



# Marketing a Medical Office

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# Introduction



- Marketing any business takes time, money, and a good deal of preparation; healthcare is no exception.
- The best preparation is a properly prepared marketing plan which contains a number of factors.
- The medical practice CEO/Administrator/Manager should work in tandem with the physicians or owners of the organization.

# Funding a Marketing Initiative

- ▶ The medical practice's marketing budget outlines the costs of the marketing initiatives planned.
- ▶ While the marketing financial plan should be determined before setting out to market the practice, this dollar amount may fluctuate and need to be flexible as needs or opportunities arise.
- ▶ A prospective strategy should estimate the number of patients expected to be reached by the plan and funds expected to be generated.
- ▶ The return on investment should be tracked by resources spent and collected.
- ▶ Examples: Plastic surgeons marketing Botox or Internal Medicine promoting new patient enrollments.

# Understand the Audience and Demographics

- ▶ Demographics are made up of the population group marketed, such as age, rural sites, or young families.
- ▶ In an area populated with a large number of seniors may market osteoporosis or prostate screenings. Elderly patients may best be reached with mailers sent to their homes, flyers at pharmacies, or local senior centers.
- ▶ Many young families on the go may be reached by advertising on printed school brochures, recreation centers, or social media.





# Researching Marketing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

## What is SWOT analysis ???



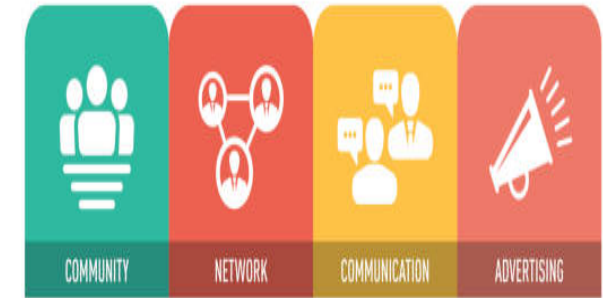
- Determine where referrals come from and keep in touch with those sources. Keep “feeding” the referral sites.
- Example: If a Family Practice has recently lost one of its two pediatricians, getting an appointment with the remaining one will be backed up thus not the time to market for children.
- Example: If an Internal Medicine practice just received a large shipment of influenza or COVID vaccines and have the staff to administer the medications, this would be the perfect time to advertise to the community.

# Research the Competition

- ▶ Part of exploring the practice's strengths and weaknesses should include a wide-ranging look at the neighboring communities.
- ▶ The medical practice leader should determine where the competition is strong and where their weaknesses lie. Who is good at what, where, when, and why.
- ▶ Example: If the only other Family Practice in town has a physician who is well known for their ability to work with children exhibiting behavioral issues, this might not be an area in which competing practices should market.
- ▶ Spending dollars on marketing in an area where the competition has a robust presence is naturally not a wise decision. Watch for market saturation of services offered.

# Using the Internet for Marketing

- Research internet marketing options with cost comparison's to determine which venue is appropriate for the practice's marketing plan.
- Develop websites, either internally or contract out, with search engine optimization. With an internet search engine, such as Google, this will bring the practices website to the top of results list.
- Example: If a potential patient searches for a dermatologist in Charlotte, NC, they may go to the internet search engine and type "dermatologist, Charlotte, NC." A paid advertisement will appear on the screen bringing potential new patients to the practice.



## INTERNET MARKETING



# Build a Robust Website

- ▶ Most practices have robust websites where patients are able to request or even schedule appointments, pay bills, or find answers to commonly asked medical questions.
- ▶ Include biographies of individual physicians and advance care practitioners. Video segments help patients see the providers philosophies, medical care specialties, and better understand who they may be seen by in the office.
- ▶ Include insurance information to include the types of accepted plans.
- ▶ Locations and hours sites are open for care. Driving directions and parking information should also be included.
- ▶ Career opportunities available can be a source for marketing new team members.



# Direct Mail Advertising



- Any form of advertising sent via mail directly to individuals homes is direct mail marketing.
- These typically include your practice name, address, phone numbers, services offered, providers, and perhaps pictures of the building or providers.
- Marketing companies exist that provide direct mail services and can prepare your direct mail ad. Select ZIP codes may be targeted in the surrounding areas or certain driving distance to the business.
- Also a target patient population may be the objective to reach an age group or seasonal residents.

