



YOUR PRACTICE / BUSINESS

## The Attraction Is Undeniable: Four Ways to Attract Patients

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*Dr. Jerry has been in practice for six years, and he's struggled since day one. He spends as much time and money on marketing as he can, but since his practice is slow, his budget isn't that big. Every month or two, Dr. Jerry tries a new strategy in the hopes he'll discover the "magic secret" to success. Instead, he's exhausted, frustrated and ready to change careers.*

Does this sound familiar? Maybe this scenario describes you or someone you know. Oftentimes, those in Dr. Jerry's situation reach out to their colleagues to find marketing activities that will work. This can be helpful to stimulate ideas and creativity, but it also can lead to frustration and confusion if the activities don't produce the same results. How does the same event produce different results in different practices?

We could spend the rest of this article discussing the ramifications of implementation, budget size, number of staff, marketing ability, event promotion, and so on. But it's pretty clear how those elements play into the success of marketing events. Instead of looking at those obvious factors, let's turn our attention to *internal characteristics*. What is it about *you* that can make any marketing activity you choose successful or unsuccessful?

Characteristic #1: Consistency

People learn to trust those they can depend upon. Regardless of your marketing strategy, be consistent with your efforts and be 100 percent reliable. If you say you're going to provide a health talk in your office at 6 p.m. Tuesday and only one person shows up, it can be tempting to reschedule the talk. Besides, it's awkward to give a lecture to just one person, right? By delivering the talk as promised, it sends the message that you're a person of your word. Furthermore, perhaps the information in that talk was exactly what this one person needed to change their life or refer dozens of

people to your practice.

*Practical Tip:* Create a written [marketing calendar](#). Schedule one internal and one external marketing event each month. (An internal event is held in your office and an external event is held out in the community.)

In addition to providing accountability, a marketing calendar helps you thoughtfully plan out your marketing so you aren't tempted to use "spaghetti marketing." Spaghetti marketing occurs when you jump from activity to activity, throwing things at the proverbial wall to see what sticks. This leads to exhaustion and burnout, and is rarely successful because no activity is given time to succeed.



## Characteristic #2: Authenticity

[Live-inspired.com](#) recently posted an article that stated a person's odds of "being born into their particular time, place, and circumstance is about 1 in 400,000,000,000." *There has never been another you.* Yet we spend so much time trying to be like others: We wear the same style clothes, buy the same cars and use the same expressions in an attempt to "fit in," instead of celebrating our uniqueness.

The same is true of marketing. People look to see what marketing events have worked for others and try to implement them in their own practice, even if the event doesn't fit their personality.

*Dr. Jerry is quiet and reserved by nature. His athletic and boisterous classmate, Dr. Kristen, built an*

*explosive practice by providing high-energy talks to personal trainers. Dr. Jerry tried the same approach, but didn't experience the same results. Why not? Because he was uncomfortable with the audience, uncomfortable with the pace and uncomfortable with the method of delivery. In short, he was trying to be someone he was not.*

*Practical Tip:* Take some time to review a multitude of marketing activities. Which events appeal to you? Which activities have you tried in the past with success? Which ones haven't worked for you? For those events that *didn't* work out for you, reflect on why. Was it due to poor planning, lack of resources, or simply because the event didn't suit you? When you have a list of marketing activities that reflect your personality and your practice, start scheduling them into your written marketing calendar.

### Characteristic #3: Generosity

A common marketing mistake practitioners make is focusing too much on their own wants and needs. If this sounds familiar, flip it around. Spend more time asking your community how you can help *them* instead of expecting them to help you.

Are there certain health topics your community is interested in learning more about? Is there a close-to-home charity for which you can provide support or expertise?

*Practical Tip:* A great way to incorporate generosity into your marketing strategy is to host a charitable services day once or twice a year. For example, hold a food or toy drive for a local food bank or shelter. Each patient who brings in a bag of groceries or new toy receives a free service. (If they forget their donation items, you could charge them \$20, which would then be donated to the selected charity.)

Another option: One or two days out of the year, allow current patients to refer a friend or family member for free. This means the new patient receives their initial consultation and exam at no cost.

While generosity is an important characteristic, don't sacrifice yourself for others. You have valuable skills and deserve to make a good living. To help ensure a big heart doesn't get in the way of running a business, some practices limit *pro bono* cases to a certain number per year. This way, they're still helping those who can't afford it, while respecting themselves and their business.

### Characteristic #4: Passion

When you're passionate about something, that positive energy is infused through everything you do. It's undeniable and draws people to you. Find ways to incorporate your passions into your practice.

*Practical Tip:* Love to run? Create an annual 5K run to get involved in the community and promote your practice. Love to golf? Develop a presentation to help other golfers improve their game by taking care of their bodies.

Has someone you love been impacted by a stroke? Consider a diplomate program in neurology to better serve this population. Passionate about nutrition? Host cooking classes to teach others how to prepare healthy meals. Love technology? Create a [podcast](#), [blog](#) or [radio show](#) to market your practice. You get the idea!

*Dr. Jerry created a specific, written marketing plan about six months ago. It consists of creative events*

*and activities that reflect his passion for nontoxic living and nutrition. He's giving monthly health talks in his community and sponsoring a food drive twice a year. His energy is up, his practice is more successful than it's ever been, and he's hiring an associate to take his practice to the next level.*

Your practice - and its marketing - is a reflection of you. If the marketing activities you're doing aren't a good fit for you or your practice, they won't be as successful as they deserve to be. Carefully use consistent marketing events to share your authentic, generous and passionate self - and then watch your practice grow!