



# Team effort

Transform your staff into  
marketing warriors.

BY KAREN APPOLD

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**M**ost chiropractors don't want to spend much time marketing their practices. Instead, they'd prefer to focus on healing patients.

But the fact is that most chiropractic practices need to be promoted to be viable businesses. Turning your staff into a team of marketing champions (or hiring someone to do this task) is the best way to market your practice while minimizing your involvement. We gathered some proven experts in the field to show you how.

#### **Theme of the week**

One effective way to turn your staff into a new-patient machine is to get them to embrace a daily patient education and referral system, says **Len Schwartz, DC**. To achieve this, he suggests choosing a specific topic each week to discuss with patients during their visit, such as how chiropractic care can help to decrease headaches.

*For example:* After greeting a patient, the receptionist would broach the topic by saying something like, "Did you know that according to the government chiropractic care is the treatment of choice for headaches? The doctor will tell you more about this when he sees you."

If there's a bunch of people in your waiting room and there's no time to mention this to each person individually, have the receptionist stand up when the rush is over and announce the topic to everyone waiting.

If another staff member—such as a massage therapist or rehabilitation assistant—works with a patient, they can provide additional information, such as stating that a university's research found that chiropractic care is the treatment of choice for specific types of headaches.

When patients check out, the receptionist can follow up by asking

them if they know anyone who suffers from headaches. If so, they can be asked if they would be willing to share with them some information about how chiropractic care can eliminate headaches.

On the patient's next visit, the receptionist then asks if the information was shared and what the headache sufferer said about it. If the person is interested in learning more, the receptionist can offer a free initial consult.

Another strategy to generate leads is a reactivation effort. Have staff send a series of letters to missing patients throughout the year. The next step is to follow up with a phone call to confirm that they received the letter, see how they are doing, and reiterate the special offer (that was also mentioned in the letter) to get them back into the office. "This also gives staff an opportunity to ask patients why they have not been in recently," Schwartz says.

#### **Getting staff buy-in**

Another suggestion, offered by **Jared Yellin**, is to compile a one-year educational and relationship-based marketing plan. To garner staff buy-in, have them help create it. Hold offsite meetings quarterly or so to plan for the next three- to 12-month period. Develop such strategies as educational workshops inside and outside the practice, patient appreciation days, referral programs, interactive community events, and webinars or teleseminars.

Yellin advises a three-pronged approach to building a staff that's on fire to grow your practice with your marketing plan. Begin by working with staff to create a list of leverageable leaders consisting of local people, groups, and associations that are conduits to your ideal patient. Staff should then look at the list of leaders and determine which segment would make the perfect partner for the

marketing campaign that month. Next, reach out to these folks and invite them to engage in that campaign.

The next task is to make your staff aware that your practice is a business. "Even when they aren't in the office, staff should still be thinking about the practice and talking to people they encounter about how it can serve them," Yellin says. "For example, they should invite people in the community to events you are holding so that they can be exposed to your practice, educated on how you can help them, and eventually converted into practice members who will have their lives transformed."

The third task is for you and your staff to make declarations each month. This means setting serious goals about building the practice. "Most people make goals and fall short," Yellin says. "Dig your feet into the ground and commit to changing lives. If your declaration is to change 25 lives during the month of February, everyone on your team will be aware of this declaration and they should rally around it," Yellin says.

Another facet of building a committed marketing team is to get staff to view their position as a career and not just a job. "Instill a sense of purpose to come to work every day," Yellin says. "Share with them why you became a chiropractor, so they can connect with you on an emotional level."

During an offsite meeting, have each staff member talk about their vision for their life so you know their intentions. Build a plan that will enable each person to accomplish their vision for the next year, as the company progresses simultaneously.

Rewarding employees when they reach milestones will help to maintain buy-in. "I believe in a performance-based compensation structure beyond salary," Yellin says. "This enables individuals to make more income and

## Meet the experts



**Len Schwartz, DC**, owner of Market Domination Specialists, in Philadelphia.  
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**David Singer, DC**, president of David Singer Enterprises in Clearwater, Fla.  
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have more freedom in their lives.”

When staff members meet weekly goals, reward them with dinner or take everyone to a movie or sporting event. “Always have exercises to motivate people to up their game,”

Yellin says. “Create a culture where they feel like they are progressing.”

## Working with workshops

**Paul S. Inselman, DC**, agrees that it’s important to get your whole team involved, because everyone has a unique perspective.

One way to engage staff is by conducting a workshop. “This gets you and your team solving problems, owning the solutions, and implementing them enthusiastically,” Inselman says. Begin by writing a topic on a whiteboard, such as “Who is our ideal patient?” Then, ask everyone to silently write down bullet points addressing the topic.

Next, record on the whiteboard everyone’s ideas regarding how to attract the ideal patient. While doing this exercise, emphasize that no one can be ridiculed, and no idea can be shot down. The goal is to get creativity flowing. Criticism at this juncture is counterproductive.

After you’ve identified your target patient type, including gender, condition, ZIP code, educational status, and hobbies, pinpoint where such individuals can be found. Now evaluate what methods might attract them.

