



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

Every Contact Is a Marketing Opportunity

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Marketing encompasses all contact between anyone in your practice with everyone in the outside world. I suggest that your healing and marketing are closely related because your goal is to heal as many people as possible, and marketing yourself and your practice can make that possible. Let's take a look at some key components of marketing.

ALL CONTACT

When I say that marketing encompasses all contact, that's exactly what I mean. To start and grow a thriving practice, you need to be aware of the many direct and indirect ways that you come in contact with prospective, existing, and former patients. To do this, you must pay attention to all five of the human senses, plus how you interact with the world around you:

How do people see you and your practice? Do you promote yourself as an acupuncturist in what you wear; i.e., a clinical jacket with mandarin collar? Do you wear authentic Chinese attire? Do you ever carry around a small plastic meridian doll? (By the way, when I began my practice, I did this for a while. It got attention and new patients. It gets people talking and provides an opportunity to interact with them.) What does your marketing (brochures, education cards, clinic forms, business cards, Website, advertisements, signs, etc.) say about you and your practice? Does your clinic decor inspire a warm, calm feeling?



What do people hear when they enter your practice? Is there loud traffic, talking, music or other noise that might interfere with the healing process? Can you create an acoustically pleasing environment that relaxes your patients with calming music, soothing water fountains or a sound-blocking white noise machine?

What do people feel when they enter your practice? Is your furniture comfortable? Is it too cold or too hot? Is there a draft? Is your waiting area too crowded, with patients virtually sitting on top of each other?

What do people smell when they enter your practice? Are there any chemical or unclean smells? Do you use incense, moxa, aromatic herbs, cooked herbs or aromatherapy? If so, are the aromas strong enough to be effective without overpowering?

What do people taste when they enter your practice? Do you have fresh water, juices, tea or other beverages available? Do you use herbs, tinctures, or patent medicines?

How do you interact with your patients? Do you seek to form lasting relationships with them? Do you radiate concern for their health and well being? Do you express concern for the health and well being of their family and friends? Do you ask about their family and home life? Is your staff courteous and supportive? Do you have specific practice and patient-education protocols that foster long-lasting relationships with new and existing patients? How do your patients feel and think about you and your practice? Do you ask for testimonials? How can this information help you improve your practice and your healing abilities?

These are some of the many questions you'll want to ask yourself and your staff. Place the patient first in your thinking and feeling, and use that viewpoint to plan exactly how you will present yourself and your practice to them.

OFFICE FENG SHUI

One powerful way to put this idea into action is to make your clinic as pleasant and as educational as possible. After all, the time your patient spends sitting in your waiting room is the perfect opportunity to educate and inform them about acupuncture and your practice.

Educating your patients is a multi-dimensional project, and doesn't stop when the patient leaves your treatment room. Everything from decor to reading materials to product placement can affect your patients' relationship with the healing process. Before you begin to treat them, your patients need to know that your business is legitimately concerned with their health and vitality. Preparing your space does not need to involve any heavy expense or a large chunk of your time. Keep it clean and simple, and then let the environment you create help to promote and grow your business.

Take a moment to look around your office and ask yourself the following questions. Then put some of these simple suggestions to work to make the environment, from waiting to treatment room, a place that not only educates your patients, but also promotes health and well being. Consult books on feng shui to help you design your space and lay out materials.

What do your patients see? When they walk in the front door, are they greeted with plants that have restricted qi flow, outdated products or empty brochure stands? It's easy to keep things simple and clean. Display only those products and materials that promote your current business, keep plants and flowers trimmed, watered and happy, and never let your brochure racks and business card holders stand empty.

Don't display magazines where articles and advertisements reinforce the "symptoms = drugs" scenarios. Instead, display magazines about yoga, health, spirituality and nature, which promote healthy lifestyle choices and support the "health = no (serious) symptoms" scenario. Books on these topics, as well as on meridian exercises or energy medicine, are great too.

What can your patients share with others? Place things that they can take with them such as literature, educational materials, recent articles and studies in a visible location. While your patients wait, they can read through education cards such as "Acupuncture and Menopause" or "Acupuncture and Depression." Everyone knows someone who can benefit from what we have to offer. Education cards are an excellent and effective way to introduce people to a new way of relating to health and wellness. Create packets of information based on specific topics such as pain or allergies, which include education cards, articles, studies and other literature. Attach notes encouraging your patients to take them home and to spread the wealth to family and friends.

What do your walls say? Hang framed posters that promote acupuncture and Chinese medicine. How about a meridian chart displaying meridian pathways and organ networks, or a poster explaining the safety of acupuncture? In this way, you can beautify your walls while also educating your patients. Don't forget to change them often. After all, change is good and it keeps your office fresh, new and exciting.

Now that you've created a space where your patients will feel welcome and relaxed, you can concentrate on marketing efforts designed to attract new patients.

