

Produce Sustainable Profitability With a Sales System

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I'm sensitive to the fact that many chiropractors are uncomfortable thinking about their practice in terms of a business, so I'd like to address a fundamental flaw many practices suffer from: While most doctors are excellent at caring for their patients, they are not excellent at making money at it. This is because in between caring for patients, they practice random acts of running a business.

Reimbursement is decreasing while regulation is increasing, which makes running a practice more complicated than ever. For this reason it is essential that you implement a sales system that produces sustainable profitability so you can focus on what you need to do most - deliver the highest-quality care to your patients. A successful sales system includes three components: marketing, communication and education.

Identify Your Market Sweet Spot

The marketing component of your sales system includes the strategies and tactics you use to consistently promote your practice to create high-quality demand for your services. This process begins with targeting your market. Don't try to be all things to all people. The failure to target your market will result in wasted energy and capital. If you attempt to be everything to everyone, you'll end up being nothing to no one. Your target market is the profile of the perfect patient for your practice.

Let me give you an easy analogy: Golf clubs have a "sweet spot." Hitting a golf ball with the sweet spot of the club head makes the ball fly the longest distance with the straightest trajectory. This helps the golfer predict the outcome of their swing with the greatest amount of accuracy. Likewise, identifying your market sweet spot increases the efficiency of your efforts.

Your market sweet spot is at the intersection of your patients' demographics and their psychographics. *Demographics* is defined as who is interested in your services and can include such categories as age, income, gender, geography and level of education. *Psychographics* answers the question: Why are they interested in your services? The answer to this question is called your *value proposition*.

Communicate Your Value Proposition

As chiropractors and practice team members, there are many ways that we assign value to the services we provide to our patients. We assign value based upon our cost to deliver the services. We can also set the fees for our services based upon a published schedule of "relative value units" that third-party payers assign to our services. Some of us base our fees upon what we feel the average patient can afford to pay for our services. Have you ever thought about how your patients assign value to your services?

The communication component of your sales system includes your messaging: anything you say or

write that communicates your value proposition. Your value proposition is the impact the services you provide has on the lives of your patients because of a new capability (that you provide them with). Examples of these capabilities include freedom from pain, increased productivity and the ability to enjoy recreational activities, handle stress or return to work.

Communicate how you solve a fundamental problem the patient is suffering from or you will fail to motivate the patient to purchase your services. Answer the patient's question: "What problem will you solve for me?" It's the reason why patients choose to do business with you.

In marketing, "relationships always lead the deal." It is essential for you to make an empathetic connection with your patients about how you can solve their problem. You cannot lead someone to make a decision to purchase your services from a position of emotional neutrality; you have to make it personal. There is one surefire method of uncovering your patients' fundamental problem: Ask them what they want. When the services you offer provide the solution to their problem, patients will buy from you.

Ask Qualifying Questions

The educational component of your sales system helps patients decide to buy your services. Buyers of all services, including chiropractic care, are afraid of making two primary mistakes. The first fear is that they are not making the best choice and the second fear is that they are not getting the best financial deal. In today's hyper-competitive health care market, the smarter the buyer, the better the deal. Your patients need their decision to be validated. They need proof that the decision they are making is the best possible one at the best possible value.

Keep in mind that buyers don't want to buy. They want to solve a problem. It's like the old adage that no one buys a hammer because they want a hammer. They buy a hammer because they want to drive a nail. Your job is to help your patients make a decision. You can do this by finding their problem and offering the right solutions.

Buyers check a lot of sources. It has been shown that buyers need 12 to 15 data points of proof and evidence to make a decision. An expert saves buyers time and money by compiling the information they need to make a decision, thereby making it easy for them to buy. Experts are valued higher than vendors. If you are not seen as an expert, you will be perceived as a vendor. Position yourself as an expert by asking qualifying questions such as, "What problem are you trying to solve?" "What are you doing to solve it now?" "How's that working for you?" and "How do you feel about the choices/options out there?" Don't be afraid of talking about your competition, not by name, but in what choices are available to the patient. Explain the different choices there are and how what you provide is different. Let patients know, "Here's what you get with us." If you can't differentiate what you do from your competitors, patients will do it for you, and they will differentiate you based on price alone.

Have a Strategic Plan

Your sales system should be a formal, written, enterprise-wide process that identifies the phases patients go through when making the decision to purchase your services. Have a strategic plan that maps out each step of the sales process. Identify who is responsible for each step, when it is going to be done, and how it is going to reach your marketing target. Leaders create an environment for their people to be successful. Build an environment of success in your practice. The difference between negative growth, no growth, fast growth and explosive growth is the ability to generate sustained

profitability. Sustained profitability comes from systems.

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