

A large, close-up photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her eye and nose, serves as the background for the article.

Catch him & keep him

Two marketing experts offer tips, tricks
for attracting — and retaining — male patients

John Jesitus

Senior Staff Correspondent

While some strategies for reaching male patients mirror female-oriented strategies, marketing to men generally requires a deftly targeted approach, say two marketing professionals.

When working with a practice to lure male patients, says Tracy L. Drumm, "We always have them start by marketing to their internal patients, even if they have a primarily female clientele." Word-of-mouth delivers the highest new-patient conversion rate, says Ms. Drumm, who is vice president of Chicago-based If Marketing, an aesthetic medicine marketing consultancy.

Men possess a stronger fight-or-flight reflex than women, adds Catherine Maley, MBA, a San Francisco aesthetic marketing strategist and author of *Your Aesthetic Practice*. If they feel at all uncomfortable, "There's a much better chance they'll book an appointment and not show up, or get to the parking lot and not go in."

"If the woman pushes the issue a bit, that seems to help," Ms. Maley says. "For example, if a woman wants a facelift, often her husband comes in with her for the consultation" and subsequent appointments. This allows him to get to know the doctor, the practice and the process of care, she says. Over multiple exposures, "There's a much better chance for him to say to the doctor, 'By the way, what about my eyes? Or liposuction for my love handles?'"

Along with courting significant others, practices that serve primarily women also should encourage their patients to bring in male friends, Ms. Drumm says. "We do that with a male-referral card. It's specific to the male brand — not too feminine or flashy." A typical example could take the form of a



Ms. Maley

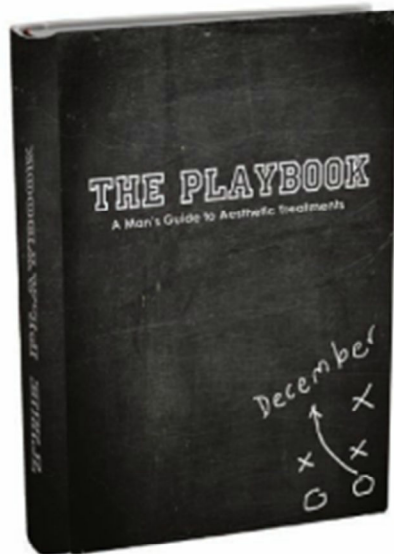


Ms. Drumm

Catch continued

male VIP card designed largely in basic black, she explains.

Along with informing women what treatments are available for men, such cards incorporate a built-in call to action; namely, to give them to the men in their lives for consultations, Ms. Drumm says. Moreover, women provide a main source of validation: "It's OK to do this. It's not a feminine procedure," she says.



Tools such as a "male playbook" describing a practice's male-oriented services can go a long way toward making a man feel comfortable in the waiting room. (Photo credit: Tracy Drumm)

Regarding content, "The biggest difference when marketing for the male segment is that for females, we typically use an aspirational branding approach," she says. Through patient profiles, "We focus on the story of the person getting the treatment." This can inspire women to see themselves in — and want to emulate — the profiled patient. "It's about empowerment — the idea that 'this could be me.'"

Furthermore, the narrative-based approach reflects the way women speak to each other. "Women watch long stories on TV; men want the sports highlights," Ms. Drumm says.

NO "POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE"

"Women want to build a relationship — they want to chit-chat and talk to other women in the office who have had procedures," Ms. Maley says. The typical heterosexual male wants no pomp and circumstance. "They don't want a lot of discussion. They want to go straight in to the doctor — typically a male — talk about what they want, get the facts, make a decision and get out."

She says that when pursuing male patients, "Keep it simple. Talk results and about how quick and painless it's going to be. Give them all the information they need without their having to ask for more."

Adds Ms. Drumm, "When you're producing copy

and dialogue for men, less is more. Whereas a woman is more likely to pick up a brochure in the waiting room and read the entire thing, you're lucky to get a man to glance at one."

Ms. Drumm suggests using tools such as a "male playbook" to describe a practice's male-oriented

Promotional pearls

John Jesitus

Senior Staff Correspondent

CHICAGO — Scheduling, organizing and hosting promotional events for men requires considering their needs from start to finish, according to Tracy L. Drumm, vice president of Chicago-based IF Marketing, an aesthetic medicine marketing consultancy.

