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Making marketing a forethought

By Judy Munroe

Is marketing a forethought or an afterthought in your practice? To answer that, look at your patient flow. If your practice acquires a regular flow of new patients, you probably make a consistent marketing effort.

But if your patient flow has peaks and valleys, marketing may be more of an afterthought — something that is done after everything else gets done.

To get off the patient roller coaster, try these six proven strategies.

1. Make marketing a habit. If you only have time to schedule one weekly meeting, make it a marketing meeting. Commit to a time and a place. Specify who you expect to attend, and create an agenda for each meeting.

Weekly marketing meetings may sound like a lot, but what you are trying to do is create a habit — a marketing habit that keeps you on top on your new-patient acquisition.

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2. Create a marketing system. The purpose of the marketing system is to develop accountability.

Marketing systems are put in place to hold people accountable for getting tasks completed on time. This system should include the following items for each task:

- Date assigned;
- Name of marketing task;
- Description of marketing task;
- Estimated cost;
- Who is responsible;
- Completion date;
- Resources needed.

- 3. Create an annual marketing calendar.** Identify internal and external marketing events on the calendar. (The marketing system, with assigned accountability, will allow the marketing calendar to unfold.)
- 4. Create a budget.** Once you have developed your marketing calendar, identify the cost of each item or event. Include as many details of the cost as you can anticipate.
- 5. Create a tracking system.** Tracking the success of your marketing efforts allows you to evaluate whether to repeat the effort or try something different. Calculate the return on investment for each marketing event to determine its effectiveness.
- 6. Execute consistently.** Marketing is not a hit or miss proposition. It must be consistent to be effective.

Some marketing experts purport that it takes six to eight touches per person to get them into a mindset to buy. Others believe that it takes a series of three mailings that contain irresistible offers to generate new business.

One of the general rules of marketing is that 60 percent of your marketing efforts should be spent on existing and past patients. Keep in touch consistently with your warmest market.

Marketing is an opportunity for you to use your imagination and even be outrageous. If you put these six strategies in place, you will not only begin to reap the benefits but will also look forward to doing more.



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