

No Formal Training Required

Proven Marketing
Strategies
for Urgent Care
Centers

Branding

Customer
Satisfaction

Internet
Marketing

Social
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Sponsoring

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TINA S. BELL

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Urgent Care Marketing Book
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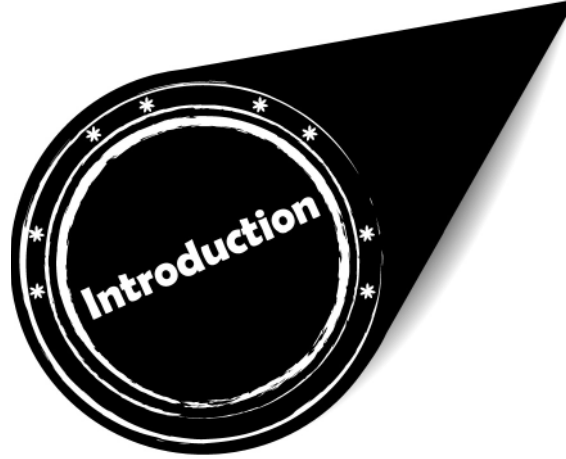
*A Success Tree is only able to grow as tall
and strong as the roots it has been fortunate
enough to develop over time.*

*The roots of my Success Tree's are strong today because
of the seed for knowledge my mother first planted many
years ago as she would read to me
and encourage me to write letters and never stop learning.*

*Over the years my Success Tree has continued to
grow and prosper because of the nourishment and
encouragement my mother has showered it with.*

*Without her inspiration and guidance, I would not
be where I am today. Mom, this book is dedicated
to you - a woman whom I credit all of my
success in life to.*

*Thank you for your help and guidance in making sure
my Success Tree continues to branch for years to come!*



No Formal Training Required

"Because the purpose of business is to create a customer, the business enterprise has two—and only two—basic functions: marketing and innovation."

-Peter Drucker

Growing up, my dream was to be an elementary school teacher, but after a foreign exchange trip to Germany in high school, I declared my major in college would be international relations. I dreamed of working for the United Nations or being an ambassador for the United States to a foreign country. I had planned to spend two years in the Peace Corps teaching English or helping a third world country in some other way. The closest I came to those dreams was when I was awarded a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to study at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland for a year, where my two favorite subjects were both electives: German and Sociology. My core class, Comparing the Political Systems of the United Kingdom, France, and Russia was to say the least, not interesting to me. As I sat in the small lecture group each week debating these political systems one-on-one, two things happened. First, I would inevitably leave each class with a headache. Second, I realized a career in foreign or domestic policy wasn't for me.

Upon returning to Texas to finish my Bachelor's of Arts degree I was faced with two dilemmas: What should I do with the rest of my life, and what was my new major going to be? I finally decided on

finishing my degree at Sam Houston State University, where I would focus on public relations. Their program was particularly appealing because the public relations degree was combined with studying journalism and mass communication. I had always loved to write, and I soon found the journalism side of the degree much more interesting than the public relations side. Nonetheless, I only took two journalism classes in college.

When I graduated from the university in December 2005, I had already taken my first professional job. I was working as a reporter for *The Madisonville Meteor*, a paper in a small Texas town of about 3500 people. I loved my job. I had breezed through my interview that November with the publisher of the paper, but landing the job meant I had to be able to cover a boy's basketball game the following Friday night. One small problem ... I knew very little about high school basketball. I was, however, good at writing feature stories. So I called the basketball coach, explained my dilemma, and asked if he'd like some great publicity for his team in exchange for a bit of help covering the game. We created a win-win formula. And that's when I officially adopted the motto that would shape my career's success, "Fake it until you make it!"

One month, and exactly 8 news and 4 sports stories into my career as a journalist, the publisher quit his position. He wasn't suited for small town Texas life. That left me in charge of running a small town newspaper by myself, a role I relished for the next eight months. The regional manager of the publication continually bided his time in filling the position by telling me they were looking for someone to fill the publisher role. It never happened. I'm not sure where they were looking, but eight months into my role, I realized I didn't need a publisher. I was quite capable of successfully running a weekly newspaper by myself.

For a measly \$18,000 a year I worked day and night covering every single news story I could find to cover. I was at sporting events, school board and city council meetings, wrecks, fires, county court, and community events. Occasionally I got lucky and a breaking news story that would shock the town would land on my doorstep. What I quickly learned though was people were only willing to help supply me with an endless array of news stories if they knew I had

their best interests at heart. John Maxwell put it best when he wrote, *“People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”* I would later adapt those words into my original “Fake it ‘til you make it” motto.