# Purchase Mailing Lists

- ▶ Some healthcare facilities may choose to send direct mail advertisements straight to households, rather than through a direct mail marketing firm.
- ▶ Mailing lists/addresses can be purchased from marketing firms.
- ▶ With this marketing option, the medical office manager should work with the physicians to determine the type of advertisement desired and the demographic audience to be targeted.
- ▶ A budget should be compiled for artwork and printing of the mail piece. Also consider the cost of postage.



# Welcome to the Neighborhood

- ▶ Most communities have city or county funded committees whose function it is to provide information with new members of the community, such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- ▶ These committees typically provide materials to people who are buying a home in the area, or even to those who may be new renters.
- ▶ This material often includes information on the locations of libraries, parks, police stations, utilities, and other public facilities. These “Welcome to the Neighborhood” packets are helpful to new-comers in your community.
- ▶ Knowing new residents will need to establish with primary care or specialist physicians, plus dentists or therapists, can be an excellent opportunity to spend advertising dollars in an area that has a profitable return on investment.

# Offer Screenings and Education



- ▶ Many healthcare providers offer free screenings in their community as a way to bring in new patients. These screenings can range from scoliosis, vision checks, blood pressure screenings, and live public medical presentations.
- ▶ Screenings are often held in local malls, healthcare fairs, YMCA's, senior centers, and even grocery stores. Note: COVID disclaimer.
- ▶ A patient history form should be completed by the patient at the screening event to include demographics plus educational information distributed with bio's of the providers along with services provided.
- ▶ Have plenty of giveaways such as pens, sticky notes, keychains, nail files, chip clips, etc. for patients to take home with the medical groups website and contact information. Advertise telehealth visits.



# Social Media Sites

- Social media sites, such as Facebook or LinkedIn, have become popular methods for medical offices to market their services.
- These sites offer low to no cost page set up where marketing information about the medical group can be published.
- Articles written by providers or staff, plus news about new procedures or techniques, can be posted in this public format.
- When a user types in a certain word or phrase, the social media site's search engine will automatically bring up advertisements that fit the request.
- Example: If a user types in the words "low back pain," a paid advertisement for a local chiropractor or orthopedic group may appear on the user's screen.



# Use Focus Groups

- ▶ Focus groups are small groups of people who are used to survey satisfaction with a particular service or test product ideas.
- ▶ In healthcare, they are typically one of two categories:
  1. A focus group of existing patients in the facility or medical practice who are asked to provide their opinions on types of care or to share their feelings about how physicians should interact with patients.
  2. A focus group which consists of individuals who are not current patients in the clinic. With this group, the goal is to survey the members to determine what kinds of services would be valuable to the group and what it would take to encourage them to become new patients with your group.

The feedback gained is typically valuable and an inexpensive form of marketing.

It is suggested a bag to include provider bio and business cards plus tchotchke's be given as a thank you gift for their attendance.



# Target Local Businesses

## KEEP THE "DOCTOR" ON THE SHELF

**A Complete First Aid Home Treatment for Coughs and Colds**

*Wm. Wm. Mess*

Have you tried *Mess's* Cough Drops, Antiseptic Solution, and Nose & Throat Drops?

Made Clean and Sold Clean

Safe Sealed Sanitary

**AT YOUR SERVICE ALL DAY AND ALL NIGHT**

- Many healthcare providers reach out to market directly to local businesses in their community.
- This is a form of direct mail advertising in that advertisements may be sent to local businesses as an attempt to bring in new patients.
- Medical Office Managers/Administrators may choose to use this method to contact local businesses about setting up private health screening events, or offer a physician to give a presentation.
- This type of advertising is inexpensive as costs involved may be contained to materials, time, and postage.