One of the biggest mistakes cosmetic surgeons make in marketing to patients of either gender is failing to consider the patient's perspective, she says. For example, "The practice manager will focus on what he or she wants out of a promotion, such as 10 new male neurotoxin patients this month, and how they want to get there. But it's not about what works for you — it's about what works for your patients."

In one instance, Ms. Drumm says, a practice's otherwise well-planned and advertised event failed because the practice decided to hold it at 4 p.m. on a Saturday — because this was the only time that worked for staff members. Regarding timing, she says that what works in one location might fail in others. However, "We've found that 5:30 p.m. on Thursdays is our sweet spot for many major cities. If we wait until 6 p.m., many people go home after work first and don't make it back out." Turnout on other weeknights can be hit-or-miss, she adds. "The key is to listen to your market's needs."

Ms. Drumm also recommends that promotional events tie into a charity. In this regard, "It's very important that the charity a physician or practice chooses to partner with is something the practice truly supports, because these efforts shouldn't be seen as simply a marketing ploy."

Additionally, she says, "We charge a door fee for any event — even if it's \$5. Partnering with a charity allows prospective patients to feel less like they're coming to an event to learn about Botox and more like they're helping a good cause. It takes the vanity out of the equation."

Charging a fee also solidifies attendees' commitment. "People often throw open houses as a 'thank you' to their patients. But often, the

staff ends up preparing for weeks; the doctor blocks out his schedule; then maybe five people show up," she says, adding that it's because, in her company's experience, people often perceive free events as having no value. "People will be quick to RSVP. But if it happens to be a rainy or snowy night or an exceptionally beautiful day, people are quick to rethink attending. So we've found that having someone pay — whether it's \$5 or \$10 — to be involved gets the person invested in actually coming."

Additionally, she says, some practices seeking to boost their male patient base might offer a "Man-Day Monday." This involves removing flowers and other feminine touches for the day, tuning the TV to ESPN and placing male-oriented magazines in the waiting room.

"Just coming up with a promotional name like 'Man-Day Monday' helps build awareness among existing patients walking through the door that these treatments exist for men," she says. Alternatively, many practices have succeeded by offering a monthly "man day" after normal hours or on a Saturday.

The key to scheduling is knowing your patients, she says. "If you have a large professional male patient base, many of those men will want to come in after hours or a little past the typical 9-to-5 zone." Lunch hours often are popular too, she adds, although this varies around the country. Monday mornings universally garner the highest no-show rate.

"To get someone excited to come to your event, you should have an offer," Ms. Drumm says. "It can be something like a complimentary consultation or a sample of a new lotion line you carry. Many skincare companies have responded to the growth in this market and created entire lines just for men."

Whatever the offer, "It's about creating a relationship with the person and about the emotion you're evoking when they're at your practice," she says. "And who doesn't enjoy receiving a nice gift?" ♦

services. "We need to make the brand so that it's not intimidating. We don't want it to be flowery or soft. We don't want to make it stereotypical, either. We want to make this marketing piece so that it speaks to the male audience in such a way that they're going to feel comfortable picking up a brochure or even a photo book in the waiting room."

Humor can help. "We educate the male market by entertaining them," Ms. Drumm says. For example, a "back-to-school" print media campaign she orchestrated highlighted the image of a man's hairy back as a way to promote hair removal treatments. "We've also done a hairiest man contest."



Practices that serve primarily women should encourage their patients to bring in males, perhaps through distributing VIP referral cards that women can give to men. (Photo credit: Tracy Drumm)

And don't underestimate the power of safety in numbers, she says. "We typically post a chart that shows the total number of aesthetic treatments performed across the United States, with the number of male procedures broken out."

Most men don't know, for example, that according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, approximately 337,000 men underwent botulinum toxin injections in 2010, Ms. Drumm says.

POTENTIAL ALLIES EVERYWHERE
Regarding external marketing, Ms. Maley suggests putting more resources into setting up specific

strategic alliances than mass advertising. "The alliances would cater to the male group you want as patients and could include your local gym or men's hair salon. If you're not sure who your alliances should be, ask your patients for recommendations."

Brainstorming with staff can reveal whether any of them have connections with a local business that reaches the desired demographic, Ms. Maley says.

Both sides must benefit from a strategic alliance. "Therefore, you want to meet with the business owner, since they will care more about growing their business than their employees will," Ms. Maley says. "Since you never want to get involved in anything that looks like 'fee-splitting,' be creative." ♦

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