After eight months of working for the newspaper, I was burned out. Additionally, without even considering to offer me the publisher position, I received notice the regional manager had decided to move the publisher of a different paper over to be the publisher of the paper I’d put my heart and soul into for the previous eight months. In my mid-20s at the time, I didn’t like the idea of having someone coming in and taking over “my” paper. I didn’t know what changes would be in store, but I knew one thing...my life needed a change. So I began applying for jobs. I landed a job as the marketing coordinator for an industrial pipeline supply manufacturer in Southwest Arkansas. I was excited because it instantly doubled the salary I’d been making, and they were hiring me despite my total lack of marketing experience. I knew nothing about industrial marketing, but I did know Quark Express, a publishing software I’d trained on in both college and at the newspaper. As it turned out, the marketing director for the company was in a pinch. His marketing coordinator had up and left right at deadline time for the company’s new price book. He needed someone who knew Quark Express, and I needed a new job. It was a win-win situation. Any other time, my guess is I would have never scored a job working as part of a multi-million dollar company’s sales and marketing team with no marketing background and no clue about the industry. But they needed a skill, and I was the only applicant who had it. Once the price book was completed, I began studying the industry and picking up marketing books to help me become successful at my job.

I quickly learned marketing industrial products was not my life’s calling. Much like the international relations class I had taken in Scotland, I was bored by the job. Creativity wasn’t really allowed, as most of the marketing materials centered on the features of the products, their ratings, and technical information that the engineers enjoyed helping craft, but I found rather mundane. Social media and PPC campaigns were really starting to take off in internet marketing at the time, but the administrative team I was working with didn’t really see a use for them. I did get to work on the

website redesign team, where I began to dabble in HTML by learning how to update the website on my own. Our IT Administrator was more than willing to teach me in his “spare” time, as it meant one less project he ultimately had to do. In the end, the company paid \$10,000 to a firm out of San Antonio, Texas to completely rebuild their website. Five years later, they’d rebuild the website yet again.

By September of 2008, I dreaded going to work. My skills were not being challenged, and I really felt more like a secretary to our marketing director than part of a team. My projects were the same – update a brochure, update an ad, send out a press release, update a price book, etc... Basically I was the computer design whiz, but I could only design within the parameters of what had been designed in the 30 years before me. Who was I to question their thinking? They were, after all, the industry leader in their field. I just often wondered had they branched out and tried different things, what other markets might they have conquered?

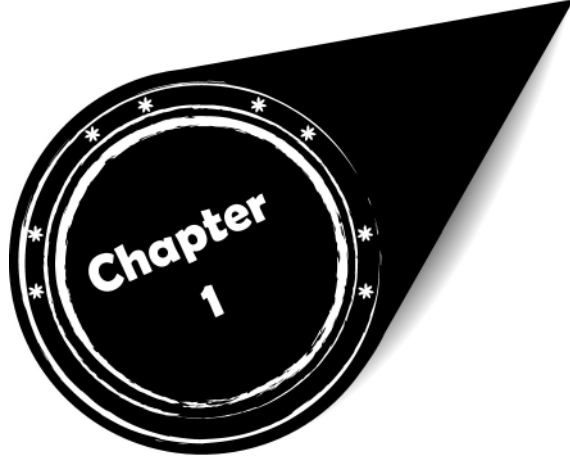
I began searching for a career move that would afford me more freedom to utilize both my creative and my analytical skills. As I searched the newspaper and on-line job boards for a new position I ran across an ad for a local urgent care center. They had just opened their second urgent care and were looking for someone who was both willing to travel to another town to grow awareness there, and who was also willing to improve their marketing efforts in their hometown. It sounded interesting. I really didn’t have any of the skills they had listed, and I knew nothing about the medical industry per say, but I was eager to take on the challenge. I updated my portfolio binder and resume, and within a week, I had an interview scheduled. I researched sample marketing interview questions and answers and felt confident I would land the new position. An hour after leaving the interview I was standing in Books-A-Million when my phone rang. The job offer was less than I was making in my current position, but I didn’t care. I accepted it, and two weeks later I started my career as marketing director for an urgent care center.

There was no formal training program. In fact, there was no training program at all. I shared an office with the company’s director of human resources – who doubled as the director of occupational med-

icine. She gave me a copy of the company handbook and showed me around the clinic. That was my training. The week I started the owners were on a family vacation to Disneyworld, and I had no clue what I was supposed to be doing. When I turned on my computer for the first time I wanted to cry. I didn't even have a copy of Microsoft Office, let alone a copy of Adobe Creative Suite or any other form of desktop publishing. Since I knew it was my job to make the marketing department successful, I went out and purchased a license of Adobe Creative Suite on my own, and the HR Director bought me a copy of Microsoft Office.

I spent my first full day on the job going through the 12 file folders outlining all of the marketing they had done in the past. They had paid a local graphic design artist \$800 for a brochure that I was less than impressed with. Their four page website was being managed by a lady out of Indiana, and it too, was less than impressive. They were spending almost \$1000 a month on ads in the different Yellow Page directories. Other than that, I really didn't have a clue what the company was doing (or had done) for marketing. And my officemate couldn't give me much direction either. "That's why we hired you," I remember her saying, with a smile.

"Fake it 'til you make it," I reminded myself. I began scouring the web and bookstores for anything I could find about marketing an urgent care center. As it turns out, almost all of the information I could find was on hospital marketing, but it was a starting point. At the time, there wasn't a lot of information on running an urgent care center. Two years later I would cofound *Urgent Care Management Monthly* to help share pragmatic tips on urgent care marketing with others who found themselves in my shoes.