*For example:* Free marketing—such as volunteering at a school or church—or paid marketing—such as doing a



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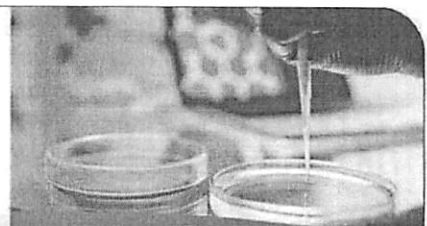


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radio show or TV campaign, might be the better route to attracting this type of person. Ask staff to choose several ideas from the list, rank them in importance, and then proceed to implement the plan.

Your staff can be marketing champions by showing enthusiasm, looking for ways to praise patients, and making them feel better about themselves. Have them educate patients about the goods and services offered by your practice, share anonymous success stories of other patients, and ask for referrals.

"Everyone has to do what they are comfortable doing," Inselman says. "As a leader, delegate tasks to employees who can best handle them." For example, you can assign an extrovert with good communication skills to follow up with potential patients after a screening rather than a shy introvert.

Perform a postmortem analysis following your marketing efforts. Evaluate everything you've done, step by step, and if you were to repeat the activity, what would you change?

*For example:* After a campaign of following up on screened patients, Inselman found that the scripting was good based on results, the time of day was right (people answered the phone), but people weren't getting engaged in conversations. "We listened to tape recordings of the conversations, and determined that the caller was not strong enough to handle rejections and navigate through," he says.

### Staying on script

**Keith Maule**, of Integrity Management, has a different approach. He believes that for staff to do marketing, they must do it in a controlled environment. "We don't want them going out and saying whatever they want," he says. "We don't even want their ideas. We know what works."

For classroom presentations, Maule has staff memorize two prepared scripts. The classes clarify why people of all ages benefit from chiropractic care.

But if your staff aren't eager to market your practice, it's time to hire a marketing person, says Maule, who dubs this person a "practice representative." This individual should introduce him- or herself with both name and title, e.g., "Hello, my name is Sally Smith and I represent Keith Maule." This way, listeners will know they are talking to someone with authority.

"This works perfectly when answering the phone, teaching a class, or doing a screening," Maule says. A practice representative should operate inside boundaries, however. They should not diagnose nor recommend care. Their role is to invite the potential patient to come to the office for a consultation.

Another recommendation Maule has is to avoid free marketing. "New patients have to pay, even for a screening," he says. "However, we let them know that we give back to the community and care about the community." The chiropractor and staff decide which cause to support. This may

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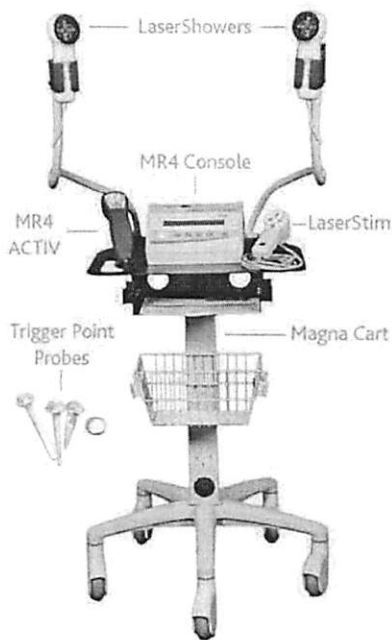
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## A person who works in multilevel marketing may make a great chiropractic assistant.

be a well-known organization or a local person in need.

"As a result, most doctors who adhere to our programs are awarded the title of outstanding business of the year or similar by local organizations such as the chamber of commerce or small business association," Maule says. This gives staff pride and confidence in their work.

### Surveying for skills

**David Singer, DC**, advises first asking your staff if they want to do marketing; don't force them to do it. If they respond positively, gauge their ability to market by having them survey a dozen family members or friends.

By this, he refers to a "stress survey" he invented. It requires asking someone's name and seeing if they have any stress-related symptoms such as fatigue, sleep problems, or digestive issues. Then this information is recorded on a form.

"Most staff will not complete this task," Singer says. "This shows that they don't have the propensity or personality to confront people and get them to discuss their health issues."

If no one on staff is appropriate to engage in marketing, then hire a part-time chiropractic assistant who can go out into the community to meet people and survey them.

"The goal is to let people know that your practice exists, what you can do to help them and why they should come and see you," Singer says. A good place to do this is in a mall setting.

A person who works in multilevel marketing may make a great chiropractic assistant. "This person knows how to make contact, talk to people, and make stuff happen," Singer says. "Or, walk around the mall and approach salespeople at kiosks. Ask them about the product they're selling

to gauge their sales capabilities."

Before hiring an assistant, first see if he or she has the ability to survey people. "If she can't do this, she won't be good at marketing," Singer says. "She needs to have the ability to talk to people, as marketing involves setting up lectures in the community and getting the practice to exhibit at health fairs." When surveying, the assistant should mention that the chiropractor offers free health seminars and ask respondents which topics would be of interest. If enough people sign up, you're ready to call on them.

Proceed cautiously by retaining someone on a part-time basis initially to work on weekends. "That way, if they don't work out, they will still have their full-time job to fall back on," Singer says. "You should be able to tell in a week or two if they have what it takes."

Use caution when giving bonuses, Dr. Singer warns. It is not legal in most states to compensate marketing staff for recruiting new patients. Instead, compensate the assistant for each person surveyed.

The bottom line is that there are many proven ways to engage staff in your marketing efforts. Getting staff buy-in and choosing the right person for the job is key. If current staff aren't a good fit for your market efforts, hire a marketing assistant. ☺



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