



PRACTICE PEARLS

## 5 Marketing Tips to Build Your Practice

Antonio Arias

You may think your sole purpose in life is to treat your patients. After all, that's why you went to acupuncture school, right? But whether you have been in practice a few months or a few years, you realize attracting and retaining patients is the name of the game if you want to keep your practice afloat.

Trying to develop marketing strategies can seem overwhelming to many, but it does not have to be an impossible task. Before we can dive into this, it is crucial to understand that marketing is a conversation between you and your patients (or potential patients). And much like any conversation, it is an ongoing process and an investment of time and money. Marketing is also a pointless exercise if you cannot back up your claims. Focusing on your superior patient care and positive outcomes is what will build your practice.

With that said, here are five tips you can implement quickly to begin the patient retention process that will ultimately grow your practice.

Tip #1: Websites, Blogs & SEO



If you do not already have a practice website, building one should be the first thing you do. There are several free platforms available that you can grow with your practice. Some charge a small monthly fee depending on what services you want to implement (educational content, shopping cart, etc.), but they are mostly inexpensive. You do not need to hire an IT professional to get something that looks professional.

Once you have your website up and running, start a blog and update it regularly. Your blog is where you do your content marketing; it allows you to share who you are and build your brand. Do not set an unreasonable expectation that you will need to update it daily. You do not always need to be the one to write it, either. It is good to refer to other practitioners you agree with and post about research relevant to your practice. Topic ideas could include acupuncture trends, your specialty, and any patient success story you and your patients want to share.

Search-engine optimization or SEO also improves your chances of being found as a top link in an online search, so this is a valuable investment.

*Getting Started: You can improve SEO by creating original content, linking to other reputable sites and including basic information like your practice address. Original content could include a weekly or biweekly blog and patient reviews. Links to other reputable sites could include state acupuncture associations, published research from peer-reviewed journals on conditions you treat, as well as general health and wellness sites.*

Tip #2: Social Media

People tend to fall into one of two camps: those who love social media and those who avoid it; but social media connections are the way of the world. Posting tips, practice news and other updates can help you reach a vast audience. Providing valuable content on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram can help you reach a patient base you may not reach otherwise. Social media is also a great place to post your blogs and drive more traffic to your website, where potential patients can learn more about you and what you do.

Getting Started: *Do not feel like you must have several accounts at once. Think about what is realistic in terms of time management and what is popular with your patients. Maybe start with Facebook, as it is one of the most commonly used, and set up a business page. You can find tutorials for how to do this on Facebook and through a simple Google search if you are unfamiliar. Start out by posting links to your blogs or relevant research. You can also post some personal information about yourself and your practice so patients can get to know you. Add pictures and video for even more engagement. Once you build a following on one page, you can begin to add others, such as Twitter and Instagram.*

### Tip #3: Thought Leadership

You can certainly use the social media platforms mentioned previously to share your knowledge. LinkedIn and other professional online platforms are also great ways to connect with other professionals and share your knowledge.

Another great way to establish yourself as a thought leader is to make yourself available as a source for journalists. Do you know there is a website called "[Help a Reporter Out](#)" where you can sign up to become a source for all things acupuncture? Put yourself out there as an expert in your field. Then use that exposure to share your knowledge and expertise.

Getting Started: *Set a reasonable goal for yourself as you begin to lay out a plan to become a thought leader. This will not happen overnight, so set a goal to post one article/blog to LinkedIn each month and begin to build your following. Check the comments section and engage with people to answer questions and educate others who may not be familiar with acupuncture.*

### Tip #4: Patient Communications

Excellent patient communication should always be a priority, so sending out a monthly newsletter could be an easy way to stay in touch with patients regularly. Simply ask a patient for their email address and add them to your list. This is another excellent way to drive traffic to your website, reuse some of that blog material and share other practice news. There are easy-to-use platforms such as MailChimp and Constant Contact that can help you with this process.

Leveraging patient reviews is another way to boost your profile. Use those happy patients to recruit other happy patients. Asking satisfied patients for reviews is a great way to see what you are doing well and share it with others. And if you get a not-so-great review, use it as a learning opportunity to improve how you run your practice.

Getting Started: *Create a simple PDF form you can electronically send to patients to begin to build a positive review file. Make it easy for them to fill out and keep it short. Make sure you include a disclaimer at the bottom so they can sign it and grant you permission to publish their review.*

### Tip #5: Referral Programs

Asking happy patients for reviews and to forward your newsletter to their friends who need your services is terrific, but not the only way to build referrals. Help your patients out by printing referral cards with a basic welcome message and your office contact information. And when you do get a golden referral, follow up! Make sure you let your existing patient know how much you appreciate the support. Then reach out to the referral right away to set up an appointment and answer any questions they may have.

Getting Started: *Make a list of your long-term patients whom you know appreciate your services and will take the time to offer referrals. Create an incentive program by offering a discounted service if a referral makes an appointment.*

### Take the First Step

Merely implementing these five simple tips can help you get your practice in front of more people and help you build a successful and profitable practice. These tips are an inexpensive way to begin a longer-term marketing strategy. Marketing does not have to be intimidating. Just take the first step and remember to keep the conversation going.

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