A New Era of Healthcare Marketing Understanding the Consumer Mindset

*"You can't do today's job with yesterday's
methods and be in business tomorrow."
-George W. Bush*

Urgent care centers are a unique brand of medicine, and they should be marketed in just that way. Unfortunately, many people are still marketing them the same way family practices and hospitals have been marketed for years. Perhaps that's because there's an unlimited amount of knowledge out there about how to market hospitals, but a limited number of resources on how to market urgent care. I knew from day one in my role as director of marketing for our urgent centers that falling into the copycat trap of doing what others are doing could cost us business success.

Family practices and hospitals focus a large portion of their advertising on recruiting referrals from other physicians. The language in their ads often reads like a Scrabble board, full of big words that few people understand. Additionally, there are numerous designations following a physician's name, a list of degrees, and a list of certifications. The images on their ads are doctors in white coats, conversing and sharing information. Sounds harmless, doesn't it?

Of course it sounds harmless. You have grown up in the medical community. You may be a doctor yourself, and you worked hard to earn those letters behind your name. If you are marketing to other doctors, the images and letters resonate with them. You speak the same language and enjoy the satisfaction that comes from making a diagnosis or sharing knowledge with coworkers. Unfortunately, you've entered a new era of medicine. If having those letters on your ads is important to you, you should put this book down and start a family practice. Urgent care is not about you. Urgent care medicine is all about the consumer, and your marketing must reflect this. While some of the patients who visit your urgent care center may come from family physician and emergency room referrals, they will make up a very small percentage of your overall customer base. So your marketing and branding campaigns must take on a whole new feel. They must promote the convenience and service aspects of your new healthcare business.

Understanding the Consumer's Mind: Shifting From Selling to Buying

The first step to understanding your new business is to understand the shift in how you must market to consumers. While other healthcare entities have a selling mentality, you must have a buying mentality. You can no longer think as though you are selling your urgent care services. People do not want to be sold to. Instead you must think like the people who are going to buy the services you offer. What are they looking for and what do they need to know in order to make the decision to buy from you?

No matter what product they are purchasing, customers go through a four step cycle in their buying process: attention, interest, desire, and action. Your marketing campaign must be ready to provide information to them at each step along the way. In urgent care, you may get a patient's interest with a catchy jingle playing on the radio or a billboard on the road as they're driving. Attention getting is what you are doing in your most basic advertising. Interest involves educating the consumer on how your urgent care center meets the needs they are seeking to have met. Desire is created by showing how you actually meet those needs. This is often accomplished through testimonials from other patients or videos highlighting the perks of visiting your urgent care center. Action is created when you

convince the person to actually walk into your urgent care center to be seen.

Before the internet, marketing healthcare was fairly easy. You told people what you wanted them to believe about your clinic, and unless someone else told them otherwise, they had to believe you. Selling was easy, and selling became the marketer's top choice. Today's healthcare consumer is savvier on all aspects of their care. Just ask one of the doctors on your staff. No doubt they'll be able to share stories with you on patients who come in with their own self diagnosis and prescription plan ready, all based on information they read on the internet. If they have spent the time researching their ailments, they have also spent the time researching you. From peer-to-peer sites like Facebook, to blogs, Google Rankings, Yelp, and even your own website, chances are your patients know more about your urgent care center than most people on your staff do.

What does this mean to you, the marketer? It means you now have to listen more and talk less. Patients who already know about you want to be heard. Listening is no longer an option in your sales pitch, it is a requirement. You must listen to what your patients tell you they want, and then you must figure out how to provide it. From great customer service, to less time spent waiting to be seen, this is exactly how urgent care medicine has evolved to being the new way people are getting healthcare. Urgent care business owners know they must listen to what the customer wants and successful marketers know how to deliver the message to the patient that those needs will be met.



Building Your Urgent Care's Brand

*"Brands are the express checkout for people living their lives at ever increasing speed."
- Brandweek*

Over the last several years there has been a shift from marketing to branding. In reality, marketing and branding your urgent care center should work hand-in-hand together. Marketing is simply the vehicle in which you deliver your brand's message. Branding is how you go about generating, converting and satisfying your patients. It is about creating a value and a feeling that your customers want to be part of so much so that they will visit you and only you for everything you can assist them with.

Edwin Artzt, a U.S. Business leader who served on the boards of leading U.S. Companies like Procter & Gamble, American Express, and Delta Airlines, described brand value like an onion: "It has layers and a core. The core is the user who will stick with you until the very end." The deeper you are able to layer your customers into your urgent care center brand, the greater bond there will be between them and your urgent care. If you can get them to the core of loyalty, they will stick with your urgent care forever because of the brand it represents.

