

Marketing Your Medical Practice: Evaluate, Strategize, Execute and Monitor



The definition for marketing that I like is “the process of establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with stakeholders to facilitate exchanges.”

To expand that definition, consider:

- **Mutually beneficial relationships** are created when the healthcare entity has a service to provide and consumers of healthcare seek out the service and (ideally) are a payer source.
- **Stakeholders** can be the healthcare consumer, but can also be the employer who purchases insurance for consumers or directly purchases the services, the federal or state government who reimburses the healthcare entity, the insurance company itself, other healthcare providers including hospitals and physicians, or other companies such as banks providing funding, liability companies providing malpractice insurance, and Independent Review Boards (IRBs) and other third-parties that pay for services. An argument can be made that everyone the practice comes in contact with who has a part in enabling the healthcare entity to be reimbursed for services is a stakeholder.
- **A exchange is facilitated** when the payer source wants the service, understands the service, and an agreement

is made for the terms of the exchange.

How To Develop a Marketing Plan Part 1: Evaluation Process

1. **Determine the services you want to provide.** Basic services may be straightforward to market to a community as many locations have need for more healthcare services, but new or specialized service lines or ancillaries will need a marketing plan. For instance, a family practice medical group may provide primary care to children and adults, but may also want to develop a diabetes clinic to provide more intensive education and care to a larger diabetic population. An internal medicine or cardiology group may develop an anti-coagulation (coumadin) clinic and a general surgery group may want to establish a wound care clinic. If the new service is developed for existing consumers only, then marketing is largely an internal issue. If your service will be available to new consumers, an external campaign is crucial.
2. **Determine your geographic market.** Do you plan to market to the immediate/local consumer, to the regional consumer, statewide, through multiple adjacent states, or state blocks such as the East Coast, the Mid-Atlantic, New England, etc.? Do you plan to market your service to consumers in other countries?
3. Identify any consumers in your chosen demographic market who have already purchased services from you to **evaluate the potential** for consumers to drive the distance to purchase your services.
4. Determine what is **currently being provided** in the geographic market you've chosen and evaluate what potential exists for competitors to provide the same service in the same area. Some places to gather information without cost are:
 1. **ZipSkinny** (demographics by zip code)
 2. **City-Data** (includes info on neighborhoods and has

- a forum)
- 3. **ZipWho** (advanced search capabilities)
- 4. **State Health Facts** (Kaiser Family Foundation)
- 5. Other methods to **assess the need for your service** are:
 - 1. Focus Groups
 - 2. Telephone Surveys
 - 3. Mail Surveys
 - 4. Mall Surveys
 - 5. Referring Source Surveys (hospitals, physicians, agencies)
- 6. Now that you have all this data, make an **informed decision** about going forward with your new service, and marketing it.

How To Develop a Marketing Plan Part 2: The Strategy

Once you've determined that a need exists for services you want to provide and you've identified the target service area, you must develop a strategy for cultivating a desire for the service and encouraging consumers to come to you for the service.

- 1. **Wrap your brand around the new service**, or if the new service will be branded separately, develop that new brand. A brand is a name, term, symbol, special design or some combination of these that is intended to identify the service and differentiate it from the services of competitors.
- 2. **Determine your target market**. Are you targeting consumers directly, or are you targeting care providers, employers, businesses, or payers?
- 3. If your **marketing budget** was not established as part of the pro forma, establish it now.
- 4. **Select your marketing methods** based on your target:
 - Direct to consumer methods include free meet and greet appointments, lectures, personal appearances, direct mail, print advertising, radio, TV, billboards, theatre pre-movie ads and

online methods including Facebook, interactive websites, blogs, Twitter, texting, Google advertising, Google Places (not yellow pages), Groupon, Social Living and Facebook advertising.

- Direct to other service purchasers include online and print press releases, direct mail, invitations to events, personal visits, service brochures and referral sources.

5. Put together your **timeline** leading up to the launch of your service.

How To Develop a Marketing Plan Part 3: Execute and Monitor

1. Prepare a table or spreadsheet of **your strategy and timeline, assigning responsibility for each phase of your plan.**
2. Be prepared to collect data both in person and online to analyze which marketing mediums produced conversions (consumers buying your service). Ask every single person who uses the new service "How did you hear about us?" and log it. Use analytics programs to assess online activity surrounding your brand and service.
3. Evaluate your results from different marketing mediums and eliminate those producing poor results and focus on those producing conversions.

Image by EmaStudios via Flickr