

Using Direct Mail, Publicity, and Other Tools

Some of the more traditional marketing tactics—which at times can take advantage of the Web's reach and immediacy—remain good options to get your message out. These tactics include news releases that offer advice on a hot medical topic in your community and a local newspaper ad to draw attendees to an educational seminar.

Chapter in Brief:

- ▲ *Free news media exposure (i.e., publicity) is powerful but difficult to predict or control.*
- ▲ *Direct mail efforts such as postcards and newsletters are cost-effective marketing tools whose effectiveness can be measured.*
- ▲ *Advertising costs more than other marketing tools but allows total control and predictability, making it an essential tool in certain situations, such as image-building campaigns that target a wide audience or large geographic area.*

Getting your marketing message out means considering every marketing tool available and choosing the ones you think will work for you. There's much to be said for getting publicity the old-fashioned—and free—way: through press releases. Other relatively inexpensive tools such as direct mail can be effective at building credibility and contributing to expert positioning. This chapter examines such tools, outlines situations in which they can be useful, and helps you create and use them.

Using Publicity Effectively

One of the easiest, most cost-effective ways to showcase the expertise of your practice or its clinicians—or to generate

Documenting telephone calls while on the go is a Snap with New MEMO-Snap™ OnCall Pocket Data Pads!

A quick and inexpensive way to ensure accurate medical records and follow-up for telephone, online, and after-hours patient consultations.

- Keep MEMO-Snap™ with you for telephone notes while on call or on the go. The pad's vinyl cover has a pocket for storing completed forms.
- Capture and document telephone encounters for completion of the patient medical record.
- Check boxes to alert support staff to patient follow-up, new medications, transcription, coding/billing.
- Visit www.memo-snap.com for tips on using MEMO-Snap™ and for up-to-date information on coding and reimbursement for telephone care.

MEMO-Snap™
Medical Memo & Coding Management

Date _____ Time _____ F/U Appt
 Patient _____ Chart
 Caller _____ Billing
 Phone Number _____ AM PM
 Chief Complaint _____
 Assessment _____

Discuss and advise **Action**
 Rx to Pharmacy _____
 order lab work _____
 call for office visit in _____ days/weeks
 Other _____

Coding
 _____ minutes spent in telephone medical discussion
 billable not billable

Telephone service
 5-10 minutes
 11-20 minutes
 21-30 minutes
 Online encounter

Physician	NPP
99441	98965
99442	98967
99443	98968
99444	98969

Signature _____

Get a free sample of MEMO-Snap™ OnCall Medical Memo & Coding Management Pads, our exclusive point-of-prescription Patient Consult tool. Just be one of the first 500 physicians to download the FREE *Doctor's Digest* "Essential Practice Tips" App in the Medical Category on your iPhone and provide your e-mail address at the opt-in.

inquiries from prospective patients—is to gain free media exposure, i.e., publicity. You can generate news mentions in the press—online or elsewhere—by way of interviews with journalists or information gleaned from your news releases (also known as press releases). Publicity is generally considered 10 times

"Think in terms of the questions you get asked most often in your practice, and turn them into tip sheets that will help the community," says Marcia Layton Turner, author of *The Unofficial Guide to Marketing Your Small Business*.

more effective than paid promotion, such as advertising, because of the implied editorial endorsement of you as a knowledgeable source of information. However, because you can't purchase publicity, it is impossible for you to predict or control it. But most marketers agree that publicity's power far outweighs this lack of control.

"Publicity is especially important for primary or family care practitioners because they want to reach as wide an audience as possible with information about their practices," says Marcia Layton Turner, author of *The Unofficial Guide to Marketing Your Small Business*. "Publicity is a very cost-effective way to do that."

Medical practices and other small businesses are often surprised that their good work doesn't earn more media attention. The assumption is that when a practice offers exceptional outcomes or innovation, the resulting buzz will attract media coverage. Such a result is possible but unlikely. Follow these six steps to attract more media response:

1. Be proactive with the press, reaching out with press releases to share information of interest to a general audience.

2. Remember that what *you* think is newsworthy isn't necessarily interesting to the general population, although adding a new physician to your staff, moving to a new location, or hosting an information session on a health topic might garner a line in a local paper. Instead, look for unusual opportunities: you

might provide a local angle on a national news story, offer a counter-intuitive position on a current topic, or provide an expert viewpoint on a prime-time TV drama storyline in your field.