So what is your urgent care's brand? At the very basic level, your brand is a proper noun. It is your name. It is the single idea that your center represents in your community. You may have multiple brand lines within your urgent care center, but they should all be based on the same single idea. Some people call this your unique selling position. Others call this your niche. For simplicity's sake, let's call it your focus. Your focus needs to be narrow. If you try to be everything to everyone, your clinic will wind up empty because no one will really know what you do. Your urgent care brand should position you as a specialist, not a generalist. You specialize in minor emergency care. If you attempt to specialize in minor emergency care and family medicine, you will confuse your patients. You specialize in walk-in, same day service. If you attempt to also specialize in appointments, you will anger your patients who think you are walk-in only. Get the picture?

Narrowing Your Focus is Key

When you think about PetsMart, you think about pet supplies. If PetsMart decided to start selling farm equipment too, even though farm equipment may be needed to take care of some of your animals, you would be confused. When you think about Home Depot, you think about home improvement products. If Home Depot started to sell groceries, even though they go in the refrigerator you buy at Home Depot, you would be confused. Foot Locker sells athletic shoes. If Foot Locker started selling women's dress shoes, you would be confused. What makes each of these companies successful in their marketing is they understand what it is they sell, and they make sure customers receive only that information during the buying cycle. Consumers are not receiving mixed messages about why they should visit one of those businesses.

You might be tempted to argue against this point. After all, stores like Wal-Mart seem to have no problem being the one-stop-shop for consumers. It's important to remember two things about the Wal-Mart model. First, they didn't start out as a one-stop-shop. They started out as the low-cost provider of consumer goods for the working class. Second, in 2009, Wal-Mart moved away from their roots as the blue-collar worker's department store and attempted to also lure in more affluent consumers. They even remodeled the insides of their stores to have a more upscale feel. What they ne-

glected to do was stay true to their original message. Their customer satisfaction scores went up, but their profit margin went down. In their effort to attract a different customer base, they changed their focus. That change also changed their bottom line.

Defining Your Target Audience

So what is your brand, and how do you get the right message out to the public? How do you avoid falling into the Wal-Mart trap of over expansion and targeting the wrong audience? Chances are you are more than just an urgent care clinic. You probably also offer occupational medicine, wellness medicine, DNA testing, allergy testing, travel medicine, and an array of other medical related services. You want your patients to come to you for all of those reasons. But who are your patients? Remember, in order to successfully market to customers, you must understand how your potential patients buy and what information they're looking for in the buying cycle. Men and women respond to information differently. They seek different types of information when it comes to deciding on healthcare, yet both men and women will utilize your urgent care center. You must tailor your messages accordingly.

Good news for you. The ideal urgent care center will be located in a community of working families who have health insurance. Those families will be comprised of working parents who are actively involved in their community. Because of their active lifestyle, they seek time saving alternatives and value convenience, quality, and customer service. They also seek the knowledge of their peers before making decisions on healthcare. "They" can be even more narrowly defined as wives and moms. Most urgent care consultants will tell you're your target demographic for marketing campaigns is women ages 25 to 54 who have one to three children and a household income greater than \$50,000.

According to a study by the U.S. Department of Labor, women account for 60 percent of all expenses at doctors' offices. Additionally, they make 80 percent of healthcare decisions for their families. While this probably doesn't surprise you, what may surprise you is most moms feel marketers don't understand them or their needs. Seventy percent of moms say marketers do not focus on them in their advertising, while 67 percent say they turn to peer moms for

advice. This is all good news for you. Moms are telling you what they want. It is your job to give it to them. As you continue reading, picture your target demographic: a working mom between the ages of 25 to 54, juggling an active lifestyle, kid's extracurricular activities, and of course, housework. Now picture that same woman sick, or doing it all with a sick husband or sick kid in tow, too.

Defining Your True Brand Identity

Your brand will grow and change as your urgent care center grows. Your brand will be shaped in the minds of patients by the services you provide them, the atmosphere those services are provided in, and how you treat patients when they are away from your clinic. When you first open your urgent care center, none of those things are defined. You have one opportunity to define your brand, and with that opportunity comes the chance for free publicity.

Generating free publicity is simple. You have to be first. Being first makes the news. Being first captures someone's attention. Being first allows you to set yourself apart from the crowd. So what can your urgent care center be first at? That depends on the community where you're located.

If you're lucky, you may be the first alternative to the emergency room. You may be the first clinic in town open on weekends. Maybe you're the first clinic open until 10:00 p.m.. Perhaps you are the first clinic to offer patients the opportunity to register for their visits online. Maybe you are the first clinic to not take appointments. You could be the first clinic to offer free coffee to every patient. Perhaps you are the first clinic to combine occupational medicine and urgent care under one roof. The list of things you can be first at is only as endless as your creativity allows.

In reality, you may be the first clinic to do a lot of things. Which one do you think your primary target market is most interested in? The busy mom will like the convenience of not having to wait in the waiting room with a sick child. In that instance, online registration could be a good thing to promote. Waking up with a sick child on Saturday morning is never fun. A mom would like to know you are the first clinic open on weekends. Remember mom as you pick your "first" and take it to the media.

It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It

You've paid a lot of money for your website, your beautiful brochures, and your advertising campaign. You've told everyone you know about your urgent care center or occupational medicine business. You've listed off a slew of services you offer, that in your eyes make you better than anywhere else in town to seek medical treatment. Yet the response you'd anticipated to all your efforts has been dismal.

