

Building an Effective Specialty Practice **marketing program**



PROMOTE
expertise


differentiate
FROM COMPETITORS

articulate
HOW NEEDS ARE MET



intro

In today's consumer-driven healthcare marketplace, specialty practices must do more than just treat patients.



To stay afloat or even thrive, specialty practices must also promote their expertise to the community, differentiate themselves from their competitors and clearly articulate how well they meet customer needs.

A solid marketing strategy is an essential element in achieving these goals. With a well-considered program, practices can attract new patients while re-engaging current ones, resulting in more business, greater patient satisfaction and increased loyalty—all things that translate into better financial performance.

The challenge for many physician practices is that they have never tried to formally market their organization.

Instead, they have relied on tactics such as word-of-mouth or physician referrals to keep the doors open. Fortunately, developing a sound marketing plan is well within an organization's reach. **This e-book deconstructs the marketing effort, discussing why it's important and offers key tactics for a successful program.**



ATTRACT NEW PATIENTS



ENGAGE CURRENT PATIENTS



PROMOTE PATIENT SATISFACTION
& INCREASED LOYALTY



BETTER FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE



the benefits

of a comprehensive marketing strategy



BY MOVING FORWARD WITH A ROBUST MARKETING STRATEGY,
A PRACTICE CAN REALIZE MANY POSITIVE OUTCOMES.



ATTRACT NEW PATIENTS

COMMUNICATE VALUE OF PRACTICE

TARGETED & TRANSPARENT
COMMUNICATION

INCREASE MARKET SHARE

MAINTAIN REVENUE GOALS

One example is when a program captures the attention of prospective patients and communicates the value of practice offerings, it can increase its market share. Similarly, targeted and transparent communication with existing patients can foster greater loyalty and help the practice maintain revenue goals.

THE BIGGER AN ORGANIZATION'S
PRESENCE IS IN THE COMMUNITY,
THE MORE IT CAN CULTIVATE A
REPUTATION OF QUALITY.

The right marketing interventions also boost brand visibility and name recognition, helping the practice rise above the competition to become the logical choice for patients when choosing specialty healthcare services.



In addition to growing an organization's patient base, a marketing program can foster a stronger rapport with physicians outside the specialty. Clear, regular communication with other physicians lays the groundwork for more collaboration, better patient care and more qualified referrals.

Not only does this help from a business perspective, but it also can improve patient outcomes.



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BENEFITS



Marketing does not have to be expensive, **but it should be strategic.**

the strategy

that yields a solid program

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STRATEGY

Organizations should have a defined plan for how they will communicate about the practice, what information they will share and what channels they will use.

Following are some essential tactics to include in a marketing program to ensure it achieves the practice's communication goals.



strategy 1

Designate appropriate resources.



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STRATEGY

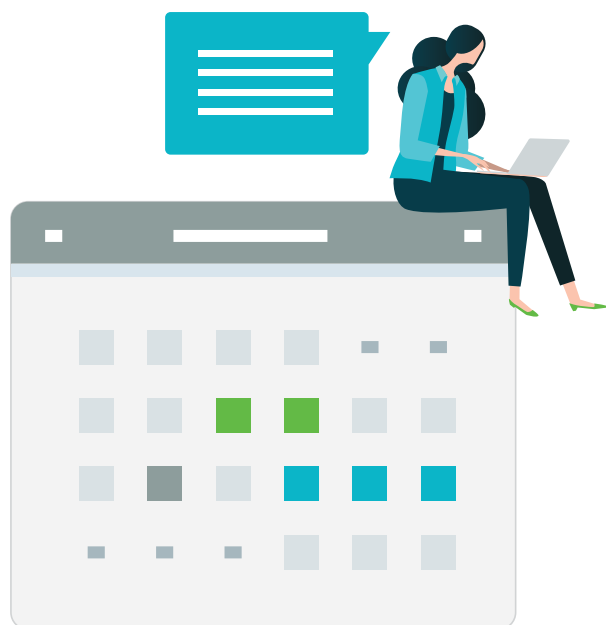
Although it is not necessary to hire someone solely for the purpose of leading a marketing initiative, practices should consider tapping an individual or group of people to take ownership of marketing efforts.

