

Marketing Strategies

How to successfully promote your practice in a competitive market.

BY ELMER BOOKS, MBA

Unfortunately, many physicians mistakenly view the development and execution of a marketing strategy as something that is tied to a small business and not a medical practice. What physicians need to understand is that a medical practice is a small business and that successful marketing strategies are critical to long-term success. To be an effective cosmetic practice in today's highly competitive aesthetic market, physicians must embrace proven marketing tactics to ensure sustainable growth and success.

TIPS FOR MARKETING AN AESTHETIC PRACTICE

The heart of every cosmetic practice lies in its marketing plan. Whether a practice is looking to spread the word about existing or new offerings, it must make marketing a priority. Here are several tips that will help an aesthetic practice ensure that its marketing efforts pay impactful dividends.

See all your opportunities. Because the number one source of new patients is referrals from existing patients, it is easy to neglect other important marketing opportunities. For a medical practice to prosper, the procedures and services it provides must be communicated to both new and existing patients. Even though existing patients are extremely important to the ongoing success of a practice, they do not give a practice the necessary outreach to adequately grow procedures and services. New procedures and services require their own marketing strategy to ensure that the correct target audience is reached.

Develop your practice goals and objectives. A marketing plan can be used to achieve specific objectives, such as providing information and promoting special events. When marketing a special event, practices should take the time to clearly define their goals and objectives so they can tailor their marketing message to target a specific audience that will respond to the promotion. For example, if a practice is advertising the grand opening of a medical spa and the goal is to get as many potential patients as possible to attend, they might consider offering a gift bag to the first 75 people

who arrive. Each practice knows its market and audience; therefore, practices should not hesitate to reel customers in with a hook or call to action!

Analyze your competition. Marketing creates an atmosphere for strong competition. Publicizing your services and offerings gets the word out on pricing and availability, which not only reaches the intended patients, but also reaches the other medical practices competing for the same patient's business. Marketing facilitates a healthy competition that allows an existing and new medical practice to be successful and grow in the marketplace. Marketing allows the new medical practice to compete with the well-known established practice on a more level playing field.

Build a practice reputation. The reputation of each practice is built through active participation in community programs, effective marketing communications, and quality of procedures and services that are created or supported by the marketing efforts of the practice. Additionally, marketing builds brand-name recognition for its procedures and services. As the reputation of a practice grows, the sales and procedures will continue to grow, and word-of-mouth referrals will take on a life of its own. When a medical practice reaches the high expectations of the cosmetic consumer, its rock-solid reputation stands on well-founded footing.

Manage your marketing budget. Although marketing is important for a medical practice to succeed, it can also be costly. During your first year in business, a medical practice might spend as much as 15 to 25 percent of its gross revenue on marketing. As gross revenue dollars grow in the second and third years, the marketing budget will begin to reflect typical marketing benchmarks in the aesthetic industry. The optimal marketing plan is a healthy mix of different forms of marketing, such as website, internal, print, and special events. Successful practices plan for this expense because they recognize that marketing is a worthy and necessary investment in the future of their business.

Maximize your Internet marketing. Marketing that takes place on a practice's website or elsewhere online follows the same basic principles as any other types of marketing. Marketing is all about building relations with patients. It is

critical that practice leaders clearly identify their end goal, the target audience, and how they plan to connect the two. The goal is to stand out from competition with higher search-engine optimization results and good contact widgets to transition each customer's online experience from a site visit to a booked consultation. The typical aesthetic patient is Internet-savvy and looking for easy-to-obtain-and-use information to help them meet their needs. They are busy people and want truthful and direct information. Practices should make sure their Internet information is educational and inspires the patient to reach out for a consultation appointment.

MARKETING MATTERS

Medical practices need to recognize that they are no different than a small business and that marketing matters. Once this resonates, they are then able to take steps toward successfully promoting their products and services to ignite both new and returning customer interest. The long-term success of any marketing program lies directly in understanding the target market, setting clear and measurable goals and objectives, analyzing the competition, building a solid reputation, managing the budget, and maximizing Internet impact. When these actions are taken, a practice can expect a handsome return on their investment, just the way a small business might. ■

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