If you reexamine what you're saying, you may realize you're making a big mistake. In general, people select to purchase a service or product not based off its features but off of its benefits. Yet, for some reason, most healthcare marketers focus on features. A feature is a fact about the service you provide. A benefit is the positive result your patient gets as a result of using your urgent care. It sounds simple, but in practice, oftentimes features sound so much like benefits that we confuse them.

Consider this example from an urgent care marketing campaign: "We offer on-site labs, digital x-ray, and extended hours." Feature or benefit? While the campaign is naming things that appear to be beneficial, no clear benefit to the patient is stated. Instead, what comes across are facts about the services offered at the urgent care.

Consider this example from a campaign aimed at moms: "We offer a children's play area, along with cartoons and bubble machines in our rooms." Feature or benefit? In this case, the campaign is describing the process the urgent care center uses to make kids feel more comfortable in their clinics, not the result itself.

So, What is a Benefit?

A benefit answers the question, "What's in it for me?" The benefit of having on-site labs, x-ray and extended hours may be, "You no longer have to go to multiple places for your medical care" or "You get same day results, ensuring you can start the right treatment sooner" or "You no longer have to wait until tomorrow to get medical care for your child when that runny nose turns into a fever with chills at bedtime."

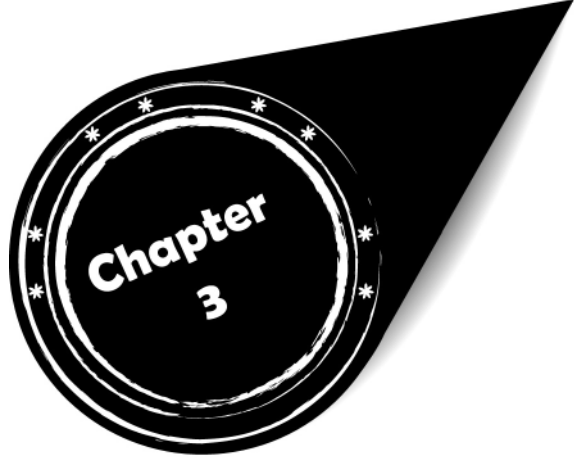
There are three keys to communicating what the true benefits of your services are:

1. Determine the premise of what your patients want and need.
2. Connect those wants and needs to the services you offer at your urgent care.
3. Explain why that matters.

While it may be true you offer on-line registration, a more attractive way of wording this might be, “Short on time? We understand. That’s why we don’t want to waste your time sitting in a waiting room. Register for your next visit on-line, and skip the headache of filling out paperwork on a clipboard and wondering when you’ll be called back.”

Highlight Features, But Close with Benefits

Don’t get me wrong. You still need to highlight the services you offer. But don’t stop there. Most urgent care centers never take their marketing to the next level. Be different. Tell your patients what they get by visiting your urgent care center.



Delivering Your Message Designing the Bells and Whistles

*“A brand name is more than a word.
It is the beginning of a conversation.”
- Lexicon*

From the moment you decide to open your urgent care center, you begin a conversation that never ends. As with any conversation, you should be honest and true to what you stand for as you talk about your urgent care center. Every aspect of your communication should have your core message in mind. It should also encompass many different forms of communication. You should know you are not the only person leading the conversation about your urgent care, so tools should readily be available to those who hope to share your message with others.

Great Conversation Starters

Starting a marketing campaign for your urgent care center is a bit like going on a first date over and over again. A great tool for first dates is to keep a proverbial bag of conversation starters handy, just in case you need to pull them out. Three key things you need in your bag when you are marketing is a logo, a slogan and a jingle. You should make sure all three work well together and deliver the

same message. They may never come up in conversation, but more than likely you'll be surprised at the conversations they start when they do get mentioned.

Logo Design

Leonardo da Vinci once said, "Simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication." It is with that advice in mind you should set out on the mission to get a logo designed. If you're lucky, since the moment you decided to open your urgent care center, you've known exactly what you want your logo to look like. More than likely, however, designing a logo has been the last thing on your mind. In fact, unless your only job is to market your urgent care clinic, I hope it has been the last thing on your mind. Before you have a logo, you have to have a solid business plan in place. Too often people get wrapped up in the idea of designing their logo, and they forget to work on the more important things, like their marketing plan.

Nonetheless, a logo is important for your identity. It helps your name stand apart from the names of all other doctors' offices in town. It helps tie your promotional products, your letterhead, your brochures, your commercials, and your print ad campaigns together. It is the mug-shot of your urgent care, but with a lot of pizzazz in only a few colors. Your logo must describe your business and be memorable. While you can use color to make it pop, you need to make sure your logo also looks good in black and white. In fact, you will probably use your logo more in black and white than in color. Think about faxes, newspaper ads, and even imprinting your logo on promotional items. For each color you include in your logo, plan on spending extra money to reproduce it exactly as it's designed. Your logo also needs to be scalable. This means the fewer words you put into it, the better. Remember your logo will be printed on everything from ballpoint pens to the sign outside your clinic. It needs to look the same in all locations.

