



KEEPING YOUR PRACTICE TOP OF MIND IN TODAY'S ECONOMY

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Even with inflation cooling, your practice might be noticing a decrease in patients' spending on elective procedures (LASIK, premium IOLs, etc.). To respond to these trends, you can employ strategic marketing tactics to weather the storm of fluctuating economics and keep your lead and surgery numbers consistent.

Cutting back on your marketing efforts now to save money will make your practice invisible; it is necessary to stay current on multiple platforms. As always, frequency is key. During a "normal" buying process where there are no economic worries, it takes eight to twelve interactions with a person to move them from "first inquiry" to "purchase." When the economy erects barriers, you might need additional connections to bring that person closer to "purchase."

Rather than focusing on what you can't control (poor consumer confidence, war, politics, natural disasters), concentrate on what you can control:

- Patient experience
- Consistent communication
- Solicitation of reviews
- Community involvement
- Online engagement

PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Price-motivated shoppers are back, so your practice needs to exceed patient expectations at every engagement: online, on the phone, and in the office. Provide ways to schedule appointments online and ensure that your website is fresh and easy to navigate. Make sure your staff can answer common questions, address patient concerns, and explain why they should choose your practice over your competitors.

CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Connect regularly with the various groups that contribute to the success of your business:

- **Staff.** Schedule daily morning huddles to discuss the challenges of the day. Inform them of changes throughout the practice. Hold training sessions to explain the benefits of your

IN A BLINK

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2. Concentrate on what you can control.
3. Begin with the end goal in mind.

technologies, your post-op processes, techniques for dealing with frustrated patients, etc. Recognize their hard work—they are most likely overworked and emotionally taxed.

- **Referring doctors.** Send monthly newsletters to keep your referral network informed about your services, technology updates, changes in your practice, etc. Regular communication is particularly important for co-managing partners, especially when informing them of their referred patients' progress with you (including billing processes).

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- **Care coordinator.** Arrange for a dedicated contact in your practice to receive and process faxes, emails, and phone calls from referring doctors. This individual or group of people can act as the bridge between the outside provider, the patient, and the practice.
- **Leads.** Send monthly newsletters and create a series of “drip” emails to keep your practice and your procedures top of mind. Provide education and lifestyle benefits of your procedures in these communications and include easy calls-to-action.
- **Current patients.** Send monthly newsletters to stay in constant contact. Help patients prepare for appointments by sending emails and texts with educational information so they will know what to expect (including the appointment length), surgery upgrade options, pre-appointment online paperwork to complete (patient portal), etc. The more information your practice can collect online or via phone calls, the better.

SOLICITATION OF REVIEWS

When consumers are hesitant about spending their hard-earned cash, social proof can often be the incentive they need to buy from you instead of the competition. If you don't have many (or any) user reviews or testimonials, now is the time to start asking patients for reviews. Make sure reviews

are prominently featured on your website and in your marketing materials. Respond to all online reviews—the positive and the negative—to show you appreciate the feedback and care about the patient experience.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Participation in local events; flyers around the neighborhood; special discounts for businesses, teachers, or first responders; and other guerrilla marketing tactics can make a big impact for a low cost. It shows you are invested in the community.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

Build social proof that your practice is the best choice for eyecare. This can be accomplished by sharing practice videos, patient testimonials, and more. Ensure all online local business listings contain the correct information for your practice (phone numbers, addresses, website address, hours of operation, etc.). Speaking of websites, routinely audit your search engine ranking for top procedures/keywords and make changes to your search engine optimization (SEO) regularly to stay on top of search results.

BEGIN AT THE END

Before you embark on these tactics, determine what goals you are hoping to achieve and what steps should be taken to promote success. For example, regarding the patient experience:

- Do you need to implement an upgraded CRM to help with

communications or billing? Would a knowledgeable call center be advantageous to help reduce your on-hold wait times?

- Should you invest in new technologies to improve vision outcomes?
- Does your staff need training in how to handle inquiries, welcome patients by name, respond to frustrated patients, apologize for long wait-times, or power-pass patients through the office?
- Should you hire designated surgical consultants to help patients fully understand their options in plain language, explain insurance and financing, and take time to fully review educational materials and answer all questions?

The bottom line: Keep your practice visible everywhere prospective patients spend their time: online, throughout the community, while working, and socially. When patients are financially ready for an elective procedure, your practice will be the obvious choice. **AE**



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