When these opportunities arise, fax or e-mail a release stating your availability to be interviewed, with a short biography, to the appropriate media contact; or write an opinion article and submit it to your local newspaper.

3. Find the correct media gatekeeper—often the publication’s health or business reporter or editor. Contact the assignment editor at a television station, the news director at a radio station, or the producer for a talk show. For online media outlets, contact the Website content editor; for an e-zine or e-newsletter, contact the editor. (See “Getting the Word Out,” p. 65.)

4. Try writing a “tip sheet.” Offering medical tips or advice in a press release format is an ideal way to share helpful information with the community; for example, “Six ways to prevent dry skin in winter.” Introduce the tips by naming yourself: “Dr. Henry Jones, an internist at the Smith Medical Center, offers these tips for lowering your cholesterol without medication.” Then list your tips with bullets or numbers. Make the tips brief and action oriented, using a “do” and “don’t” format. Back up your tips with statistics and quotes. Conclude with a paragraph describing your practice.

“Think in terms of the questions you get asked most often in your practice, and turn them into tip sheets that will help the community,” Ms. Turner says.

5. Send a short e-mail or make a phone call to “pitch” an article or broadcast interview idea. Send the news release in the body of an e-mail message, not as an attachment, because journalists—like so many others—worry about viruses in attachments. (See “Press Release Template,” p. 66).

To make sure your idea receives serious consideration, include any data that prove your point, indicate that you have patients

Easiest Registration Ever!



Now when you register to access the new 1.1 version of *Doctor's Digest's iPhone/iTouch App*, all you have to do is include your specialty designation. What are you waiting for?

who agree to be interviewed (when appropriate), and suggest other thought leaders who might be interviewed. Include supporting background information such as journal articles, links to online information, or any press releases or tip sheets you've written previously on the topic.

Make certain that all press releases and tip sheets appear on your practice's Website so reporters will find them when they use search engines for topic research. Include links to news coverage of your practice if available.

6. Prepare to be interviewed in case the reporter or editor wants more information. Make a list of questions you would ask if you were interviewing an expert on the subject you've promoted; then practice answering them, making certain that some of your answers incorporate the marketing messages you defined for yourself and your practice in Chapter 2. (See "Five Tips for a Successful Media Interview," below.)

Connecting With Direct Mail

Certain marketing campaigns can be executed with a media relations campaign using some of the tools and techniques just discussed. But you may also need to use direct mail and advertisements in the Yellow Pages and newspapers. Certain types of

Five Tips for a Successful Media Interview

If all goes well, your publicity efforts will result in a call from a reporter or editor, who may want to interview you for more information. To make the most of this opportunity, follow these guidelines:

- 1. Avoid medical jargon.**
- 2. Spell out** uncommon medical terms.
- Be quotable by learning how to **speak in "sound bites,"** those pithy phrases that are so clever, counterintuitive, or memorable that they are almost certain to be used.
- Consider investing in **professional media training** if you will be doing high-profile television interviews.
- Respond as promptly as possible to a journalist's call.** Reporters often have immediate deadlines and will move on to another source if you are unavailable.

Getting the Word Out

Here are resources to help you easily find the right media contact as you implement your marketing effort:

Bacon's media directories: These come as separate directories for the Internet, newspapers, magazines, radio, etc. Find them at any library reference desk, or consult online Gebbie Press's All-in-One Directory (<http://www.gebbieinc.com>).

Specialized online resources: You can also tap into one of these to help you compile a list. Examples include Yahoo!'s News and Media Web Directories (http://dir.yahoo.com/News_and_Media/Web_Directories).

Online distribution services: For widespread press release distribution, consider a reputable online service such as Cision (www.us.cision.com) or PRWeb (www.prweb.com), which let you completely outsource the press release distribution process by creating, updating, and storing your custom media list and sending your news releases to it.

campaigns will also benefit from radio and television advertising and even billboards.