# Offer Educational Speaking Engagements

- ▶ Physician or advanced care practitioner talks are an excellent way to connect with the community and reach out to potential new patients.
- ▶ Example: A provider may give an educational talk about shoulder/hip/knee therapies and surgeries at a local senior center or one about proper nutrition at a local diet center.
- ▶ Physicians have also offered their services at local colleges, especially in vocational programs, such as nursing or medical assisting. In these settings, physicians may speak about their particular profession, or on a special subject matter, such as how to deal with noncompliant patients.
- ▶ Additionally, other medical practices may be an excellent place for a specialized provider to make presentation. This creates referral sources with primary care offices in the community.



# Telephone Books as Advertising Source

- Patients still use the Yellow Pages!
- With the popularity and ease of use with the Internet and our cell phones, many potential patients today forego owning or using telephone books or directories. But...
- This form of advertising still needs to be done in an effort to reach those new patients who are not online or tech savvy.
- Just as with any form of print advertising, the cost is determined by the size of the advertisement and its placement.



# On-Hold Messaging

- ▶ Most business and medical practices frequently include advertising messages in their telephone systems. These messages are heard by callers who are placed on hold.
- ▶ On hold messaging can be purchased from a vendor, or clinics can design and records their own. Ensure voices have clear, articulate, and happy voices on the recordings for ease of hearing and understanding the message.
- ▶ Because the caller is a captive audience during the hold time, this is a perfect opportunity to market items that may be of interest to the caller.
- ▶ New or unique services in the clinic, the availability of a new provider, or expanded office hours are all examples of advertising information that may be included in the clinic's on hold message.

# Offer Exceptional Customer Service to Keep Patients Satisfied



- ▶ Patients are healthcare consumers with options. If not satisfied with all aspects of their care, they may and certainly can, seek medical treatment elsewhere.
- ▶ Happy patients also refer other friends and family as new patients. Positive free marketing!
- ▶ Outside companies, such as Press Ganey, can be used to survey patients or medical clinics may use their own form of survey to collect information about patient satisfaction. In office surveys can be filled out on site or given to patients with a request to complete and return them in a postage paid envelope. The clinics website should also provide an area for patients to share comments.
- ▶ Share patient feedback with providers and team members for improved performance and healthcare delivery.

# Patients and Staff as Advertising Tools

- ▶ Patients who are very satisfied with their care often refer their family and friends for treatment in the same facility or medical group.
- ▶ On the other hand, patients who are unhappy with their care also share those less than flattering stories creating a negative effect on earning new business.
- ▶ Because patients are a form of advertisement, both good and bad, medical office managers and administrators should address patient concerns and complaints in a timely manner with sincere attention while listening to learn.





# Writing Articles for Local Newspapers or Periodicals

- ▶ Many communities have local newspapers or neighborhood newsletters which may be open to physicians writing informational articles to be published in their paper. Example: Dermatologist's advice on summer skin care in the sun or what to watch for with irregular moles or growths.
- ▶ This is form of free advertising, plus a community service, with low to no cost to the medical group.
- ▶ These articles can be written on particular topics or in a prearranged question and answer format the physician typically listens to in their own practice.
- ▶ Additional medical team members, such as a nurse or medical assistant, may write articles about how to care for specific patients who may need particular attention or precautions.

# Target the Local Media

- ▶ Whenever a new development occurs in the medical practice, it provides a great opportunity to seek free advertisement with the local media. Local television stations may also help promote a new service or technology.
- ▶ Examples: Opening an additional medical site location, hiring a new physician with unique skill sets or expanded medical treatments, or the purchase of a new piece of equipment.
- ▶ These events may be submitted in the form of a press release to local newspapers, on your website, or to the media as recommendations for news stories.

# Hiring a Marketing Consultant

- ▶ For clinics with larger budgets for advertising, a marketing consultant or marketing firm may be retained. They bring creative ideas, tools, and tips to get the most return on your investment.
- ▶ These marketing companies take the work of researching products and competition off the shoulders of the medical office manager, administrator, and physicians. Determine who is offering similar medical care in your community and what sets your group apart.
- ▶ If this method of setting up a marketing program is chosen, time should be spent first in researching the best firm. Some specialize in healthcare and know our unique industry; we are in the people business.
- ▶ A company that has a good history of working with healthcare facilities and one that freely provides contact information for some of their clients is a good place to start. Check their references and finished products.
- ▶ Also research MGMA sponsors and vendors for successfully proven marketing consultants in your region.