As you're coming up with your design, be sure to avoid using symbols trademarked to other companies. Many urgent care centers feature a red cross in their logo because the symbol is known world wide to stand for emergencies. The symbol is also a registered trademark of the American Red Cross. If your logo uses a red cross in it, you may find yourself with a letter asking you to change your

logo. Other colors of crosses are also trademarked to companies, such as the blue cross, belonging to Blue Cross and Blue Shield Companies.

Before you start printing your logo, make sure there is not another company already using your mark. This can become costly down the road should you have to change your logo due to infringement on their exclusive rights to the design. You can search trademarked words and logos for free on the United States Patent and Trademark Office's website (<http://tess2.uspto.gov>).

If you hire a company or designer to design your logo, make sure you do background research on the company or designer's reputation. Using someone local can help you establish business connections in your community. It can also help you communicate the design you want in person. If you want to go a cheaper route, sites like Elance.com and Fiverr.com list freelance designers who work cheap. If you have never worked with a designer before, ask for a contract to outline how many changes they are willing to make in your logo design process.

For your logo (and other design) projects you should expect to follow a standard seven steps. The first step involves meeting with the designer and giving them an idea of what you are looking for. Next the designer and you will research and brainstorm ideas on how to convey your brand in a small graphic. It is helpful at this point for you to have your unique selling point picked. You should also consider looking at different fonts you like. Visiting the on-line database SearchFreeFonts.com gives you the opportunity to play with different fonts for free. After you finish brainstorming together, the designer will make a prototype of the logo. This stage is often called conceptualizing, meaning the designer is turning all your brainstorms into an actual concept. Usually the designer will create four or more similar concepts for you to choose from. These concepts will be sent to you for review. This is where it is important for you to understand your contract with the designer. A designer will usually allow you to make two to six changes on the concept as part of the original quoted price. If you require additional tweaks and changes after the number stated, expect to pay more for your logo design. After going over the things you want tweaked in the

logo design with you, the designer will revise the logo and put on any finishing touches. You will then be given the opportunity for a final review before the designer sends you the different graphic versions of the file.

If you have never worked with graphics before, it is important you have a vector file image of your logo, along with the following versions in a “DPI” of 300 or greater: .jpg, .tif, .pdf and .eps. Your graphic designer will know what you mean when you mention these letters. The .eps is the vector version, which is what most banner companies, promotional item companies, and other companies who will be scaling your logo to different sizes will require. If your logo has color in it, you should also request the same file types in a black and white version.

Another important thing to keep in mind when you design your logo is the shape. You should use bold, solid shapes that will retain their form when reduced or enlarged. Keep the shape simple in either a square or rectangular form. The urge to use circles, triangles and other shapes will creep in. Remember these shapes are often difficult to work future designs around. Squares and rectangles work well on brochures, shirts, website designs and more.

Slogan

If your logo is the mug shot of your company, the slogan is the caption that always accompanies it. For this reason, it is important your logo and slogan work hand in hand to enhance your message. Your slogan should be unique to your brand. It should be catchy and easy to remember, meaning it should also be short. Think about famous slogans that stick in your head: “Im Lovin’ It!”, “Just Do It”, “Got Milk?” “Once You Pop, You Can’t Stop”, “Plop plop, fizz fizz, oh what a relief it is”.

Slogans that stick have several characteristics in common. First, they highlight a benefit of using a company. What benefits or unique experience will patients get from coming to your urgent care center? Make a list of the benefits. You should already have part of this list created from when you worked to find your “first” in the market. Find creative ways to describe these benefits. A thesaurus can assist you in this step. After listing all the words you can possibly imagine, get creative. Mix the words you’ve found with action

verbs and start playing. Come up with five versions of the slogan and share them with friends for input.

The next thing successful slogans have in common is they're short. Your slogan should never have more than 10 words in it. If you can include your company name in it, you may promote better recall of your brand. But if your slogan always accompanies your logo in promotional material, this is not required. Successful examples of slogans incorporating a company's name include: "Nobody does it like Sara Lee", "Please don't squeeze the Charmin", and "The best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup".

Once you finalize your slogan, you should protect it. You spent a lot of time creatively coming up with a concept. Don't give other people the right to steal it. For a small fee you can register your slogan with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (www.uspto.gov). A trademark attorney can also file this paperwork for you. It is important to note that just because you file to register your slogan does not mean you will actually get trademark approval.

Jingle All the Way to the Bank

Once you have your slogan, it's time to ingrain it in the minds of the people in your community. Since your target audience is families, particularly moms with children, your jingle should have a catchy tune that sticks in the minds of both adults and children. At the very basic level your jingle needs to include your company name and slogan. The length for your jingle can vary from five seconds to thirty seconds, but should not go longer. This is because radio and television ads are typically sold in increments of thirty seconds.