Marketing experts recommend direct mail when you want to reach specific market segments and to include as few people outside your target audience as possible. Because direct mail delivers its information literally into the hands of its audience, it has a longer shelf life than other forms of promotion.

While many businesses prefer e-mail marketing in order to avoid printing and postage expenses, a recent survey underscores the need to provide information in whatever form the target customer prefers, not what's best for you as marketer. Although it may seem everyone prefers e-mail, that's not necessarily true. For example, a 2008 Pitney Bowes survey of more than 1,000 people found that half preferred looking in their mailbox for marketing messages (<http://www.advdirectinc.com>). In addition, more than 90 percent said they had taken action on promotional offers they received in the mail in the past year.

Printed and mailed newsletters are another option for physicians, says David H. Wong, DDS, a Tulsa, Okla., consultant on referral generation. His own print newsletter uses a standard approach that incorporates front-office news, an article or two

offering timely and often general medical news, and a page of light information that includes inspirational quotes. “It’s part entertainment, part information,” he says.

Newsletters that get read—and even saved—emphasize helpful information rather than promotion. They help patients and staff develop relationships with each other through employee and patient spotlight features, share important information about changes or development in the office’s operations, and offer how-to material that can improve the reader’s health. The newsletters don’t need to be long—perhaps two to four pages—and the tone should reflect your marketing message. You can send the newsletters not only to current patients, but also to

Press Release Template

Follow these guidelines to create an effective press release:

1. **State the release date.** Most press releases can be used immediately. If that’s the case, write FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE across the top. If the information can’t be used before a specific date or time, write FOR RELEASE ON (INSERT DATE).
2. **Name the person** in your practice who should get inquiries from reporters. This person must be in a position to respond quickly. Include name, telephone number, and e-mail address.
3. Write an **attention-getting headline.** Announce the release subject with active verbs and colorful words. Craft an attention-getting, accurate headline.
4. Be sure to **include the basics:** who, what, where, when, why, and how. These details should be in the first one to three paragraphs.
5. Begin with a **one-sentence summary of your news.** In a second sentence add a few more details. Read them over. Make sure the sentences aren’t too long.
6. Is **a quote** from someone in the practice appropriate? This is where you can share your opinion. Once you’ve covered all the essentials, present any secondary information. This is a good place to use messages you created in Chapter 2.
7. Conclude with **a paragraph that summarizes** your practice in a few sentences. Use this same concluding paragraph (known as a “boilerplate”) in all your press releases.

inquiring prospects, past patients, and local doctors who are in a position to make referrals.

While publishing monthly is ideal, most practices find that schedule unrealistic. You may find it easier to outsource the project to publishing companies that produce customized newsletters with primarily generic content, such as The Newsletter Company (www.thenewslettercompany.com). Most practices can maintain a bimonthly schedule, but some prefer a quarterly format; experts say a lesser frequency isn't effective.

If you are interested in generating a national audience, you can also publish weekly, biweekly, or monthly e-newsletters or e-zines sent via e-mail to a database generated by a simple online subscription process. Ask your Webmaster how to add a newsletter sign-up option to your practice Website. In addition, ask for recommendations on free or inexpensive services available from companies such as ConstantContact (www.constantcontact.com) or iContact (www.icontact.com) that help professionals produce and distribute electronic newsletters.

Other types of direct mail promotion may work well to introduce a new practice, welcome a new practice member, or announce a new service. When developing a direct mail campaign, make sure that you have clear objectives to ensure that the mailing piece—in both text and graphics—is effective.

Postcards are popular because they are less expensive to print and mail than more elaborate marketing materials. In addition, well-designed postcards can grab attention and communicate quickly, clearly, and effectively. When the University of Kansas Hospital wanted to promote its atrial fibrillation treatment, it sent postcards to a carefully targeted mailing list of about 40,000 who would be most interested in this type of service. The mailing generated inquiries from nearly 1,500 recipients. “With direct mail, we can build a relationship with an individual patient and increase customer loyalty through relevant and

Download **Doctor's Digest's "Essential Practice Tips" App**



in the Medical Category on your **iPhone/iTouch** and provide your e-mail address at the opt-in to get a free sample of

MEMO-Snap™ Medical Memo & Coding Management Pads.

personalized communication,” says Julie Amor, the hospital’s director of marketing.

