

# Marketing on a Budget: Low Cost, High Yield

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There are countless ways to spend money marketing your practice, and you could easily invest thousands of dollars for unpredictable results. This can be difficult — even crippling — to any practice. If you're just starting out or have a small practice, low-cost marketing can be crucial for practice survival, growth and success. But where do you begin?

## Start With a Plan

First, create a written (hard copy or digital) marketing calendar. This is your three- to 12-month plan for internal, external and social media marketing.

Next, select a theme for each month. This helps make things interesting and consistent. The theme could be based on holidays, conditions, services, awareness days, or key practice dates such as your opening-date anniversary. You can repeat themes if you like, but don't have back-to-back months with the same theme because it's too easy for patients to tune out.

Within each theme, decide what promotion you'll offer (if any), what events you'll host internally, what events you'll attend externally, and what print or digital advertisements might be appropriate. You can also block out times and general ideas for email campaigns, social media posts, blogs, newsletters, and video posts that are in keeping with the monthly theme.

(This isn't about being rigid or boxed in. You can always add things to your marketing calendar in response to current events or patient needs. This just gives you a starting point and a structure.)

For each marketing event, think about all the hard and soft expenses involved. Hard expenses are things like postage, graphic work, printing, and so on. Soft expenses include things like the time used to put labels on a mailer or to brainstorm.

Where to spend your precious marketing dollars is an important decision for any business owner to make. Determine which marketing events or activities work well for you and provide maximum return-on-investment. Include several of these activities in your marketing calendar.

**Tip #1:** Create a physical or digital folder structure for every marketing activity. Place all things related to the activity (flyers, emails, receipts, goals, checklists, metrics, etc.) in the folder structure for easy access and review. With proper organization and tracking, you'll soon see which activities give you the "best bang for your buck."

## Use Your Existing Contacts

Your personal and professional contacts can be a treasure-trove of information for your marketing efforts. On a basic level, always listen for opportunities to provide information or to serve as a

resource for your friends, family, patients, and community. For example, if several parents in the neighborhood are talking about the size of their children's backpacks, you might offer a free backpack safety class to teach parents and kids about proper backpack use.

Ask professional contacts (nutritionists, physical therapists, massage therapists, energy workers and/or other health care providers) if they'd be willing to do cross-consultations. Coordinate a day during which they could spend a few hours in your office providing free consultations for your patients. Then schedule a time for you to do the same in their office. This doesn't cost you anything, but could introduce several potential patients to you.

Ask your contacts for online reviews. Whether we like it or not, the majority of patients now search Google, Yelp, Facebook and other sites for information and recommendations before selecting a provider. If you don't have reviews, they're likely to go on to the next person who does.

Make it easy for people to review you. Provide step-by-step instructions with a QR code or link to the appropriate site. And remember to thank them when they've posted a review. (It's also a good idea to obtain a signature release to use their review, even though they posted it on their accounts.)

Tip #2: Ask everyone for a review – not just your patients! Non-patients can still speak to the ease of finding your location, the personality of your team, the cleanliness of your space, your ability to speak from the heart, and so on. Previous patients who stopped care for geographic or financial reasons may be a great source of online reviews as well!

### Stay Connected

Sometimes you have more time than money to devote to marketing. Use this time to develop a strategy to stay connected with your prospects and patients. If you're a decent writer, a regular blog post may keep people engaged. Sending out an email once or twice a month can keep you "top-of-mind" as well.

Struggling for topic ideas? You could purchase a newsletter and then add your branding ... but patients like to hear from you. They can often tell you didn't write that content.

Tip #3: Try sending a photo of the month, supplement tip of the month, spinal health tip of the month, recipe of the month, or health-care tip of the month. It doesn't have to be long or cumbersome. Better yet, if you're comfortable, email a short video each month instead of a written newsletter.

Try different things and see what gets the best response. And whatever you send, make sure it's informative, interesting and congruent with your practice.

### Finally, Don't Forget the Basics

When considering your marketing strategy, make sure to pay close attention to the fundamentals. Maintain high standards of professionalism, obtain appropriate clinical results, and build a respectful rapport with your patients to enhance your reputation. Have a clean logo and be consistent with your branding. Pay attention to your business cards, your website and your social media activity.

(Social media is one of the best — and most economical — ways to stay in touch with your target demographic. Learn to use it effectively and leverage its power.)

Marketing your practice doesn't have to break the bank. Develop a plan with inexpensive and creative

ways to use your existing resources, stay connected, and master the basics to build your practice on a budget.

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