

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/optimize-business-finances-outreach/4-donts-medical-practice-marketing/10022/>

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4 "Don'ts" of Medical Practice Marketing

Announcer:

This is a special edition of *Perfecting Your Practice: Optimize Your Business Finances & Outreach* on ReachMD. The following episode is provided in partnership with Bankers Healthcare Group.

Here's your host, Chris Panebianco.

Chris Panebianco:

Welcome to episode number three, the four don'ts of medical practice marketing.

The success of any practice depends upon attracting and retaining patients. So how, exactly, do new patients find you and existing patients keep you top of mind? Are you doing everything you can?

In this episode, I'm not going to tell you what to do—I'm going to tell you what NOT to do. I've seen a lot of bad marketing out there; all right, I've even put some bad marketing out myself, but I really want to help you to avoid some potentially costly mistakes. In this episode, the four don'ts of medical practice marketing, we're going to do three things:

1. Identify common marketing mistakes
2. Talk about why these mistakes can be harmful to your practice
3. How to fix them

Marketing Don't #1: Don't rely on word of mouth to get new patients through your door.

Why not? Because you're missing out on opportunities. In today's world, there are more ways than ever to reach patients and give them reasons to see you, but you have to be proactive. People aren't necessarily talking to their friends at a party about how much they love their doctor, telling their cousin what a great surgeon have, or bragging about this cutting-edge procedure they just had.

Now, more than ever, patients have options and are well informed. You need to proactively get in front of them and tell them why they should choose you. Give them value beyond the procedure. Here's one quick idea: Mail them a postcard. Not too long ago, I quit smoking after 15 years. My wife had told me and I noticed that my teeth had gotten a little bit yellow. I went to the mailbox one day and I had a dentist for a while, but I got a postcard from a different dentist in town that had just opened up and he was offering 50 percent off on teeth whitening services. I said, "What the heck! I'll give it a try." So I went in and five years later, they're still my dentist.

It was that simple little task that they did that won over a customer. It can be done. People will change practices for the right reason. You can do this on a small budget. Don't be afraid to try. If you aim small, you can miss small. There are many great do-it-yourself options here. Don't be overwhelmed; you can go out there and pick a template and upload a list, utilize geo-targeting services by the vendor to create your direct mail campaign. Do not be afraid to try something new.

Marketing Don't #2: Do not neglect your website.

Having a website is a starting point for growing your business digitally. You simply can't ignore its importance in this day and age of Google. If your practice doesn't have a fully operational website, you may be missing a key ingredient in the recipe for growing your business. If you already have a site that's up and running, great; but is it up to par with your competition? Here's a simple test to get

some fast answers.

Pull up your site on a mobile device. Does it look and function as well as your desktop site? So, if you're on your laptop, does it look the same or is it choppy? Do the images overlap, does content overlap, is it hard to navigate to get the information you need? Pretend you're a prospective patient – can you find all of the necessary information within one click or within one scroll? Browse some of the practice websites in your community. Be honest – is yours any better? Chances are, it's not.

If you answered no to these questions or you don't have a website at all, it's time to make a change. The good news is that your website is your digital office and you can build it the way you want it to appear to a patient. Make sure all the information is up to date – contact, hours, services, staff, promotions, can you schedule an appointment, can you sign up for reminders, can you view your bill, can you pay your bill – don't just build it and forget it. My wife is on the websites of our doctor practitioners all the time. She's complaining to me all the time that she can't schedule an appointment, this doctor changed services – I don't know how to get in touch. I email and nothing happens – I don't get a response. This is very important, people, you have to pay attention to your website and make it user-friendly.

Marketing Don't #3. Don't forget about your current patients.

I know – it's sexy to go out and acquire new patients; that's where we're going to get all of our money and retire. But while you're acquiring these patients, and that's a great goal, don't let it result in neglecting your existing patients—they deserve to hear from you regularly, too. Are you relying on them to know when they need to come back – or are you thoughtful enough to remind them? The more engagement you have with your patients, the more reasons you can provide to get them into your office for either preventative care, necessary care, or elective care and this can result in better business for you.

