

Marketing Habits

Make 'Em Part of the Routine

By Sherri Petro

Ever hear of the saying – “Deep water covers many stumps?” The essence is that when times are good, real problems can appear not to exist. It's only when the water recedes that problems are revealed. When you are busy earning your income from existing business, it can be easy to forget that marketing your practice is critical to your success. You can delude yourself that since everything is fine and you are making money that marketing your practice right now is not necessary. How can you insure that this mental slip does not overtake your good sense? Gravy trains eventually end. If you are not prepared, you can find yourself at the end of the line. Not only should marketing your practice be a pledged priority, it should be a habit.

Habitual Marketing Practices

To develop healthy marketing habits even when you are busy delivering other work product, allocate a certain amount of time per month. Theoretically, you have 2,080 working hours a year. Setting aside 10% (208 hours a year!) may seem like a lot - especially if you are hourly billing -- but it is as an investment in the future to insure you can bill again next year. Invest wisely, however. Divide your marketing time into two categories -- strategy and execution. Use your knowledge of the season to decide how much time per month is required. Budget it. Calendar it.

Strategy: Develop Annually

Before you gear up for the season, take a portion of your allocated marketing time in autumn and determine which tactics are going to best serve your objectives in the following year. Use the time to update your marketing plan. Review your existing strategy. Has a new development internally or externally caused a shift? Check out existing tactics -

- Marketing brochures and stationary - Do they fit the bill or are they old? Are the colors, images or information in need of an update?
- Advertising – Did it reach the amount of people expected and generate leads?
- Website - Has it been checked lately and are recent changes reflected? Does it need a facelift?
- Business Cards – Do you have space on the back to write in the next appointment time?
- Yellow Pages - With multiple companies, are you advertising in the right one for your clients?
- Participation - Are you involved in activities which impact or influence your clients?

If you have a fixed budget, determine which tactics of this year's marketing campaign worked - or didn't - from your records. Use that knowledge to adjust for next year.

Execute: Deliver Perennially

While you must be flexible, don't allow distractions to decrease the amount of time required to make the strategy a reality. Remember, marketing is a habit. Operationalize that strategy and decide how and when you will take on the marketing projects.

- How many networking events will you participate in?
- How many business cards will you hand out?
- How many times will you refer people to your website for information?

Make marketing goals and take the time you allocated monthly to get out there and spread the word about the superior work you do. Does that make you uncomfortable? How will prospective clients know about you unless you tell them or do excellent work for others and get referrals? You are performing a valuable service. Go tell others what value your company can provide.

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Conclusion

An annual planning habit and monthly execution habits are ways to insure that marketing stays in the viewfinder. While it's simpler to stay with your day-to-day process, it's short-sighted to think business will jump your way without you jumping towards it. Make time for setting your strategy and marketing your practice. Make it a habit.