



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

Build Your Practice by Becoming a Community Difference Maker

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Like most chiropractors, I have felt the need to both grow my practice and educate my patients. There are a multitude of ways to do this and spinal care classes have always been one of the staple activities that are prescribed by nearly all of the practice management gurus. I recommend this practice and was "religious" about offering them for many years. But, after doing these for years, they began to get stale. I wanted to do something different.

Create Higher Trust: Bring in "Competitors"

To add some diversity, I added specialty quarterly events, for which local health care providers were invited to speak and present on their particular brands of mainstream and complementary health care professions. My patients were introduced to a broad range of other holistic paradigms like homeopathy, Chinese Medicine, Yoga, meditative practices and much more. Perhaps I loved these evenings the most because I was learning right alongside my patients.



These classes created enhanced opportunities to create not only a greater degree of cross-professional referral, but the patients greatly appreciated my willingness to do more than just "sell" them on chiropractic care alone. Their trust in our practice grew and they saw me as a caring provider who was more than just a single-minded health care provider.

These quarterly events became monthly events, with the other Wednesday evenings remaining as spinal care classes. This had the beneficial effect of having my patients who had been through their spinal care class, return regularly to listen to other speakers about topics that were of interest to them. This supported them in being more involved over longer periods of time, enhancing their engagement with the clinic.

You might think that by sponsoring other health care providers patients might stray away to those

other professional care givers. I can honestly say that I never felt that I had "lost" one of my patients to another healing arts practitioner. I even had other chiropractors come and speak at my office and they were all incredibly respectful, careful not to imply any degree of superiority so as to avoid "scooping away " any of my patients. Their presence only served to offer a reinforcing and unique understanding to chiropractic and healing.

About that time, I sold my practice in the Northern California Bay Area and relocated to an island off the coast of Seattle. The region of the island that I drew patients from included a population of approximately 8,000 along with 6 other DCs. I started my new practice from scratch, not knowing a single person.

From Zero to Success

I ramped up my practice quickly by being the only DC at the local fairs with my Chiropractic Zone booth. I held spinal screenings, gave health talks at Rotary, the Lions, the high school sports medicine class, churches and any other organization that would have me.

When I initiated my spinal care classes as the new chiropractic kid on the block, I made sure to alternate them with my special guest presenter events. It offered me the opportunity to get to know a new community of health care providers that were often too busy to get together over a lunchtime meet and greet. They also appreciated my offer to provide a "ready made" audience that all they had to do was show up and speak for an hour. Since many of the providers were new to me, I ran into a problem. Many of them I had never presented to an audience before.

While most did a superb job, there was nothing more painful than introducing my guest to my patients and quickly sensing a room of boredom. I found myself on occasion having to interrupt or engage my guest in a fashion that would lift the energy. And this led to the next level of educational marketing: Transformational Dialogues.

Transformational Dialogues

What I call "Transformational Dialogues" were borne out of an experience at a full day symposia the included two of my scientific heroes, Bruce Lipton, PhD, and Rupert Sheldrake, PhD.

During the afternoon, two overstuffed chairs and some aesthetically pleasing potted plants were placed on the stage, creating a intimate living room ambiance. Then began a philosophical, personal and professional dialogue for which I felt fortunate to be able to listen in on. I imagined these eclectic personalities meeting for the first time over a glass of wine and what they would talk about. They laughed and shared their most recent explorations, amusing anecdotes and interesting stories of times gone by.

That event was more than five years ago and was the inspiration for what became a community service that has changed my life and practice. No longer was there a need for a front of the room speaker, just myself and my guest engaged in an inquiry that would engaged my patients and guests in entirely new way. It transformed my life.

My invited guests were not only health care providers, but also notable artists, authors and scientists; anyone that I felt could contribute to changing people's lives in a positive way. Fortunately, my community, and I suspect yours as well, is filled with them and more than 75 events later, I still have not exhausted the candidates.

I was further inspired to make a difference locally and began offering the events with the caveat that voluntary contributions would be collected and the net proceeds donated to local non-profit

organizations. To date, we have donated more than \$6,000 to approximately 25 local charitable organizations, with donations ranging from \$50 to \$1000.

Over time, the audience size has grown and the audience size has varied from 15 to 150 people with the average being about 25. Each unique dialogue brings new people to my office, and fortunately, I have a large open space that allows for groups up to 50 people. Over that size, we move to a larger local facility.

So what greater purpose do these talks serve? After all, I am a chiropractor and these monthly events are not focused on subluxations or spinal health. It has simply, bar none, been the greatest philanthropic contribution that I have made to my community. I have received more words of appreciation for this service than anything else that I do besides serving patients through my hands-on, loving care. I have been told many a time that though they were a bit skeptical about chiropractors or even about me from my early eager days as a chiropractic evangelist and now they truly can see how big my heart is and how much of a difference I make in my community.

I offer the model of what I have created as a source of inspiration and ideas for you. How will you stand out in your community by not just serving the "Big Idea," but your community members who are not chiropractic patients, other professionals and organizations that need your support just as much as your patients? This was my way and it supports my heart, mind and soul while simultaneously evolving, involving and inspiring the growth of my community. May you find your way to do the same if you are called to.