

Getting Known in Your Community, Part II

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I am always in search of new ideas to help my clinics and their doctors to increase in-house referrals and educate others in the community to the benefits of chiropractic. Years ago, I worked diligently to produce a monthly newsletter to educate and promote reactivations and referrals. I usually spent three days a month gathering, organizing, typesetting, printing and mailing out our clinic's newsletter.

As our patient volume grew, it became more difficult to find the time to put together a professional-looking newsletter. Our clinic contracted a professional newsletter company to do that work. After six months, we reviewed our public relations/marketing budget and realized that we were spending almost one-third of our monthly budget on reactivation that seldom happened. (In the last six months, we only had two reactivations from the newsletters.) We stopped including newsletters in our PR budget, at least temporarily.

Newsletters can be a useful educational and marketing tool, but it has been my professional experience that using newsletters solely as a reactivation tool is not the best use of a clinic's PR budget. The key word here is solely.

Newsletters can be so much more to a chiropractic clinic. First, CAs, your time is much too valuable to spend three days a month doing all it takes to put together a great newsletter. On the other hand, I feel that using one-fourth to one-third of the PR budget on an outside service is just plain poor business management.

The first thing you need to do is look for a publication service that meets your clinic's needs. I know of one service that creates a two-page weekly handout that comes to the clinic ready for printing (please contact me for that information). Copy as many newsletters as you need throughout the week. I suggest using colored paper. (I like bright colors over pastel colors. I feel they are more eye-catching.) With this publication, 52 issues a year cost less than one month's worth from many other newsletter companies that only print one issue a month.

The second thing you need is a plan of action to put your newsletters to work to get the maximum from your PR dollars. Here are some suggestions that will educate your active patients and pass along invaluable information to your community.

You can easily laminate "flyer-type" newsletter (one page, with information on both sides). (I told you in my last article in the January 1 issue that we would get our doctor's money's worth out of that laminating machine.) I suggest laminating between 10-12 of each week's newsletter. Put one in every seat in either the reception room, adjustment suite, or on the clinic's "hot seats."

A CA needs to be in charge of making sure that the newsletters are put back into the chairs between patients. You definitely want your patients to have to pick up the flyer before they sit down. Patients are more likely to read it if they have to pick it up before sitting down. Putting flyers in the magazine racks just doesn't cut it. Also, have a dozen or more newsletters at the front desk (not laminated) so the front-desk assistant can offer them to patients to take with them, to give to their friends, family members or co-workers.

How about this one? If people walk by your clinic in a downtown location or in a strip mall area, it's likely people passing by may look into your windows during your off hours. If you have an attractive window at the front door of your practice, display a laminated copy of that week's newsletter in the window. Take this opportunity to educate them about the benefits of chiropractic care while they become familiar with your location.

Now that we have all of these laminated newsletters from last week, it would be a real waste to throw them away. You and your doctor(s) can choose 10 or more of your patients who you believe would be willing to be helpful ambassadors to your chiropractic cause. These patients should be people who own, manage or work in a service environment; who have reception rooms for their clients; and who you believe would be willing to have your clinic's newsletter in their lobby or reception area. Ask these chosen few to be the clinic's "ambassador to health" by having the weekly laminated newsletter available for their clients to read. CAs, be sure that if the ambassador does not come into the office weekly, make arrangements to drop a copy by their business location each week.

Here are some other ideas for getting your doctor's money's worth out of the flyer-type newsletter. Recently, in one of my clinics, I started saving one of the laminated newsletters each week for the clinic. Why not make a binder with a collection of your favorite newsletter?

Think about the possibilities of this collection. Keep it in your reception room as an educational reference. Additional copies can always be made from the collection later for a potential patient wanting information on a certain condition or health concern. Why not refer to the information in the collection when you or your doctor are scheduled to speak to a civic group, organization and/or industry in your community? Make more copies and use them at the talk as a reference to the subject you spoke on to take home with them.

Getting known in your community is an ongoing project. When a chiropractic clinic thinks that everyone knows their doctor or location or understands what services your clinic has to offer and stops promoting, watch your statistics. In about three to six months, your numbers will begin to slide in the wrong direction.

Even megabusineses like McDonald's and Disney constantly market themselves. They keep themselves in sight and in mind every day, and your clinic should do the same. CAs, keep your clinic's name visible and remember that even little things like cost-effective newsletters can be used for a lot of mileage if marketed effectively. Until next time, go out and make a difference.

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