These individuals should have an interest in communications and a commitment to growing the practice's market presence. They also should be given resources to implement a program. Depending on the practice, this may include marketing software, time during the day to work on communication campaigns and a budget to pay for various initiatives.



strategy 2

Allocate marketing resources based on data.



Data underpins a strong marketing program. The more information a practice has on how patients learn about the organization and what services they seek, the better it can target its marketing program. Conversely, organizations that take a scattershot approach won't be as effective because they may end up spending money on strategies that don't reach the right audience or convey optimal information.

To access the necessary level of data on which to make decisions, a practice should think about using marketing software—specifically tools embedded in the electronic medical record (EMR)—that efficiently pull a variety of information for review. These solutions allow a practice to get a clear picture of its current patient onramps, identifying top physician referral sources, most popular procedures, other ways patients hear about the organization, etc. Practices can use this data to focus marketing strategies and promotion efforts to realize the biggest return on investment.

Well-designed marketing tools involve little-to-no setup, relying instead on the referral information that administrative staff enter into the patient record. Provided a practice is diligent about entering this information—and EMRs can be designed to require staff to enter it—the software can generate detailed and insightful reports to guide marketing activities.

strategy 3

Build relationships with referring physicians



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STRATEGY

One of the most valuable sources of new patients is other physicians. For example, an oncologist or breast specialist may refer patients to a cosmetic surgeon for breast reconstruction. Similarly, an internist may refer a patient with vision problems to an ophthalmologist to check for various ocular diseases. By cementing these relationships, a practice is likely to increase referrals over time. This could also improve information exchange between physicians.

To strengthen connections and cultivate new ones, specialty practices should regularly review data that shows which physicians are referring patients, including how much revenue is tied to those referrals. The organization can then reach out to top-referring physicians in addition to the practices that have the potential to generate more referrals to make sure they have the information they require to continue recommending the practice. Possible information to offer includes referral cards that list the practice's contact information,

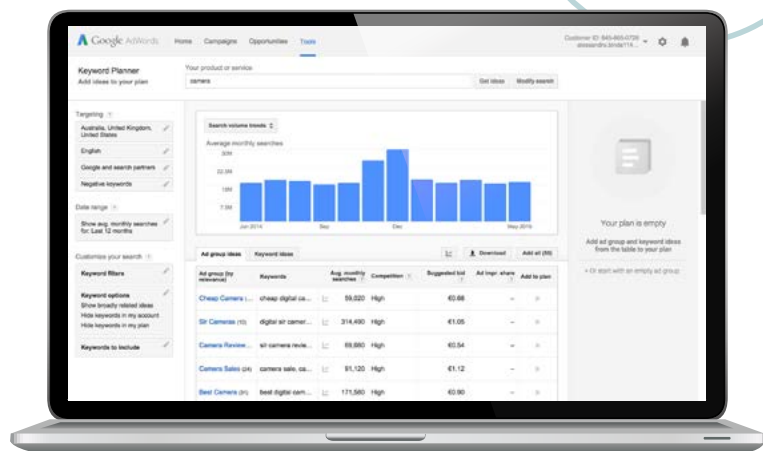
so the referring physician can easily share practice information with patients. Or, the practice could provide a direct phone number for dedicated schedulers to streamline patient access. Leave-behind pieces about specific procedures can also be helpful, especially if they answer frequently asked patient questions. In addition to providing resources, the practice may want to encourage a physician-to-physician phone call or email to introduce the practice.



The ultimate goal of all these communications is to reinforce that the practice is a true partner in extending the patient experience and can provide a seamless transition for the referring physician's patient, delivering an equivalent level of care.

strategy 4

Pay attention to the Internet



Although patients may hear about a practice through other providers or family and friends, more are relying on the Internet to search for physicians. Many are typing in specific keywords to see which practices fit their needs best. The names that appear at the top of the list tend to be the ones a prospective patient calls first.

