Promoting Your Practice

Introduction to Marketing

Did you know that whether or not you consciously decide to market your practice, your patients, potential patients and other physicians choose daily whether they'll come to you or refer to you?

Everything from your office décor to your billing statements to the courtesy of your office staff reflects on how patients and referrers perceive your practice. Traditional marketing activities like flyers, advertisements, web site or events will only be effective if the overall experience of your practice is positive for patients.

A well thought out and executed marketing strategy can make a world of difference.

Atrium Medical Center has created this short guide to promoting your practice as a reference for you. Mapping out your marketing goals, budget, timeline and tactics will help you be strategic in your approach and avoid wasting money.

Target the Right Audiences

When choosing a physician, consumers rely on several sources for information:

- Self (internet, calling the office)
- Word-of-mouth (friends, co-workers, family)
- Physicians and other caregivers
- Hospitals
- Physician referral services
- Health care plans

Marketing can help you communicate with patients and referrers through these trusted sources.

Think about how patients come to you as you plan your marketing approach. If your practice relies mainly on physician referrals, it may not be cost-effective to market your practice directly to consumers. Instead, it may make more sense to spend your time and resources networking with referring physicians and providing them with information about you and your practice.

If you're targeting consumers, it is important to note that patients are very loyal to their physicians. They're unlikely to switch unless they move, change health plans (and their doctor is not in the network) or are extremely dissatisfied with their current doctor. Also, whether they are the patient or not, women make 70 percent of medical decisions for their families, including choosing a physician.

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Last but not least, keep in mind the power of your existing patients. If you have an existing patient base, don't forget to tell them when you add a new service or procedure. Even if they don't need it personally, they may tell friends or family members.

Brand Your Practice

A brand is much more than a logo. Your brand sets expectations about what people will experience when they choose your practice.

Focusing on how you want others to perceive your practice will help to guide your marketing efforts, as well as decisions about how you and your staff deal with patients, referrers and others.

Your affiliation with Atrium Medical Center allows you to leverage the hospital's brand as a springboard to your practice's own brand. Atrium has worked hard to build a brand based on its history of service to the region and its commitment to patient care, safety and quality.

Get Results with a Call to Action

How will you know if your marketing is working?

The best way is to include a call to action. This means including a request that tells the reader/viewer/listener what you want them to do. Some examples of call-to-action phrases that could be considered are:

- Call this number for an appointment or for more information
- Talk to your family physician about your symptoms (measure resulting referrals)
- Visit our web site to learn more about treatment options
- Attend our event

The simplest way to measure is to note how many calls and/or web site visits a month you get before placing an ad or other marketing. Then measure how many calls/web site visits come in after your marketing runs. Don't forget to have your front desk staff ask and track how patients heard of you too.

Patient Service

Medical practice marketing is more than placing print ads in the local newspapers or sending postcards to patients on their birthdays. In the end, the most important marketing you can do is to deliver quality care and create a good experience for patients in your practice.

Everything from how the phones are answered to the comfort of the waiting room chairs and the body language of staff (rushed vs. sitting and ready to listen) plays a part. The best part is that many noticeable improvements can be made without spending a lot of money.

Marketing Strategies

Most marketing strategies fall into one of these categories:

1. Advertising
2. Online marketing
3. Public relations
4. Community relations
5. Physician-to-Physician

We'll give you more information on each to help you strengthen your practice's marketing.

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