Newspaper advertising is often recommended... when the goal is to reach as many people as possible in a certain demographic. This would be a good choice if you're opening a practice, adding a clinician in a position to accept new patients, or hosting an educational session.

Most practices are accustomed to using postcards for appointment or scheduling reminders, but they don’t realize they can also use them as a marketing tool:

- Introducing patients and prospects to new employees
- Announcing a location change or addition
- Promoting additional services or products
- Announcing changes in office hours
- Promoting special events (e.g., open house, educational session, or support group)

Postcards can be produced using local design, printing, and mailing resources, but a number of online services such as PostcardMania (*PostcardMania.com*) and VistaPrint (*VistaPrint.com*) offer printing services for do-it-yourselfers. PostcardMania can also help you select and purchase appropriate mailing lists and can provide addressing and mailing services.

For more personal communication about practice developments, consider letters. In addition, brochures may be a good choice to promote specific treatments or services.

When your mailing targets people who aren’t yet patients, a reputable list broker can help you secure a mailing list that meets your demographic criteria. The more specific you are, the more effective and targeted your list will be. Know as much as possible about your target audience—age, income range, gender, lifestyle, etc.—to help your broker deliver a list that will get results.

As with all other elements of the marketing campaign, you

should track direct mail results to determine their effectiveness. Evaluate a mailing that generates a low response to avoid repeating mistakes, and evaluate one that generates a good response in order to leverage elements or messages that prove successful.

Advertising in Traditional and Online Media

Unlike publicity, advertising gives the marketer total control over the message, including how and when it's delivered. Advertising is an excellent image-building tool. You may find it useful in several situations, but Ms. Pophal points to one outlet she says is a must for all growing medical practices: "Because of the local nature of medical services, physicians need to be in the Yellow Pages," she says. "Yes, people use the Internet to find medical information; but when doing an online search for a physician, you can get overwhelmed very quickly," she says.

She recommends that you take your competition's Yellow Pages ad into account when deciding on the size and look of your own ad. "You want to be positioned so that you become the provider of choice to the consumer who is making a decision about whom to call from the ads," she says. This might mean purchasing a larger ad or using a design that communicates more or less information than the competition. It also means using a design that is consistent with your own brand image.

With more than 147 million U.S. adults using the Internet, there's no question that if you are hoping to build a thriving practice, you should harness the power of the Internet. Pay-per-click, also known as search engine marketing, is perhaps the most common form of online advertising for businesses of all types and sizes. Popular provider Google Adwords (<http://adwords.google.com>) allows marketers to select the search terms they will pay for, decide how much they want to pay, and set a monthly budget. Advertisers pay only when a search engine user clicks onto the ad, which appears as text at the top of the search page or on the right, alongside what marketers refer to as "organic" search results. "Organic" search



moxatag[™]
(amoxicillin extended-release tablets)

www.moxatag.com
Please see Advertisement
and Brief Summary
inside publication.

results are those that happen naturally, without the aid of advertising devices such as pay-per-click programs.

Google provides helpful feedback on the per-click cost, which helps advertisers determine their per-click rate and the amount they should budget to pay for this use each month. In addition,

Although rarely announced, sponsorship fees sometime drop as the event draws closer and organizers scramble to raise money. If an event is desirable but too pricey, ask again at deadline to see if there's any flexibility.

marketers can add parameters so that an ad is seen only by search-engine users in a specified market area. To find a qualified Internet consultant, visit the Search Engine Marketing Professional Organization site at www.sempo.org.

For certain purposes, consider other advertising media:

Newspaper advertising is often recommended for making timely announcements of interest to a wide audience, particularly when the goal is to reach as many people as possible in a certain demographic. This would be a good choice if you're opening a practice, adding a clinician in a position to accept new patients, or hosting an educational session. Because different media outlets attract different population demographics, you may need to use more than one advertising medium, if your budget allows, to reach your goals.

