

The Just-Do-It-in-10-Steps "Jump Start"

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Every practice has more and less productive periods. Most practices have a period of time during which the practice seems to be in a bit of a lull. Most of us know when this is the case, but sometimes we are at a loss as to what can be done to "blast" out of the doldrums and back into a thriving, growing practice, one in which things feel as if they are "buzzing."

The signs/symptoms of a "down period" probably are fairly obvious, but sometimes we can slip into a lull and not notice it as quickly as we should. Here are some of the common signs:

- low number of new patients;
- increased number of cancelled appointments or patients just not showing up;
- low levels of staff enthusiasm;
- too much outstanding/late AR;
- lack of outside presentations;
- no new exciting techniques or products to speak of; and
- inadequate or unsteady patient education.

Sometimes, the regular things don't seem to bring more patients to your door. What once seemed to be "good enough" may no longer keep your practice in a thriving state. Maybe you are stuck with only considering options that are "inside the box." That's no longer going to get the job done. Then there are tried-and-true tactics that never get old or lose effectiveness, but maybe you just stopped doing them. Consider the following options to "jump start" your practice. You literally can start incorporating these options into your practice today or tomorrow.

1. Mail thank-you cards and gifts to all referrers, professionals and patients. Have you ever noticed that the people who are most successful are also the quickest to mail out cards and those who seem to have problems managing things often don't ever get their cards out, period? Be in the category of those who get around to sending thank-you cards out early and often. It's certainly nothing new, but it sure is tried and true. Don't be one of those who "doesn't get around to it" when it comes to this.
2. Phone patients who are acute or who just had treatment for the first day. This makes a very big difference and tells the patient you really do care about helping them. Don't convince yourself "you don't have the time" because that just isn't true.
3. Name badge all staff. There is no reason not to. Allowing patients to be able to refer to staff by name, without having to commit their names to memory, gives your practice environment a friendlier feel.
4. Decorate the office for the season. This simply makes the office a warmer place to visit.
5. Post your newsletter. Put copies at the front desk, too. Better yet, get all your patients' e-mail addresses and e-mail them your monthly newsletter. There are commercial packages that can handle your database of e-mail names and create a professional-looking newsletter for \$15 a month. The ease of getting this done will amaze you, and the value it provides is significant.
6. Call and schedule your local health club, spa or fitness center for a workshop. Try to form a relationship with a health club; this establishes a "win win" situation for both parties: You are providing their club members value and you develop new patients in the process.
7. Rearrange the reception room. Ask yourself if the current layout is as effective as it could be.

Take a look at how other successful practices are organized and ask yourself how you could benefit from a similar design.

8. Place a "profit center" in your reception area. This could be the topic of an article in itself. Discover the products you really believe in and educate your staff on why they are important for your patients. Establish clean retail displays along with literature. If you do this right, the patients will make it happen on their own.
9. Be the picture of health in your patients' minds. If you went to a mechanic and his personal car was a wreck and sputtered and backfired, you would not be that enthralled for his services. Why are chiropractors any different? You are your own billboard. Make sure it is sending the right message.
10. Say "thank you" to your staff and patients at every opportunity! Kindness is the one gift that costs you nothing, yet it can add so much positive energy to the world and your practice. Even if some people misinterpret your kindness and friendliness, be kind and friendly anyway. The cost? Priceless.

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