

Show Your Heart and "Own" the Town

Steven Visentin

Have you ever wished you had a monopoly on chiropractic? There's only one person in history who even came close.

One day, Dr. Palmer noticed one of his patients watching him adjust through a mirror in the room. Later, he smashed the mirror so no one would learn his methods. He wanted to keep chiropractic within his family. Fortunately for the world, his son had a "bigger idea" and set about popularizing our great art.

Success Is Found Only In Your Heart

There is no way to "own the town" you practice in, but if we show our hearts as chiropractors, we might just earn a small place in the hearts of the people we serve.

The world is weary of advertising, and as a profession, our budget is not nearly big enough to access the market share we deserve. The only thing that works consistently is serving in our own unique way, without holding back.

In general, advertising doesn't work. Why? We've been exposed to it for so long, and frequently, we've become virtually immune to most advertising. Two thousand messages bombard us daily. After a lifetime of exposure to this noxious stimuli, everyone is simply too savvy. This avenue is closed to all but the richest industries that can afford an ad campaign powerful enough to overcome the resistance we've developed to traditional marketing.

Our Marketing Is Boring

There is no way to bore someone into becoming a patient, although it seems like we often try. Just look at how we tend to approach the public. One could easily say, "So what?" to every solicitation we make. Here are a few examples:

- "We are totally devoted to our patients' health." (How nice!)
- "We offer same-day appointments." (Whoopee!)
- "Our staff is well-trained." (Great – so are the baristas at Starbucks!)
- "We do a very thorough exam." (I should hope so!)
- "We work with insurance." (Really? So does the auto-body repairman!)

What a lot of drivel. None of it connects on an emotional level. It's no wonder this approach is highly inefficient as well. Just a glance at most of our marketing materials shows how little we know about what the public really wants:

- We try to impress them with our education, how many degrees we have, and our specialties.
- We tell them about the latest techniques and devices in which we've invested money, time, and energy.
- We go on at length about how our philosophy and approach is different, yet we fail to distinguish ourselves as individuals.

The simple truth is that the public is essentially only interested in themselves, their well-being, and getting relief from their pain.

What Works?

Most of all, what they really want to know is: Why should I trust you? If traditional advertising and everything we've been taught to do doesn't work, what *does* work?

If you just show your heart in your own unique way, all resistance will melt and you will get results.

My clinic is less than a mile from the old Spears Hospital for Chiropractic. Although it's been closed for many years and the land it stood on has found another use, Dr. Spears' legacy lives on in the community. People still remember his generosity. They point out that in hard times, he gave milk to starving children. He is remembered as a humanitarian.

There is no faking "heart," pure and simple. People will recognize and remember real kindness. Who wouldn't seek out an individual like that? Obviously, Dr. Spears made himself the stand-out choice in spite of the medical bigotry of the past. No wonder he attracted the most difficult cases worldwide and enjoyed outstanding success.

Successful practices employ different procedures, techniques, verbiage and products. The one thing that all successful chiropractors have in common is an uncommon commitment to serving their community in their own distinct way.

Why Choose You?

To stand out, become outstanding. Take an inventory and find out what makes you different. Build on your uniqueness. If you love helping people, be willing to show it openly and wholeheartedly. If you're excited about serving others, seek every opportunity to do so, and do it with so much flair and audacity that others will want to participate. Do it the same way our illustrious founders did. Enter into what the old-timers called the "spizerinctum" of chiropractic. This outpouring of enthusiasm is very attractive and rare. It's what built chiropractic and makes the most successful clinics popular.

You can also volunteer your time and services to various groups. If you love your son's or daughter's sports team, become the team coach or doctor. If you love God, become an active leader in your place of worship. If you're concerned about local politics, run for election. If you don't have time to do any of that, then donate your old car or give a local organization a 3-by- 7½-foot cardboard check for \$1,200 with your name on it.

Being a wonderful human being is everything when it comes to building a practice. Your generosity will come back to you, so be generous to local causes.

When I opened my clinic, someone was trying to start an escort service next door. I was upset. I was running a family-style practice and couldn't believe how shortsighted my landlord was to allow this to happen. I went door to door and petitioned every business against the establishment of an escort service in our community.

I told them how negative this would be for the image of the neighborhood. I rallied the local community groups and let them know I felt it was immoral and would adversely affect the value of their homes.

Pretty soon, I found myself a leader in a popular cause. We stopped the escort service from starting

up and my clinic soon grew through the goodwill these activities generated.

If you haven't been active in the community lately, go through your files and offer your influential patients a cup of coffee. Renew old ties, listen attentively, and see if there is something you can do for them.

The goodwill you create in this fashion is invaluable. Pay attention; plan on listening at least 90 percent of the time. After a while, they will ask about you and when they do, let them know you are "accepting new patients" and would appreciate a referral. Ask who they know who needs a chiropractor. (This really works, so try it.)

We'll never really "own" our towns, but we can certainly occupy a tiny bit of grey matter in people's heads. If we serve our patients well enough, eventually we may find ourselves in their hearts as a trusted friend and doctor. We'll achieve what no amount of advertising can do just by becoming the most wonderful version of ourselves for the people we serve.