You're probably asking yourself, "Why do I need a jingle?" Many people think jingles are only for big companies, but a lot of smaller companies are using jingles today. Unlike family practice medicine where patients schedule visits both yearly and as needed, urgent care centers must rely on top of mind awareness. Because people usually do not think about seeking medical care daily, marketers for urgent care centers must find a way to be in their customer's mind when a need to visit arises. Creatively written jingles help make this happen because the music adds feeling to the message being portrayed. Everyone's brain is divided into two sides, the

right side and the left side. The right side of the brain responds to music and imagery. Certain rhythms and melodies in a jingle spark the right side of the brain to pay attention. The left side of the brain then uses analytical reasoning to decipher the message being presented. Research has shown commercials that stimulate both sides of the brain are more effective. If you're going to spend thousands of dollars on a radio or television campaign, you want to get the most out of your commercial.

When you contact a production company to create a jingle for you, make sure the price you are quoted includes creating different versions of your jingle so you can use the music and words in different ways. Jingles typically come in a "donut" version. A donut means your jingle is sung at the beginning and end of the thirty seconds, while only music plays in the middle. The music serves as the background over your changing message and helps add continuity and recognition to your messages. A good production company will include a "sing-in" and a "sing-out" version of the donut. This means the singing words are only at the beginning or end of your commercial, giving you extra time to record longer messages when needed. The cost to record a jingle varies by production company, but you should expect to pay somewhere between \$700 and \$1500. The difference in price variation depends on how much creativity you leave to the jingle creators and the length of the jingle. Expect to pay more for the jingle if the production company creates all the words and music for you. Some production companies will give you a discount if you bring in your own lyrics.

Promotional Items

Free! Who doesn't love that word? Junk! Who likes getting it? You should keep both words in mind when you think about ordering promotional items for your urgent care center. Each promotional item should be ordered with a specific purpose in mind. Each dollar you spend promoting your business equates to a dollar you're not taking home. This is okay if the marketing dollars equate to a new patient walking in the door. It's not okay when every promotional dollar you spend equals an item landing in the trash.

When done right, promotional items help you get your name out in front of large audiences quickly and they keep your name in front

of people over an extended period of time. Finding the right items to give away doesn't have to be tricky. Standard items like pens and magnets should be included in your arsenal of freebies to hand out. If your budget allows, consider getting fun magnets like photo frames or word puzzles with your logo on them. Making the magnet interactive makes it more likely to end up and stay on a fridge. If you have a smaller marketing budget, business card sized magnets can be ordered for as cheap as seven to twelve cents each and still get people to put your contact information on their refrigerator door. Pens serve a dual purpose in marketing your urgent care center. For starters, your receptionists need pens and your patients like to steal them. It is what it is. Why let patients take something that isn't branded? Use the opportunity to keep your name in front of patients by putting your logo and contact information on pens. Second, pens are great marketing tools to be left in restaurants, hotels, and even in stores. Give pens to your staff to take with them as they go shopping in your community. Each time they sign a debit or credit card receipt, or fill out paperwork somewhere, make sure they leave the logoed pen behind too.

Other promo items you order will depend on the events where you are going to utilize the items. At any event where you have a booth to promote your urgent care center, the item's purpose is to draw people to your booth. Pens and magnets typically don't do the trick. Koozies are a great idea for handouts at outdoor events or at business to business events where drinks are being served. If you attend events where large crowds line up to "freebie shop," koozies can be stuffed with brochures and other information about your urgent care center and handed quickly to people as they make their way around trick-or-treating for freebies. Race day events like the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure or the American Heart Association's Heart Walk are examples of events where this may happen. Events where cold bottled or canned drinks are being distributed are also ideal for koozies. Koozies work best at these events if your marketing team goes around handing them to people holding drinks, in addition to leaving them on the table at your booth.

The key is to tailor your promotional item to the crowd attending the event. If you attend a health fair at a male dominated industry, handing out nail files or lip balm is probably not a good idea. Stress

balls shaped like hardhats, toolbox bandage kits, caps and t-shirts are good ideas to consider. A 2010 study done by the Advertising Specialty Institute found that women prefer writing instruments, calendars, bags and health and safety products, while men prefer shirts, caps and electronic items for freebies. Those demographics change by ethnicity, with African Americans and Caucasian men preferring hats, and other ethnicities preferring other products. The bottom line is you need to know your community and the demographic you are promoting to when you pick out promotional products.

Once you decide the promotional item you are going to use, make sure it delivers a good message, including contact information. Your logo and website address should be on everything you print. If you have room, also include a phone number and physical address. If you have multiple locations in the same area, using just your logo and website allows you to use the items for all clinics. The color scheme of your promotional items should also match to create brand consistency. If your logo is blue and white, your promotional items should be blue and white. If your logo is red and black, your promotional items should be those colors as well.

