an address correction option so the post office returns mail that is undeliverable, but gives you an updated address. This will cost more, but it's worth it. Make the post cards oversized; postage will be higher, but these will get noticed. Think of political postcards – they always stand out! Make the images and the text intriguing ... something that will catch the recipient's eye!

Email: If you have email addresses, begin a bimonthly "We've Missed You" campaign. Images should match the postcards, as should the messaging. Chances are some of your postcard list will overlap the email list; that's fine. Don't worry about opt-outs. If they aren't interested in your services any longer – now you know!

Personal touch: If you have the man / woman power, have someone in your practice call. "Hi, this is John from Dr. Steve's office, I noticed you are overdue for an adjustment, may I schedule an appointment for you?"

If you get voicemail, simply say, "call us back at xxx-xxx-xxxx to schedule your appointment." You can also add a quick add-in (if you have one), such as, "We've added Saturday morning hours for your convenience."

After you have completed a round of phone calls, and months of emails and postcards, you can assess the value of continuing to try to win them back. You may consider keeping them on the email list, as there is a low cost; and calling quarterly just to stay front of mind.

Give Them Incentive to Return

Highlight new services and or products and consider offering a discount to incentivize them.

Make It Easy for Them

Ensure you let them know what insurance you accept (or good-old cash), hours of operation, and anything else they will need to know.

Success Starts Now

Once you get this system set up and running, it's easy to keep it going. If you have a patient who regularly sees you monthly and hasn't been in for a while, call first and determine why they haven't been in. Based on that intel, you can add them to the next "We Miss You" campaign or put them in the permanent lost-patient file.

The key to success is having a solid process, intriguing visual content and an accurate database. The time, money and effort are worth it!

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