

Waiting Room 101

By Tracy L. Drumm

I don't need coffee. Although it is addictive, my body doesn't require it to function. I can certainly wake up, get ready and carry on my day without it. But that warm cup o' Joe certainly puts a little pep into my step and helps me hustle through my day.

Much like I don't need a cup of coffee to exist, your practice doesn't need marketing to thrive. However, just as coffee escalates me to the next level of productivity, marketing can serve as a dose of caffeine to boost your practices profitably. Are you ready to give your waiting room a dose of energy?

STEP 1: ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS

It is up to you and your staff to provide patients with as many opportunities as possible to learn about the services you offer. By providing educational tools you are allowing patients to maximize their time and financial investment into their appointment.

The first step is to ditch the distractions by getting rid of the gossip magazines. If you have an issue of Cosmopolitan with a cover headline that blares, "Five Secrets to Get Him to Call," or a magazine divulging secrets from Brad Pitt, your laser hair removal brochure will have a slim chance of being read.

Have your staff clear the coffee table of all magazines to make room for educational tools that will help the patient discover additional solutions you offer.

STEP 2: CREATE A FOCAL POINT

Once you have cleared the clutter and canceled your magazine subscriptions, think of the new found space as real estate. What tools do you have that explain to patients the services you offer in an engaging and exciting manner? You can utilize pre-made brochures that the device or drug companies offer; or, you can create your own brand of custom brochures. Gather your best before-and-after photos and showcase them in a photo album or even load them onto an iPad for patients to flip through.

Take the resources you have collected and display them in one or two areas of your waiting room and label it as your "Education Center."

STEP 3: PROMOTE A FEW OF YOUR TOP TREATMENTS

Identify the top treatments you believe essential to building your brand, and evaluate your promotional items to ensure the tools you have promote these procedures. Utilize the designated office space to highlight your experience with these specific treatments or any additional credentials that will strengthen your position as an expert.

For practices looking to make a strong first impression, consider presenting patients with a professional photo book. Custom, hardcover, commercially printed before-and-after books are one the most effective new tools physicians nationwide are using to showcase their work. The books can range anywhere from 40 to 120 pages and highlight the practice physician(s), before-and-after photos and patient testimonials.

Photo books can be designed by a graphic artist or can be created online via photo-sharing Web sites.

Regardless of the type of material you decide to use, there is missed opportunity if your waiting room doesn't currently focus on the patient and their potential interests. Remember to treat walls, doors and tables as prime real estate and to promote but not clutter your space.

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