



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

Marketing Matters: Top 5 Modern Strategies to Expand Your Patient Base

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This article's title needs a little clarification. There's a natural curiosity about a new thing, but just because it's new (comes in a glitzy package with slick promises) doesn't mean it's improved – or even works. So, in my opinion, the best modern strategies produce the most qualified new patients – even if the strategy or program has been around for decades. See if you don't find an extremely effective blend of old and new in my top five modern strategies to expand your patient base.

Modern Strategy #1: Diversify Your Marketing

Investment counselors tell us we should, and I agree. In marketing I call it a six pack of new-patient programs (three internal and three external); that's six independent programs functioning simultaneously.

Business owners who diversify their marketing always have at least 1-2 programs they can move forward, even when another 1-2 are stuck. If you diversify, you'll always have new patients from several sources. And if your experience is like mine, there'll be a top dog in each of the three, with a second and then the runt of the litter. We're always looking for the new thing to beat the weakest internal and external program.



I didn't know how valuable marketing diversity was until the policy change of one mall chain cost me three screening locations that produced an average of 50 new patients a month each. What was a headache could have been fatal without marketing diversity.

Internal Examples: Every office should have a complimentary consult and exam program in place. Give a well-designed "complimentary visit" certificate to excited patients to help them refer friends or family for a sit-down with the doctor.

I also love eliciting, collecting and displaying [patient testimonials](#). We have a testimonial form that serves as an interview outline when the DC or CA has the time; or a take-home piece if you or the patient is too busy. I have all the testimonials in frames on the walls and in three books. By the way, video testimonials are great for your website, but paper is best in the office.

Every new patient I've met in 60 years had heard a positive chiropractic story before they made an appointment. So put "new testimonial" in your office meeting agenda as a reminder to keep the supply fresh.

External Examples: I love corporate events. Employed people with good insurance, working close by, are good prospects. Health fairs or massage events are the best. Tell your patients you're putting together your public service calendar for the summer and fall, and ask them to check the company calendar for you.

Hot tip: On your public-service bulletin board, have pictures of your team serving at your favorite corporate events, along with the "thank you" letters on company letterhead. Prepare to receive feedback: "Dr. Lloyd, I'm organizing our health fair this year and I saw those pictures. Would you come to our health fair?"

Modern Strategy #2: Make Time to Market

Show your calendar you're serious about marketing. For most of us, our calendar is our appointment book. Schedule 3-7 hours of real time a week to work on marketing. If what you're committed to never shows up on your schedule, you're not committed – you're just a big talker.

Initially, it will take seven hours to produce just three extra [new patients](#). When you get really good at your marketing strategies, you can produce seven or more extra new patients a week with just three hours.

Hot Tip: Create more marketing time in your calendar by close scheduling your early-morning and afternoon appointments, clearing the middle of the day. You'd be surprised how many corporate events are scheduled between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Modern Strategy #3: Apply the Rule of Fives

If you want to be slim, forget the latest fad diet. Just ask five slim people what and how much they eat. Then you do the same. If you want to be fit, find five fit people and work out like they do. I promise you this strategy will be successful.

What do the top five new-patient marketers in your area do? You may not like everything they do or the way they do it, but it's a very modern doctor who finds out what the big dogs are doing and does the same thing. Before you know it, you'll be one of the top five chiropractic marketers *they* emulate.

Hot Tip: You can team up with other big dogs in your admired group of five and share the cost of some bigger events. There was a 17-day state fair that would have been too time intensive for me, but worked well sharing the labor and cost with other local marketers.

Modern Strategy #4: Commit to Your Strategies

"It's not my strategy – it's my commitment to my strategy." The first time I heard that sentence, it sank deep into my soul. Seldom do you hear that much truth in so few words.

Instead of desperately flinging a half-backed marketing concept at the wall to see if it sticks, you need to study, plan and commit to make it work. Old fashioned? Of course, but it's the only way to beat the new-patient problem in a modern world.

The first time I went screening, I headed up a team of eight doctors who checked well over 500 people ... and didn't make one appointment. I simply didn't know how. Years later, we welcomed 600-plus new patients in one month into my clinics – mainly from screenings. I was committed to my strategy and did not give up.

I was tempted to say, "Well, I tried that. It obviously doesn't work in my area." What I did instead was get on the phone, find out who the expert was and learn how to fix what didn't work for me.

Hot tip: Decide now that you'll become the top expert in your area in at least one marketing program, and commit to stick with it.

Modern Strategy #5: Recruit In-House Help

Developing marketing assistants to do marketing is my favorite modern strategy. We have CAs who help us route and process patients, right? Why don't we all have community outreach assistants (COAs) to help us bring in large numbers of qualified new patients?

So, how can you package what you're doing that works and teach it to an assistant so they can

continue to produce new patients – while you stay in the clinic and dream up other marketing programs to keep your clinic full of new patients?

My first COA was a young woman who started as a greeter for my events. She heard my screening scripts so many times, she accidentally memorized them. At one screening I took a restroom break, only to return to her screening and booking a new patient without my help – using my exact words.

Pretty cool, huh?

A couple weeks later she took the tools, set up our event early and I arrived late. By the time I arrived, she'd already booked three appointments. It wasn't long until I sent her out on her own. She knocked it out of the park.

Since then, I've gotten so much more sophisticated about how to find someone who is genetically gifted at sales, how to train them correctly and manage the position, but the strategy is the same: Take the skills you've acquired and train a COA.

Hot Tip: New-patient programs with simple tools (spinal screening machine, clipboards, screening forms, free exam certificates) are easy to template. There's a script and proper use for each tool. Training templates for tools is a breeze.

Imagine This...

You've taken a patient to the front desk for some reason and you run into your marketing assistant, who's just back from an event. She greets you with a smile and mouths the number 12. "Dr. Lloyd, we met so many nice people at our outreach event today." She discretely waves 12 new-patient sign-up sheets at you. Now that's hot. What's even hotter is training your associates to be their own COAs and produce their own new patients ... but that's an article for another day.

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