



BUSINESS BASICS

Embracing the Change: Reimagine Your Business and Build the Practice You've Always Wanted

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The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown many businesses for a loop, and acupuncture is no exception. Federal and state guidelines have been less than clear at times, with many practices forced to close for weeks, if not months. Some reopened, only to have to close again as infection rates continued to rise.

Rather than write 2020 off as a year of uncertainty and failure, take the new lessons COVID has taught. Embrace the emerging changes that are the "new normal" to make your practice everything you want it to be. The following four tips can help you set yourself up for success so your practice can weather any storm.

Safety First

While safety has always been a critical component of a successful practice, safety requirements have changed dramatically in the post-COVID world. Screening patients over the phone and with temperature checks on-site is the new norm. And waiting areas will most likely be a thing of the past. You will need to instruct patients on how to enter and check-in with social distancing in mind, so you do not have people congregating in elevators or waiting rooms.



Protective gear like masks, gloves and face shields is also the new norm, both for the safety of you and your staff, as well as your patients. To keep the waiting area clean and give yourself time to disinfect treatment rooms, you may need to stagger your bookings as well. This could mean seeing fewer patients in the short-term.

Efficiency is Key

If implementing necessary safety protocols means seeing fewer patients, you must be efficient in all other aspects of your practice. Your front- and back-office procedures need to be streamlined and communicated to both staff and patients. One of the best ways to do this is to embrace technology and services that make your life easier, and your practice more accurate and efficient.

From practice management and online marketing to insurance billing and accounting software, technology is your friend. Implementing one or all of these solutions can increase your efficiency and accuracy, so you are not losing money and time in this new normal.

It is important to choose software and vendors that are a good fit for your practice, so make sure you do your due diligence. Do not get more than you need or something that's missing a critical piece to allow your practice to run more smoothly. Make sure there are excellent customer support and online training options for your staff. Use this time to do your homework and find something that will genuinely make a positive impact on your bottom line.

Virtual Is Here to Stay

If there is one thing that has become a permanent fixture in 2020, it is the virtual world. From online learning to telehealth, to social interaction, meeting "virtually" is not going anywhere anytime soon.

Do not be afraid of the virtual world; use it as a critical differentiator for your practice. Take

advantage of existing platforms and implement virtual learning opportunities for new patients, like happy hours or Q&A sessions, to answer questions.

You might consider doing your initial patient screenings virtually first, so when a patient does come into the office, you have a game plan in place and can get right to the treatment room to get started.

You can also use this virtual world to collaborate with colleagues or take an online class yourself. Use platforms like Zoom, Facebook Meeting Rooms or Microsoft Teams to market your services to new audiences who might not physically come into your office, but will log in for an introductory session.

Communication Is Critical

Whether you follow all four of these steps or just one, communication is a critical piece of making sure your practice emerges from the COVID crisis successfully. Going back to doing things precisely as you had before is not a viable option. You will have to communicate with your staff about any new changes you are putting in place, and communicate with your existing and potential patients as well.

Your staff needs to understand why you are making specific changes and how it impacts them. If you are implementing new technology, they need training and know-how to problem-solve quickly. If you are implementing new safety protocols, they need to understand how you are protecting them and the patients who walk through your door.

It's crucial to let your *existing* patients know your doors are open and that, although there might be a few changes, you are ready and able to help them maintain their health, especially during these times when good health and safety are a priority for so many. In addition, reach out to your community and let potential *new* patients know how acupuncture can help them maintain their health and address critical issues of concern to them.

Do More Than Just Survive

Now, more than ever, people are looking for other options to meet their health care needs. Let them know you are there to educate, support and treat them with the best of care in a safe environment. Embrace the new normal; do not just survive, but thrive. Do not let this year of COVID hold you back from building — or rebuilding — the practice you have always wanted.

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