Print (as opposed to online) newspapers are a particularly good way to reach relatively older people. Although newspapers can be effective and affordable vehicles, they are struggling with changes in how Americans get their news.

Radio reaches a wide demographic. According to the Radio Advertising Bureau, 94 percent of all consumers listen to radio every week. This medium is particularly strong among African-American and Hispanic consumers. According to the Radio Advertising Bureau, radio reaches 95 percent of African-Americans and 96 percent of Hispanics 12 years of age and older.

Producing a quality commercial for your practice makes

television advertising very expensive. However, television is a better value today than it was 20 years ago because the highly segmented cable networks make it easier to reach a specific population. Many local businesses reduce their production costs by working with the local television station to produce their commercial. If you are working with an advertising agency or marketing consultant already, trust their recommendations on how to develop the most effective advertising materials.

To build your image consider using **outdoor media** such as billboards; ads on the sides of busses, bus shelters, or benches; or even mobile billboards on trucks. Outdoor advertising works best in combination with other forms of paid media to keep your practice name top of mind when the consumer eventually needs your service or specialty. Billboards work particularly well in high-traffic locations, especially when combined with radio ads that run during popular “drive times.” The target audience—the commuter—sees the marketing message on billboards during the same time period in which he hears it on the radio.

Specialty ads in the right publication can be powerful in developing or solidifying relationships with patients. For example, an internist might consider placing an ad in the program for a concert that is the fundraising event for a favorite charity; a pediatrician desiring a strong presence in a specific community could advertise in programs distributed at athletic events, high school yearbooks, and parent-teacher association publications.

Is Sponsorship Appropriate?

A well-chosen sponsorship can help increase your practice’s visibility with current and potential patients in a cost-effective way. Before making any decisions, consider your practice image. If one of your hallmarks is promoting preventive care, don’t link with an event that showcases risky behavior, such as an auto

Coming Soon! *Doctor’s Money Digest*

Questions about loan reduction? Investing? Retirement planning? Get a free subscription to our new quarterly online publication, *Doctor’s Money Digest*, that will address these and other topics. Just opt in for a free e-subscription to *Doctor’s Digest* on your iPhone/iTouch.



race, even if the demographics are a good fit. Associating with an event whose image isn't consistent with yours will only confuse your target audience.

Here are some examples of sponsorships that work:

- Geriatricians could have a presence at events hosted by a local group that advocates for the elderly.
- A cardiologist's staff could be recruited to volunteer at a 10K run—wearing branded t-shirts promoting the practice, of course.

Other sponsorship opportunities include fundraising lunches or dinners, sporting events or tournaments, awards events, festivals, cultural performances, and health expos. Before committing to one of these events, ask yourself these key questions:

Is the sponsorship a good fit with my practice and its particular goals?

Making sure it's a good fit might seem obvious, but this factor is often ignored as personal interests override business sense. Leaders of organizations large and small have been known to base sponsorship decisions not on "fit" but on "favorites." For example, perhaps the physician who can authorize an expense of this size is an avid golfer who would welcome an opportunity to play in a pro-am tournament with a celebrity. It may be a good choice if it's a good referral-source networking opportunity, but not if you have to look hard for a business reason to justify your becoming involved. On the other hand, a golf tournament benefiting a summer camp for children with cancer could be a good fit for a pediatric oncologist. Primary care physicians are more likely to base sponsorship decisions on geography, supporting events in communities where their patients live.

Does the sponsorship reach my target audience?

Look for events that get your practice name in front of your target audience. As you know, you may be marketing to multiple audiences. Ask your patients what events they support or participate in. If you find common ground among them, chances are you'll find more patients like them at those events. Are you targeting a specific category of physicians for referrals? Find out if they participate in regular meetings or conferences, then find

ways to have a presence at those meetings through sponsorships. Is your target audience women in a certain age range? You might reach them by sponsoring events hosted by women's professional networking groups, such as the National Association of Women Business Owners, or social groups like Junior League.

Will the sponsorship help my practice reach its specific marketing goal?

