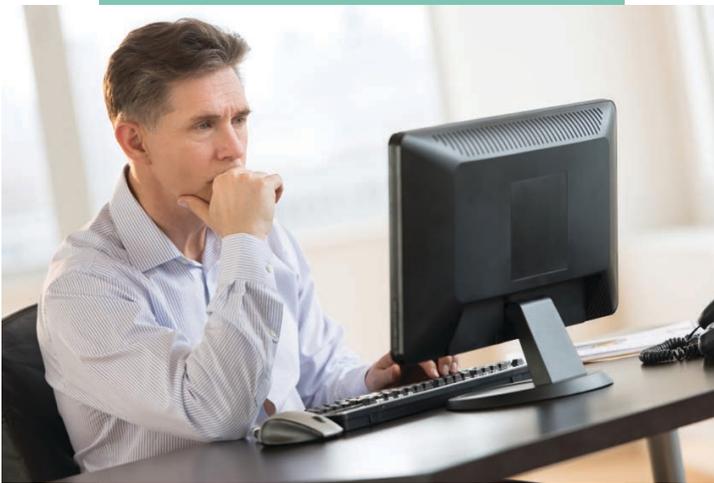


Use Clinic Software To Market Your Practice

by Henri Nuber



Could the purchase and implementation of practice management technology help you to grow and retain your patient base? Every good marketer knows that marketing works best when the message is delivered clearly and in a compelling manner to the right audience. But how can you find your message and your audience without spending a dime on professional marketing research? Here are three ways in which your clinic software can help you speak effectively to the people you are trying to reach.

Software can help you identify your audience

It is true that anyone with a spine can benefit from your care — but any marketing built for anyone is doomed to fail before it even starts. Laser focused messages and the right appeals that lead to people accepting your care requires identifying your audience. And the best way for most existing businesses to identify their audience is to know who is already buying, for what reasons, and who is satisfied with the experience.

Even the most general patient information available in your clinical software could reveal aspects of your practice that you have never measured. For example you could learn: the most common primary and secondary diagnosis codes, the average age of your patients, their work history, and where they live. With a few more questions on your intake form or during the consultation, you could also: identify word-of-mouth referral sources, quantify responses to advertisements and screenings, track your conversion rates, and measure case averages for different leads to actually understand your return-on-investment. With the right software customization options in your clinical software, you could understand these numbers with a touch of a button or at the very least, access them and then have staff plug them into a spreadsheet for you.

Measuring these statistics can give you a more concrete picture of your average patient. With a firm grasp of who is attracted to your practice and why, you can more easily identify the strongest opportunities for marketing and growth. If you are already tracking practice metrics like case averages, and patient retention, you might even begin to spot trends in who makes your best patients and why. Or what kinds of diagnosis codes tend to show greater third-party reimbursement over time. Knowing your audience will prevent you from throwing marketing dollars in directions that may not yield new patients, or will only yield you the kinds of patients who tend to offer a lower return-on-investment.

In addition to strengthening your marketing, identifying your audience can also help reveal areas of weakness. You may think of your practice as a family wellness clinic, yet be surprised at how few moms and

dads come in with their kids when you track the numbers. Knowing your audience can help you measure and understand the difference between what you think is happening in your practice and what really is going on. If your current audience really is not who you want to be serving, then you need to shift the focus of your marketing, and perhaps other aspects of how you manage your practice. Pulling your own clinic data from within your software program may be the key to understanding why you are not as satisfied with your practice as you believe you should be.

Software can give you talking points

What is more impressive than general chiropractic research showing positive patient outcomes? The answer is, knowing your own positive patient outcomes to a nice round percentage. While chiropractic research may be interesting to academics, most of your current and future patients are probably more interested in how you can help their particular problem, rather than how chiropractic helps in general. So a better way to strengthen your own report of findings, screening, or even advertisements is to be able to report your own practice based statistics. For example, a patient may be impressed with research that shows how chiropractic can help with neck pain. But they are more likely to be impressed when you tell them that 25% of your practice includes patients with neck pain, and that a majority see improvement in their condition. Do you see how this could make a positive difference in your patient management?

Everyone loves numbers, from your patients to the other professionals that also help your patients. With a firm grasp of the patients that make up your practice and how they do under your care, you have the perfect talking points for your practice. You can take these talking points on the road from community lectures to lunch-and-learns for other health care providers. Real numbers and

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percentages take positive patient outcomes from the abstract to the specific. Software tracking of patient outcomes can make this possible.

Software can automate your education

New patients are key to most practices, but long term stability requires good patient retention. Getting patients to stay, pay, and refer to others requires constant patient education to remind them of the purpose behind your care, and how they can best help themselves over the long term. Software can play an integral role in making sure that your patient education is both consistent and effective.

First, your practice talking points can always remain a source of marketing through patient exam and progress reports. Full clinic management software suites can help you auto-generate patient care plans and progress reports that speak to patients and their other health care providers. Once you are aware of what your talking points are, you will want to keep them in front of your patients and referring providers as much as possible. If your software includes areas for outcome instruments, like the Rand-36 or the Roland-Morris Low Back and Disability Questionnaire, all the better.

Second, software can help you generate condition specific education that reinforces your report of findings. This is especially important in patients with complicated cases who will require months of care before becoming stable.

Many practice suites will allow you to track what documents have been given to patients for patient education and home care, and there are others that will allow you to create custom alerts to remind you to hit those education milestones.

Beyond better billings for practice growth?

When it comes to practice building and clinical software, many doctors only consider how software can help streamline their billings and improve their reimbursements. Billings and collections are a huge portion of practice building, but they are not the only places where your clinical software can help. Purchasing and implementing a practice suite could actually help you grow and retain your patient base.

Knowing the audience that you serve can help you deliver clear and compelling messages in the right areas, and avoid throwing away marketing dollars where the return-on-investment may not be as high. Armed with real, quantifiable statistics can only help to strengthen your marketing and give you all of the talking points you need with current and future patients, health care providers, and/or other community leaders. A combination of practice software customization as well as your own practice statistics could be well within your reach with the right software suite.

About The Author: Henri Nuber is the publisher and CEO of Chiropractic Products magazine.