

# **Three Steps to Marketing Gold**

*By Rem Jackson*



**AAPP**  
AMERICAN ACADEMY OF  
PODIATRIC PRACTICE MANAGEMENT

10 Maple Street, Suite 301  
Middleton, MA 01949

978-646-9091

978-646-9092 fax

office@aappm.org

www.aappm.org

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Why does it seem that some practices grow and grow in a seemingly effortless way and others struggle to find new patients? A close look inside these practices produces some surprising answers. It is not about what town or city the practice is located in or the population demographics, as you might think. Some practices thrive in seemingly impossible places, and others in very desirable locations never live up to their potential. The answer is usually found in how the practice markets or “sells” itself to the community. Here are three steps you can take immediately to get your marketing on the right track.

## **Step One: CDT/ME**

Successful professional marketing, that is, promotional and selling efforts that generate significantly more revenue for a practice than they cost and have a good **ROI (return on investment)**, have the following characteristics. They are:

**Consistent** – All promotional efforts must be consistently applied. Marketing messages are absorbed by the intended audience only after consistent, sustained, multiple exposures. Most marketing programs fail because they are only sporadically applied. Many practices try one idea, don’t get an overwhelming initial response, and move on to the next thing the latest “expert” is touting, never giving anything a real chance to succeed. It doesn’t work with diets, and it doesn’t work with marketing.

**Diversified** – People are different. They get their news from different sources; they absorb marketing messages from different sources. Some electronic, some print, some personal. A successful marketing plan recognizes that multiple strategies – personal, print, and electronic **must** be employed to reach the most people and generate the high ROI that justify the marketing efforts.

**Targeted** – Very few practices have unlimited marketing funds, and even those with large budgets must target their marketing messages to individuals who are influential and most likely to refer or seek out the practice when they need help. TV, radio, and The Yellow Pages cast wide nets, but target no one group and therefore have the lowest ROI of any marketing effort professionals can employ.

**Multiple -Exposure** – Individuals absorb most of the marketing messages they are exposed to from a primary source (print, electronic, branding efforts), but as they encounter the same integrated message in multiple pathways, it strongly reinforces the message from the primary source. It is critical to use multiple pathways and multiple exposures to get your messages to rise above the din of competing messages we are all exposed to daily.

## **Step Two: Build Your List**

### **Your List is Pure Gold**

Every practice has a database or list of patients, but it is the rare practice that understands the enormous value the list represents. In addition to the patient list almost every practice has a database or list of individuals and businesses in the community that know them or should know them. Very few practices take advantage of their own database of contacts. This is a critical mistake. **Your only marketing goal should be to constantly build your in-house list of individuals who see you as their trusted adviser in your niche and then nurture and grow those relationships one person at a time.** Why? Because relationships result in referrals, and people tend to refer people like them. Growing your list, tending your list, and always focusing

on your ever-increasing list will naturally produce an ever-growing practice of exactly the kinds of patients you want.

You can build your list in many ways; here are several:

**P**ersonal – Developing a reputation in the community/market by personally delivering specific content about **your niche area** that is useful to your market is an extremely low-cost way to promote your key messages and create high-quality referrals.

**P**rint – A significant percentage of your population continues to state a strong preference for more traditional print messages - newsletters, postcards, letters - as the primary way they receive information. Designing and consistently delivering newsletters, postcards, and letters is a highly effective, very cost-effective, way to reach the key referring individuals and professionals.

**B**randing- Simple, useful items, such as annual calendars, date books, pens, pencils, mugs, and shirts that are used regularly, significantly and very inexpensively reinforce your practice's brand every day of the year

**E**lectronic **M**arketing -Your Web site. An exponentially increasing number of influentials are using the Web as their primary source for information. An effective Web presence is critical in reaching this crucial group.

**P**rofessional **D**evelopment – Even the best plans are only as good as the people who understand and implement them. Successful practices are committed to training their staff and ensuring they understand, support, and extend the marketing efforts. A well-trained staff can double your marketing dollars and a poorly trained, uninformed staff can stop you dead in your tracks.

### **Step Three: Make it Easy**

Very few practices have the time or dedicated staff to design and implement an effective, Consistent, Diversified, Targeted, Multiple-Exposure campaign that produces a high ROI. That's why most marketing programs produce lackluster results. It's just too hard to keep the program going month after month. Just as your patients look to you to be their partner in health, you must find a marketing partner who can take all the work out of practice marketing. Finding consultants or companies with a proven track record and the endorsement of professional organizations is one great way to start.

### **The hardest part in implementing a successful marketing program is getting started.**

Albert Einstein said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result."

There is no time like the present. Good luck!

*Rem Jackson is the Executive Director of ComPLUS Institute ([www.gocomplus.com](http://www.gocomplus.com)), the professional development and training division of Newsletters Ink Plus ([www.newslettersink.com](http://www.newslettersink.com)). Newsletters Ink is an AAPPm corporate partner.*