

## Growth Strategies for the New Year

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Building a successful chiropractic practice can be a competitive business. You must continually advance your practice by attracting new patients, maintaining the ones you already have and incorporating new technologies and techniques. This is something you must do continually or your practice will stagnate rather than expand. Here are a few simple strategies to advance your practice in the new year and beyond.

### Win on the Web

There is a high likelihood that your next new patient will search for you on the Web, even if they have been referred by one of your current patients. Make sure their first impression of your practice is excellent by hiring a professional Web designer to build [a site](#) for your practice. Make sure the content is written with search-engine optimization in mind, so prospective patients will find you when searching the Web.

If you don't already have a catchy phrase or brilliant logo for your practice, now would be the time to create one. Include well-produced, short video clips so that patients can get to know something about you before coming to your practice. Patients come to your practice assuming you know how to do chiropractic, but what they really want is to get to know you and your staff. They want to be welcomed and feel that they have made a good decision on how to spend their hard-earned dollars on their health. If they like how they are treated and feel you have their best interests at heart, they will trust you.

### Review Your Software

If you are serious about expanding your chiropractic practice, you must be sure the software system you have in place will accommodate the growth and the requirements of electronic records management. If you're unsure whether you have the right software, you will need to review several different systems to determine which best suits your needs.

Practice can become a nightmare these days if you don't have the proper software to track appointments, insurance claims, patient records, and payments. The right software should allow you to file insurance claims electronically, saving you time and paperwork. A good software system also will allow you to track your practice, spot trends in services and reimbursement, and help you grow into a profitable practice all at the same time.

### Market Internally

[Internal marketing](#) and word-of-mouth advertising are the best two ways to attract new patients; they are also the least expensive methods of advertising. Word-of-mouth is spread mostly by people who come to you for chiropractic services and are pleased with your work. Patients who are pleased with their chiropractor typically recommend them to their friends and family members.

You can encourage former patients who no longer visit you by reaching out to them with reminder postcards for a check-up or for other services. If you don't get an immediate response, continue to

mail on a quarterly basis. It often takes several contacts before a reminder will spur someone into action.

In addition to postcards, write and send a monthly newsletter to all of your patients via e-mail. Include useful information that educates your patients while subtly promoting your practice.

### Maintain Current Patients

Although it is normal to lose some patients, you can advance your chiropractic practice by maintaining as many as possible. According to expert practice builders, 25 percent of your marketing efforts should be focused on attracting new patients to your practice. Your main focus should be on retaining your current patients.

To do this, make sure your current patients are satisfied with your service so they won't think about finding another chiropractor. Build strong relationships with your patients. Chiropractors who focus on their patients and establish strong relationships increase their revenues, even during financially hard times.

Make an effort to remember each patient's personal information and family members' names to show you value their business and see them as an important part of your practice. Solicit your patients' feedback about their experiences with your practice; use the information to realize your strengths and fix your weaknesses.

### Attract New Patients

Even if you have a large patient base, over time some patients will stop coming in for various reasons. They may move, lose or change their insurance, or simply decide to try another chiropractor. Play an active role in your community. Performing community outreach by volunteering to speak at schools, service organizations, local employers and other groups is a highly effective way to attract new patients. Give presentations on topics consistent with your philosophy on health and wellness to bring visibility to your practice and promote your expertise.

Most organizations won't mind if you pass out business cards after your talk. Even if you don't, people who are looking for a chiropractor will remember your presentation and locate you via your Web site. Where state laws allow, you can make yourself especially attractive to new patients by giving them a special offer. Offer a complementary consultation or other service, and let people know that you will extend the offer to their family members, friends and co-workers. Reward people who refer [new patients](#) to your practice. Give them a small item, such as a gift card, for each family member or friend they refer to you.

### Expand Your Services

One way to grow your practice is by offering new products and services. There are many services that are compatible with chiropractic care. Nutritional supplements, orthotics and supports are natural complements to chiropractic care. Massage therapy, acupuncture and exercise therapy are high-demand procedures that also fit well in a chiropractic setting.

Research the services that are in demand and determine whether they will be profitable for your practice to offer them. Be aware of the services other health care providers are offering in your community to be sure your practice remains competitive. Review chiropractic publications on a regular basis to keep up-to-date on current practice trends.

### Add New Technologies

One important way to advance your chiropractic practice is to keep your technology up-to-date. This is especially important when a new technique or piece of equipment can help differentiate your practice by making procedures easier and more comfortable for your patients.

For example, you can switch to digital X-rays that can be read immediately and deliver less exposure to radiation. The new generations of hand-held instrument adjusting devices come equipped with auditory feedback signals that indicate to both doctor and patients that a desired level of movement has been achieved. Many chiropractors are finding that laser therapy is an excellent high-tech adjunct to the traditional modalities they offer. The results are well-documented and providing laser therapy can create the cutting-edge buzz that helps to grow a practice.

Feature your use of technology prominently in your ads and on your Web site. Send postcards to patients notifying them when you incorporate something new and beneficial into your practice.

### Focus on Your Patients

Make the choice to establish, build and maintain solid relationships with your patients. Listen to what they want and treat them well. Give them the intrinsic value they seek from choosing your practice. Deliver quality care above and beyond what they expect. The payback for you will be increased patient referrals, more satisfied patients and greater profitability. That's how your practice can continue to grow and truly flourish.

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