Make sure that you're using a HIPPA-compliant email service. You can get all of your customers' information into a database and then you can sit down and plan when you're going to reach out to them: A monthly e-newsletter with staff and office updates, seasonal info like getting the flu shot or ways to prevent the flu, wishing someone a happy birthday, offering rewards for referrals, requesting reviews – these are all great ways to stay in front of your customers. Remember, the more you stay in touch, the more engaged they'll be with you.

Of course, don't push the envelope and become a nuisance – nobody likes that. I don't need an email from you morning, noon and night – it's gonna drive me crazy and I'm sure it's gonna drive you crazy. Everybody's looking for value and the patient/practitioner relationship can be an extraordinarily valuable one. If you can stay engaged, you can build trust and nurture these relationships, you'll be seen as a necessity and patients will keep you more top of mind and feel a connection with you. Put yourself in your patients' shoes. How do you want to be communicated with?

Marketing Don't #4: Don't ignore what people think of you.

I'm talking about online reviews – we all know they're there and most of us are afraid of them. According to Practice Builders, 88% of patients now go online to read reviews about the quality of a practice and practitioner. If you don't know what patients are saying about you or your staff or worse, you don't care. You're hurting yourself and your practice tremendously. Check the online doctor review sites and do an audit. Do you like what you see? If not, you can change it.

If there are negative reviews, you can register to the site and respond. Make sure you're being very general in your response. You want to show accountability and caring, and it will help you build trust, but make sure you do not get into the details of your patient. Again, consult HIPPA guidelines. Offline, you can ask patients after their visit if they had a good experience. If so, encourage them to share a review.

As the father of three children, I deal with the never-ending cycle of doctor appointments and specialists. I always search for doctors in our area to read about the patient experience and overall patient rating. I've read good and bad, and with the bad I've strongly considered not bothering with that particular doctor. In one case, it was very evident that one of the doctors we had been recommended and referred to had 25 negative reviews and only one positive. That was enough for my wife and I not even to waste our time and we were willing to drive 90 miles away for a consultation and we ended up staying with that doctor. We relied on the patient reviews to give us the guidance for where we should be, especially at that critical time.

Of course, you can't please everyone in your office, but if there's a pattern of negative comments, they must be addressed. I get it – we all have a receptionist that has a bad day, we have sales staff that have issues going on outside of the office and they bring it in with them. It could just be a one-time thing, it could be a multiple-time thing, but you are the CEO of your practice and it is imperative that you understand this. Work with your team, make sure they're delivering a concierge service. It's a little bit different than other areas because this is talking about people's health, and at that time, people are very concerned and there's a lot of emotion involved. You have a staff that is – not only for your staff, but for you as well – that recognizes you're working to provide that concierge-level experience.

People are out there leaving reviews on everything from the office conditions, whether they're warmly greeted, their wait time (which has become worse and worse in some people's opinion), and the quality of service. Reviews, positive or negative, can get people in the door or prevent them from coming in, having a very negative affect on your business.

Make sure you are not blind to what people said about you. A simple Google search with your name or your practice can go a long way. Don't be afraid to engage.

Well, we made it. The four don'ts of marketing your practice are all set. The main message here is that people in your role shouldn't be afraid of marketing. Marketing is something you need to spend time with, you have to think about it, you have to test, you have to create a budget and be willing to spend money. Marketing is scalable. Like I said, it costs money and it costs a time commitment. You might want to consider hiring a marketing staff or hire an agency who specializes in healthcare professionals and their patients.

As someone who has dedicated over two decades to marketing, I know it'll only be a matter of time before you find the formula that works best for you and your practice. I know you can do it.

Have questions? Want to continue the conversation? I'd really love to hear from you. Feel free to email me at Chrisp@bhg-inc.com or connect with me on LinkedIn.

Announcer:

The preceding program was provided in partnership with Bankers Healthcare Group. To find other episodes in this series, visit ReachMD.com/PerfectingYourPractice. For more information on Bankers Healthcare Group, go to www.perfectingyourpracticetoday.com.

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