

Keep Your Eye on the Target When Marketing Your Practice

You have probably heard the saying, “You can’t hit a target if you don’t know where to aim.” After all, the objective isn’t to just fire shots randomly, especially when those shots are your marketing dollars and human resources. It takes careful aim and analysis before firing to hit the bullseye with as few arrows as possible. To effectively market your medical practice it is also important to take careful aim by defining your target markets before taking a shot at setting your marketing strategy. Defining your target markets isn’t just a listing of the specialties that refer you patients. That is simply scratching the surface of the important characteristics that define your target. The information below will help you better define your target markets. It will give you a better understanding of who your marketing efforts are aimed at, what their needs are, and where to find them.

Who is your customer?

That’s right, your customer! You probably think in terms of patient, referring physician, or insurance company, but the fact is that each of these groups in general is your customer. The first phase of defining your target market is to start at the general level of understanding by documenting the demographic profile of your current “customers.” What region do your patients and referrals come from? This will define the target area for your marketing. What services are typically requested or performed? This may help identify referral characteristics and service utilization. A lot of

the profile information you can obtain by analyzing your patient and referral data, while other details are common knowledge obtained over time. Whichever the case, document this profile information as a helpful reference moving forward and as a benchmark for future comparison.

What are your customer’s needs?

Conducting a needs assessment of your target market groups is an essential step that you will refer back to on an ongoing basis as you later develop your marketing strategies. Your services and marketing messages will ultimately need to address and meet the needs of your customers in order to be effective. Each target group will have common as well as differing needs. The referral source has the need to know that their patient will receive quality medical care but they also need a smooth referral process and timely reporting following the appointment. Insurance companies may need cost-effective providers who file timely reports. Patients need good quality medical care, but they also may need something as basic as easy directions to your office and information on what to expect in advance of their appointment.

Who refers you patients?

Now it’s time to get specific. What are the specific target market segments? In general, you probably know the medical specialties and groups that most often refer to your practice. Start with the general segments and then expand the list to more specific targeted groups.

For instance, orthopedic referrals may be one of the segments. Start with orthopedics and then list the current and potential orthopedic targets under that category. Workers’ Compensation insurers may also be a referral source. Start building a list of the current and potential specific insurers that you want to target.

Through this defining process, you are building a complete profile of your marketing targets. Your marketing message to each of these groups can then be developed based on your assessment of each group’s needs. This thoughtful, upfront planning will help you focus your efforts and valuable marketing dollars as you move forward.

Defining Your Target Markets

- Develop a demographic profile that describes who is in your general target market groups.
- Define the common and unique needs of each target market group.
- Outline your referral sources into market segments.
- Common Medical Specialty Target Markets:
 - Orthopedics
 - Rheumatology
 - Family Practice
 - Internal Medicine
 - Pain Management

Define Your Target Markets

(Sample Worksheet)

Who is Your Customer?

Define the demographic target market region for your practice:

Referral Sources: _____

Patients: _____

List the medical specialty referral sources for your practice within the above region:

List specific referral groups within each of the above specialty sources:

Needs Assessment

List the specific needs and expectations for each of the above target groups:

Referral Sources: _____

Patients: _____

