

Insight Sue Crampton

WITH



Marketing Savvy – unlocking the secrets to effective practice marketing

Many practices across the globe are finding the generation of new business, using traditional methods, increasingly difficult to sustain. With slower economic times, our clients are being bombarded with television commercials, newspaper advertisements, direct mail and sales calls. Someone is always trying to sell something. So how do we stand out from the crowd and develop smart and efficient marketing strategies to draw business to our practices?

Marketing Planning

Have you ever had a good idea but lacked the strategies to implement it successfully? Effective marketing results from managing and coordinating key activities by having a marketing plan. This doesn't mean an academic dissertation but a brief, yet thorough working document.

Preparing a marketing plan allows you to:

- 1 Analyse your competitive strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; who your target markets are; what you know about your market's needs, wants, attitudes and buying patterns; your competitors
- 2 Plan how to achieve your practice goals through your product/service offerings, pricing, and promotional strategies
- 3 Implement your plans well by defining what specific actions need to be done, by whom and by when
- 4 Control your marketing efforts by monitoring and reviewing your results, so that you can improve every aspect of what you are doing.

A marketing plan is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It can be likened to the tracks that a train runs on; without it the train cannot get anywhere. So, does being a small business excuse you from not having a marketing plan? Again like a train, whether it is a 16 car or four car train, it still needs tracks to run on to get to its destination.

Some practices actually view their marketing plans as their "bible," however I believe it is in the act of planning where the real value of a marketing plan is. Market planning

encompasses the processes of identification of appropriate markets, assessment of these markets, development of relevant marketing strategies and development of appropriate action programmes to implement strategies. Planning involves the specification of a 'blueprint' which, if followed will fruitfully carry out the strategies which the practice intended to carry out.

Practice Campaign Development

Marketing facilitates the exchange process by carefully examining the needs and wants of consumers, developing a product or service that satisfies these needs, offering it at a certain price, making it available through a particular place or channel of distribution, and developing a program of promotion or communication to create awareness and interest. Determining the proper campaign does not just happen. Practices must know the issues and options involved in decisions regarding each element of the mix. They must also be aware of how these elements interact and how they can be combined to provide an effective campaign. Developing a marketing campaign requires the market to be analysed through consumer research. That information is to be utilised in developing an overall campaign strategy.

Consider these things when you are developing your marketing campaign:

- 1 What are the specific needs and wants of your clients. Does this product or service satisfy?
- 2 Does it give clients a real advantage and what is that advantage?
- 3 What are the specific traits of your target audience?
- 4 What emotion is associated with your product or service?
- 5 Is the advertising message relevant, timely and meaningful to potential clients?
- 6 Does the execution of your campaign fit and reflect your practice's values, mission and desired position in the community?

The Customer Care Element

Few will argue that providing exceptional customer service gives a practice an edge over its competitors. Maximising your relationships with your clients can often be the most powerful marketing tool. Is it also important to ensure your staff are providing the standard of service you say you do in your marketing! Consider some of the steps in building the customer care element into your next marketing plan.

- 1 **Learn what your clients really expect from your relationship**
Go ahead, ask. It may seem awkward but you'll get to love this way of uncovering expectations.
- 2 **Assess how well you're performing from your client's perspective**
Once you know what's on your 'exam,' see if you're getting a passing grade or not.
- 3 **Feel comfortable acknowledging your error if you've let your clients down**
Learn to say, "I let you down." I may mean the difference between keeping or losing a client.
- 4 **Address any aspect of your business that's compromising your clients**
If any area of your business is 'failing' your client, see that you correct it.

- 5 **Monitor your performance with your clients on a regular basis**
Vigilance is essential to your success. Stay on top of how you're doing from your clients viewpoint. Work hard to always perform in alignment with your client's expectations.

Ensuring you address the customer service component in a marketing plan will ensure your employees are motivated, clients are loyal, and competitors are nervous!

Sue Crampton is the lead consultant for Crampton Consulting Group (incorporating Animal Industries Resource Centre). In August this year Provet CCG will deliver its third instalment in the 'Insight Leadership' Boot Camp Series. The Marketing Savvy Boot Camp will assist you to develop your practice's marketing plan whilst learning about campaign development and customer service planning. If you would like more information, contact the AIRC/CCG office on 07 3289 1900 or speak to your Provet Business Account Manager.

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