A relatively low-cost but impactful strategy for capturing the attention of patients combing the web is to engage in Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This involves anticipating what words patients might use to research options and including those words in website copy including blogs or other online communications to ensure the practice is at or near the top of search engine

rankings. Depending on the practice, these keywords may relate to locations, types of care, or specific procedures. Although an organization can use its own experience to figure out these words, it can be helpful to turn to an outside resource like Google Keyword Planner to search the practice's targeted geographic area and find keywords that directly reach its audience.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS

USE TARGETED KEYWORDS

DIRECTLY TARGETS YOUR AUDIENCE

strategy 5

Share meaningful content with patients



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STRATEGY

BLOGS & PODCASTS

NEWSLETTER ARTICLES

SOCIAL MEDIA

People seeking specialty care may be uncertain about what a specific intervention entails and/or why it's important to seek treatment in the first place. To provide clarity, a practice should consider crafting approachable, easy-to-understand patient education material.


Specialty physicians are in a good position to provide meaningful content due to their knowledge of patient needs as well as strategies for staying healthy. However, these busy physicians may not have the time to generate multiple pieces of content. To reduce the chances of overburdening specialists, a practice's marketing team may want to ask them to create just one article. The team can then repurpose the information into other mediums. For instance, a blog post can be turned into an infographic, presentation or video. These different media types can then be shared on various platforms to expand reach.

Blogs, newsletter articles, social media and podcasts can be ideal media for conveying helpful information while solidifying a practice's reputation as a knowledgeable expert. When a practice incorporates keywords into these materials, it can also elevate SEO rankings when posting content online.



strategy 6

Nurture patient relationships



When patients feel connected and valued by a practice, they are more likely to remain loyal. As such, organizations should focus some of their marketing efforts on maintaining patient connections.

One relatively easy method is sending reminders to patients to set up appointments. Whether these are follow-up visits or annual or bi-annual wellness exams, a gentle nudge can show the practice cares for the patient's health. Practices can create electronic reminders that reach patients on their preferred devices, such as cell phones or tablets. In some cases, a practice can automatically schedule appointments and send patients an email or text indicating that

a slot is being held for them. Not only does this jog patients' memories, it makes things more convenient because they don't have to spend time scheduling the visit.

In addition to sending reminders, the practice can communicate well wishes at significant times, such as birthdays or other special events. Depending on the situation, an organization can offer a discount or merely communicate best wishes to keep the practice top of mind.

When structuring patient communications, it is imperative that the information is targeted based on the individual's needs.

No one wants extra emails or reminders about procedures that aren't relevant. That said, a well-timed communication that offers an opportunity in which the patient might be interested can prompt action. To focus promotions, a practice can use marketing software, reviewing data that shows which patients have received what procedures. The practice can then more intentionally direct promotional materials. For example, if a person has received Botox in the past but has not visited the practice in the previous six months, he or she may be ready for another session. Sending a promotional piece or making a phone call to offer a discount on Botox treatments could persuade the individual to make an appointment.

strategy 7

Monitor marketing program performance

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STRATEGY



As a practice starts to implement some of the abovementioned strategies, it should leverage data to monitor which initiatives are generating the most referrals.

Without this review, a practice could be engaging in efforts that aren't yielding the best results. To gain a sense of how well a particular initiative is performing, an organization can employ marketing technology to see how many patients came to the organization as a result of the endeavor. When costs are entered into the system, the practice can also quantify each intervention's ROI, allowing it to accurately determine the cost-per-patient-lead and whether a marketing outreach campaign is worth the outlay.

Conversion rates measure the number of patients who not only came to the practice for an appointment but chose to have a procedure and went through with the process. Assessing the effect of interventions on conversion rates can reveal different trends than those tied to referral rates. For instance, a practice may discover that most of its breast augmentation appointments come from the web, but those individuals referred by a certain outside surgeon are more likely to have the procedure. Based on this information, the practice can focus

As part of the monitoring process, it is critical to look at more than just referral rates but examine conversion rates as well.

on converting web-driven appointments to scheduled procedures and reaching out to the referring surgeon to further strengthen the relationship—with the ultimate objective being to maintain or even increase the number of referrals.

the bottom line:

A data-driven approach is critical

The common thread that weaves through all the strategies in this e-book is the importance of reliable data. Without it, a practice will not be able to identify opportunities to effectively foster patient or referring physician relationships, target communications and seize potential growth opportunities. Organizations that anchor their marketing program in data should simultaneously find ways to easily capture, review and respond to it. Further, those leveraging user-friendly marketing technology will have the most success in generating new business in addition to realizing long-term strategic goals.

For more information,
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