Keeping your marketing goal in mind will narrow the options even further. A practice working to build its image might select only those opportunities that provide sponsor advertising in an event booklet or onsite-signage. If the goal is to build a mailing list, look for programs that allow you to collect names and addresses for a raffle or door prize. If an event organizer presents you with sponsorship options that don't meet your marketing needs, explain what you need. You may receive a custom proposal that will work for you.

Is it affordable? If not, is the rate flexible?

Sponsorship fees can range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars for local events. If the lowest fee is \$2,500 and all you can spend is \$500, ask what they can offer for that amount. In addition, although rarely announced, fees sometime drop as the event draws closer and organizers scramble to raise money. If an event is desirable but too pricey, ask again at deadline to see if there's any flexibility. Also ask about donating staff time instead of dollars.

What's the track record?

Finally, before signing a contract, make certain the event organizers have a track record of producing well-run events that leave participants with a positive impression of all organizations involved. Talk to past sponsors and ask them if previous events have been well managed and worthwhile. Would they do it again? Why or why not?

Share What You Know With Public Speaking

One of the best ways to bring people into your practice is to share what you know about healthcare and medicine. Physicians

who speak to community groups enjoy the professional rewards that come with showcasing their expertise while providing information people need to improve their lives. Speaking to groups allows you to position yourself or your practice as an expert, to provide timely or valuable information on public health topics, and to generate publicity and awareness for the practice. The goal is to make a presentation that is informative and/or motivational, so that you leave the audience with a positive impression. You can host educational sessions in your office, or through Webinars, seminars held over the Internet. Ask local groups such as Kiwanis or Rotary about their needs for speakers and see if their needs fit your plan.

To find the right outlet, first identify organizations or groups that attract members in your target audience by scanning a newspaper's calendar of events or asking the library for a directory of local clubs and organizations. Next, select a few topics that you know your target audience is interested in; you could use one of your "tips" from your tip sheets as a starting point. Other potential topics can come from the most frequently asked questions in your practice. Depending on the audience, primary care physicians might talk about the role of nutrition in disease prevention, the top five health risks and how to reduce them, or how to communicate better with doctors.

Call or e-mail the appropriate person to discuss making a presentation. If e-mailing, send a message that outlines one or two topics you think members would be interested in and why. After you have scheduled your first presentation, outline your thoughts; but don't script your entire presentation. Instead, speak from notes so that you are engaged with the audience and present with a natural style. If you plan to speak regularly, consider joining a local Toastmasters chapter to get experience and feedback. (See "Ten Tips for Public Speaking," opposite.)

Always leave attendees with handouts, a copy of your PowerPoint presentation if you have one, or an article you've written that includes your contact information. Such a leave-behind is more appropriate than a practice brochure or a business card and more likely to get attention.

Ten Tips for Public Speaking

Here are some proven tips from Toastmasters International (www.toastmasters.org) on how to give better presentations:

1. **Know your material.** Pick a topic you are interested in. Know more about it than you include in your speech. Use humor, personal stories, and conversational language. That way you won't easily forget what to say.
2. **Practice. Practice. Practice!** Rehearse out loud with all equipment you plan to use. Revise as necessary. Work to control filler words. Practice, pause, and take a breath. Practice with a timer, and allow time for the unexpected.
3. **Know the audience.** Greet some of the audience members as they arrive. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to strangers.
4. **Know the room.** Arrive early, walk around the speaking area, and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.
5. **Relax.** Begin by addressing the audience. Smile and greet them by asking if they have enjoyed the event so far. This buys you time and calms your nerves. Pause, smile, and count to three before saying anything. Transform nervous energy into enthusiasm.
6. **Visualize yourself giving your speech.** Imagine yourself speaking, your voice loud, clear, and confident. Visualize the audience rooting for you.
7. **Concentrate on the message, not the medium.** Focus your attention away from your own anxieties, and concentrate on your message and your audience.
8. **Realize that people want you to succeed.** Audiences want you to be interesting, stimulating, informative, and entertaining.
9. **Don't apologize for any nervousness or problem.** The audience probably never noticed it.
10. **Gain experience.** Your speech should represent you as an authority and as a person. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking.