

## Six Steps To Ethical, Successful Practice Promotion

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About 20% of my life is spent traveling throughout the U.S. and Canada talking with doctors about dirty words -- sales, marketing, and promotion. Many doctors, probably the majority, are, at best, uncomfortable with these words and the ideas they represent. My goal is to decrease that discomfort, so the doctors can better serve their communities. Practice growth equals service growth! And these six steps are essential to such growth:

### Accept the Necessity to Promote

Consider the word "scheme." What do you think of when you hear that word? Is that word negative or positive? Well, that word conjures up negative images for most people, typically involving criminal conspiracy. But the word really doesn't have that meaning. It's actually just a synonym for "plan." It's the basis for the word "schematic," as in: schematic drawings.

Similarly, many doctors have attached negative connotation to the word "promotion." Many doctors connect it to the very worst, most offensive advertising or marketing they've ever seen done. Playing word-association with doctors, I've said "promote" and several have said "used car dealer."

Actually everything you do or fail to do is, to a degree, promotion. When you go to lunch dressed professionally and neatly, that's promotion.

There is not a single good thing that comes about without promotion. Every church, every charity, every worthwhile effort needs to be promoted.

### Emphasize Growth from Within

Reliable research indicates that the average adult consumer has significant influence over the decisions and choices of 52 other adult consumers, yet the average referral rate in chiropractic is only three, four or five new patients per active patient, per calendar year. That gap between 5 and 52 is an exciting margin of opportunity!

One of the reasons that such a margin exists is many doctors' mistaken belief that if a patient is healing and happy, he or she will automatically refer. Nothing could be further from the truth. The majority of satisfied patients will refer little, if at all, unless encouraged to do so, and given appreciation and recognition when they do.

### Be Your Own Best Ad

Walt Disney said, "Do what you do so well that people can't resist telling others good things about you." At the Disney parks, you can see this principle in action in the incredible cleanliness of the facilities, the unwavering courtesy of the employees, and the fanatical attention to authentic detail in the attractions.

Visit with me the doctor's office where----the receptionist comes out from behind the counter to

greet you and shake your hand; fresh apples, fruit juice and tea is available; instead of depressing magazines there are informative materials on health and a practice scrapbook to look at; there is a shelf of recipe books with a supply of blank recipe cards in case you want to jot down a recipe; another shelf of self-improvement books that you can borrow a book from between visits; the C.A. takes you on an office tour, carefully explaining each room, piece of equipment and procedure; the doctor has a room set up specifically to present your report of findings in comfort and privacy (rather than doing it in his cluttered office or whatever room is empty at the moment); you go home with an informative booklet to read and an audio-cassette to listen to about chiropractic; and, after dinner that evening, the doctor personally calls to check on how you're feeling. Wow! That's great advertising.

### Educate to Promote

The patients most likely to follow through, to get well, and to refer is the best informed and educated patient!

Literature, audio and videotapes, spinal care classes -- these all have a place in a comprehensive patient education program. Here's a simple, good idea: make sure that every time a person visits your office they leave with a different pamphlet, article reprint, newsletter or other education item in hand.

"Circulate to Percolate!"

The great speaker Cavett Robert, founder of the National Speakers Association, coined that phrase. It means that you need to get out of the office and out from in front of the TV in the evening and into your community, to make a contribution, to get known, to make contacts.

Active participation in your local Chamber of Commerce, Toastmasters Club, Scout troop, school PTA, or any number of other organizations is the perfect application of Charles "Tremendous" Jones' law of leadership: "Give To Get." By giving your time and talent to a good organization, you gain self-esteem, self-confidence and self-development, as well as community prominence and contacts certain to translate into positive PR for chiropractic and growth in your practice. The rewards are simply too great to pass up!

### Commit to a Mission

My speaking colleague Foster Hibbard says that "enthusiasm" is the real secret to mega-growth in a practice. If you are really enthused about the service you give and its benefits to people, and you are strongly committed to definite goals related to reaching more people, you'll naturally find ways that work for you to promote your practice.

For some doctors that may include advertising, writing newspaper columns, appearing on talk shows, and other directly commercial marketing methods. For others, none of those methods may "fit" but others will. There is no one mix of promotion methods that is right for every doctor. Given sufficient motivation, every doctor can and will find his or her own right methods.

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