

## We Will Make This Work!

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On Nov. 8, 2003, a group of leaders met to address the sad state of chiropractic's image in the United States. Many had been involved in previous efforts to form a united chiropractic national public relations campaign, and had already volunteered countless hours to efforts that resulted in little impact.

The meeting began with an understandable amount of skepticism. Rather than being called by one of the two national associations, this meeting was called by one of chiropractic's biggest supporters: Kent Greenawalt, president of Foot Levelers company.

Kent was very straightforward and "to the point." He presented data (see "Chiropractic Leaders Sign Declaration of United Public Relations" on the front page) demonstrating what many have known for some time: Chiropractic's rate of growth is slowing in the U.S. In fact, it has slowed by over 30 percent in the last seven years.

While this was not necessarily news to many of us, the long-term projections were not encouraging. Kent made the obvious comment: "We have been trying to do this on our own in the past, and it's not working." Most of us were quiet as we pondered the honesty of his words.

At that point, we were asked to do something that has not been asked very often in this profession. We were asked to agree that we wouldn't do anything by ourselves. We were asked to commit to working together, regardless of what the ultimate plan was.

This took an act of faith. We had to believe in chiropractic more than we believed in our own plans, positions and interests. And while there was some discussion, we ultimately signed our names and committed our respective organizations, having no idea what the ultimate public relations campaign would be and what kind of message would be developed.

What we do know is that the message will be designed specifically to bring new patients into your office (regardless of what organization you belong to) by PR professionals who will be expected to show results if they want to keep us as clients. The growth of your practice, and ultimately, the chiropractic profession, is the primary criteria of success for this effort.

The next issue Kent brought forth was even more to the point: "None of us here is qualified to judge if a message will result in more people seeking care from a chiropractor." He went on to remind us that crafting an effective message that will motivate the public to change its current behavior is a skilled science. It involves a process of drafting and testing messages on a small scale to ensure results on a national scale.

The next commitment was even more revolutionary - we had to agree to donate our money, but not our opinions. We also had to agree, in advance, to let the PR professionals do what they do best (i.e., craft the message, test it and place it, in order to get more patients to seek chiropractic care) and only voice our opinions about the results, not the message.

Again, discussion ensued, but in the end, we all agreed to do what almost every other successful

group outside of chiropractic has done: focus on results.

There will certainly be those that will hear the message and hate it; I may even be one of them. But what I like - or what you like - is not the issue.

Think about the number of patients you have right now. What if we could increase the number of patients you have by 10 percent or more - every year? That is how you measure a successful PR campaign: by results, not opinions. This is the goal. This is why many chiropractic leaders (myself included) signed our names and committed our organizations to this effort. Our only interest is seeing more patients in your offices.

As this campaign gains momentum, you will receive updates in this publication. There will be an initial period when things happen quietly (such as choosing a firm and letting it test the message) before you see any real action. Before the campaign begins, you will be asked to become involved and will be given the opportunity to participate, on a local level, in conjunction with the national effort.

At this point, please consider the goal and the anticipated results more than how you feel about the message. The message will be aimed at the public and based upon what people think and what motivates them to seek chiropractic care.

If we all work together on this, we can change the future of chiropractic. We can also change your future and that of your practice.

The first step was unity; we now have that. It is time to proceed toward our goal.

Together, we will make this work!

*DMP Jr.*

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