



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

9 Marketing No-No's That Are Holding Your Business Back

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It's probably not your fault! What most chiropractors know about marketing was handed down from people who never made it in practice or only want to sell something. It's no wonder most DCs believe advertising of any kind is a waste of time, money and energy. Read on and discover how to create systems that bring in highly valued new patients consistently, and the terrible errors that hold good doctors back.



1. We Work With Sketchy SEO Companies

We are suckers. We fall for every pitchman who tells us what we want to hear. Marketing people are notorious for playing into our weaknesses, and the biggest false promise today is Google's coveted No. 1 ranking. If anyone guarantees this, be very suspicious. No one knows exactly how businesses are ranked by Google or its criteria for ranking changes constantly.

It's best to work with a trustworthy webmaster to create a quality site using legitimate long-term [search engine optimization](#) (SEO) strategies that raise your rankings and keep them there. Short-term, quick-fix tactics that pop your clinic to the top of the charts are routinely punished by Google. They may even get you blacklisted. Your climb back up will be much harder if not impossible.

2. We Buy Bad Marketing Plans

Typical marketing programs are a year long. They usually run about \$5,000 or more and offer no flexibility and no guarantees. Obviously the best thing to do is say "no" to these pitches, or train your staff to do so.

3. We're Lousy Negotiators

If you're interested in a particular program, you're expected to negotiate in the business world. It's OK to flinch at the initial price, or at least exclaim, "What?" and act shocked. You might demand a trial period to see if the program will work for you. Good marketing programs work quickly and bring quality business to your door. Be extremely skeptical of programs that require long-term contracts with no provisions for a trial period. At least ask if you can start small and expand the program later.

"All-or-nothing" proposals are often the biggest scams. If they insist on a one-year commitment and won't budge on the terms, I suggest you *run*.

4. We Pretend All New Patients Are Alike

There is hierarchy of new patients. The worst patients come from cheesy advertising. Programs like Groupon tend to attract the worst clientele; people who expect a lot but are unwilling to pay or commit to care. They are attracted by ads that require little or no financial commitment up front. The Internet may not be the best source of high-quality new patients.

At the other end of spectrum are patients [referred by](#) your existing patients. Very often they are the best. They know what to expect and have been prepared by the person referring them. Doesn't it make sense to create systems that attract the best clientele? (Read on and discover how to create a referral practice.)

5. We Usually Fail to Acknowledge Referrals

Always reward referrals. A small gift or T-shirt (if it's permitted by your state) generates business. At the very least, you / your staff should mail a handwritten thank-you note. You or your secretary could write something as simple as: "Dear Mary, thank you for your referral." Sign the note with your name ("Dr. Smith") and mail it out.

For professionals, send a handwritten note that reads something like this: "Dear Attorney Roberts, thank you for referring John Smith to our office. Your expression of confidence in our services is sincerely appreciated."

6. We Forget Who Our Friends Are

Create a mailing list of the best-referring patients and professionals. Treat them to a personalized monthly mailing administered by your secretary. Send them inspiring poems, notes, jokes, stories and health-related information. The mailings should arrive to their homes in an ordinary envelope with a postage stamp and be addressed by hand. Inside, post a personal sticky note that reads: "Frank, I appreciate you," and includes your signature. This mail gets opened and read because it's personal and creates a relationship. Emails don't do this.

If you share quality material that moves people, your efforts will pay off. You will create rapport with people who can and do refer. This is the foundation of a quality practice. Social media does not afford this level of intimacy. Treat your most influential contacts well. They, in turn, will take care of your practice.

The average person knows about 200-250 people well. A very small percentage of us influence thousands and thousands. The powerful affect the lives of millions. Create a personalized, high-quality monthly mailing for the influential people you serve. This select few will refer dozens of new patients to the doctor who helps them the most and with whom they have a friendly relationship.

7. We're Disorganized

Most of us don't even have a marketing plan. We wait until we're desperate for new patients and then fall prey to any ad man with a slick pitch. We're attracted by anything new on the Internet, whether it works or not.

8. We Don't Measure Results

In general, we have no idea what's working for us and what isn't. We don't know where our new patients are coming from, and continue programs that are not productive anymore.

9. We Don't Take Action

It's time to put the past aside and move. It's time to serve the world in a better way and take action. Now that you know what *not* to do, use some of these ideas to create a marketing plan. Measure your results and hold yourself accountable for an increase in new patients who appreciate the precious, unique service you provide. Say "no" to inflexible contracts. Say "no" to pitches and scams. And say "yes" to a practice filled with avid fans who need your service and are telling others about you. Now get to work!