



10 Simple Marketing Strategies

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Do you ever find yourself avoiding the action you really should be taking? Not necessarily procrastination as much as not knowing where to start? Well, here are 10 simple steps that you can take today that will help you develop a marketing strategy for your practice.

Step 1 - Define successful for you. It may be financial but it could also be work/life balance or peace of mind, success does not look the same for everyone, decide where you want to take your practice and then use the following steps to achieve it.

Step 2 – Invest in your staff. They are your best marketing tool; they will drive more patients toward your practice than any other single action. But they can drive more patients away too. Evaluate the quality of your staff and their ability to help you reach your goal. This doesn't mean you terminate those that are not a perfect fit but you will need to train and develop their skills to meet your expectation. Ask yourself, "Do I have confidence in their abilities? Do I enjoy being with them? Do my patients respond well to them?" Make good choices when hiring, then invest time, money and effort into your staff and you will be rewarded.

Step 3 – Focus on your established patient base. Much time and effort are placed on grabbing that new patient; ask yourself, what have I done for my loyal, long-term patient lately? Don't think discounts as a way of acknowledging and affirming these patients. Consider a special gesture, something that they will value, not something that will promote your practice. Do not tie the gift to referrals but simply acknowledge your appreciation of their years of support. For top-tier patients, you might consider a bigger gesture, a pair of glasses or a great prescription sunglass on you. The goal in this case is to create a buzz when they are out with their friends.

Step 4 – Be a positive leadership force. Your front desk team is the front line in marketing your practice. Do they understand you and your philosophy? Do they care? Ask yourself why they would? The glamour? I don't think so. The money? Certainly not. It's you and your manager who will create this enthusiasm. Develop a motivational and educational plan based on your team and reinforce it regularly.

Step 5 – Effective recall. There are various examples of pre-appointing protocols but those practice that do it right, capture as much as 65% of their recalled patients, you don't get that with a postcard. Create a pre-appoint system that is refined for your patient base.

Step 6 – Community outreach. A couple of ideas to consider: reach out to the pediatricians in your area and educate them on the value of a comprehensive eye exam for children prior to three years of age, or contact retirement communities for a discussion of visual acuity and mental health.

Step 7 – Be memorable! What is special about you? How are you unique from all the other optometrist in your community? Do you embrace technology? Have a great sense of humor and make an eye exam fun? Are you willing to deal with complicated cases? How do you communicate that to your patients? Invest in someone to help you organize your message and reach out.

Step 8 – Be available. Do you work Monday-Friday 9:00am-5:00pm? Patients have a lot of choices; you need to compete with these options. I am not advocating late night hours. Most staff and patients are too tired by the end of the day to take the time to make quality decisions and purchases. Evaluate the demographics of your community and adapt your hours to meet their needs, consider early morning hours or Saturdays to attract those patients who want time and attention.

Step 9 – Stop compromising. You cannot be all things to all people. The reality is patients don't remember they choose the cheapest option; they just remember the experience, good or bad, and you're the face of that experience.

Step 10 – Drop your lowest performing insurance companies. If you don't like the program stop working with it, seek out patients that are willing to value your skills and quality. This won't happen overnight, patients have been conditioned to think insurance first, not vision, you can change that by refocusing your conversations and actions to reflect what you know is right for the patient. I have not encountered one practice that has regretted dropping poor performing insurance companies, the only regret is how long they waited to do it.

Commit to taking action now! Before you step away from this article, write down your definition of success, then consider the skills of your staff and determine what changes need to be made. Now meet with your leadership team and put together a plan of action.

Good luck!

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