Mascot

If you want your brand to really develop a personality, consider designing a mascot or a spokes-character to serve as your urgent care center's representative. Mascots and spokes-characters elicit a special meaning to your brand through their appearances, their actions, and in the case of spokes-characters, even their voices. Why? They give your brand human like characteristics and appeal to all ages. They represent a personality and set of values to which customers can relate. The best mascots have memorable names, embody the meaning of your urgent care center, are directed at your target audience and actually build relationships with your patients. Of course, they don't do this by themselves. They require as much advertising as your urgent care center in order to be known in the community. This does not necessarily mean you have to spend more money on advertising. Instead it means your spokes-character should be incorporated into all aspects of your advertising. It becomes an extension of your brand and a representative for your urgent care at community events. Mascots can even be used

to hand out promotional items and can run errands for you around town. Having your mascot accompany you on shopping trips can cause a buzz in the stores you visit. Just remember, you should not hand out any promotional items or solicit business during these visits. Simply walk the aisles, purchase what you need, and leave. Oh yes, and pause for photos when customers stop you.

Perhaps the best reason to have a mascot, however, is it adds to the customer experience you are providing. Most medical clinics are the same. Urgent care centers are different. Remember, the idea behind urgent care centers is to provide great customer service, something that has been missing from the medical industry. Having a kid-friendly mascot to frequently visit rooms, surprise children with balloons in the waiting room, or just randomly appear with a cold bottle of water to refresh a patient who may have to wait longer than anticipated, are all things that can make your urgent care stand out over other medical providers in the area. Mascots are also huge hits at sporting events, area walks or races, and they even come in handy for presentations to kids at daycares, schools and other organizations.

Remember your mascot has a personality which should carry over no matter who is in the costume. For this reason it is important your mascot handlers have a set of guidelines to follow governing the personality of the mascot. To help set these guidelines, it helps if your mascot has a story. Where did your mascot come from? Is your mascot a boy or a girl? How did your mascot end up at your company? What does your mascot value? What characteristics define your mascot and what things will your mascot never do? Does your mascot talk, or is your mascot always accompanied by someone who talks for it? If your mascot talks, the voice should always match the sex of your mascot. Big companies like General Mills, Pillsbury and Planters have successfully developed mascots as a huge part of their brand. They also have hundreds of pages dedicated to what their spokes-characters can or cannot do. You don't need a hundred page document dedicated to your mascot. But you do need to make sure everyone presents the same personality and actions when they are inside the costume. After all, it is the actions of your mascot that give your brand its personality.

Your Rolling Billboard

When I first moved to the town I now call home six years ago, I didn't have a doctor. In fact, I didn't even know where to begin to go if a cold bug bit me that fall. But I knew there was a pharmacy in town on College Drive because I saw their cute little Urkle-Style car proudly displaying their logo as it zipped around town. The only other doctor I knew about was a podiatrist, whose fun yellow convertible with its Austin Power's design proudly displaying his logo, was also driven all over town.

Later that fall I noticed a Honda Element creatively decorated for a local urgent care company. It too was creating buzz as it zipped in and out of businesses, and little did I know at that time, but soon I would be driving it as their director of marketing. Fast forward a few years. The Urkle-Style Car and the fun yellow convertible still can be seen all over town. Now, several other companies also have vehicle wrapped cars. After racking up almost 300,000 miles, our Honda was traded in for a Mazda 2, and the car wrap was overhauled with a newer, sleeker wrap-design to match our new brand image.

History of Rolling Billboards

In 1993, the marketing team at Pepsi took outdoor advertising to new heights, when thanks to a new product developed by the 3M Company, they were able to completely transform a city bus into a rolling billboard for Crystal Pepsi. Soon, freight companies cashed in on the advertising medium, wrapping tractor-trailer rigs in advertisements for other companies. By 2000, car wrap advertising had positioned itself as the "new billboard" for the 21st century. Today, companies like SeaWorld with their Shamu wrapped VW Bugs, to small, locally owned insurance agencies and real estate firms all utilize these mobile billboards.

Measuring Return on Street Smart Advertising

But are car wraps really worth the investment, or could that money be better spent elsewhere, especially in the urgent care industry? According to a study done by Simmons Market Research, it's estimated that one mobile billboard truck can make over 1.5 million impressions per month in an area with a population of 5 million people. Other studies indicate that in smaller markets, a wrapped car makes between 30,000 to 70,000 impressions a day, when

driven on a frequent basis.

At our urgent care centers, our marketers are required to spend at least 85% of their time outside of the office, promoting our company, building and maintaining business relationships, and attending community events. Instead of paying mileage, which adds up quickly, they use our company car. When they're not driving our company car, our occupational medicine team utilizes it on callouts for on-site drug testing and/or company physicals. Our company car easily travels over 100 miles a day, sometimes much more. It only makes sense that while it travels, it also serves as a billboard for our urgent care clinics.

The initial start-up cost for purchasing a wrapped vehicle is often-times the roadblock for many urgent care owners, especially those reluctant to spend a lot of money on their marketing efforts. In addition to shelling out around \$2,000 for the actual car wrap, you'll also have to invest in a small vehicle, costing you around \$15,000 to \$20,000 depending on the vehicle you choose. If you consider a well used company car and a good car wrap last an average of five years, that equates to around \$4,000 a year, spread out over time, for your marketing investment.

Where to Use Your Car Wrap

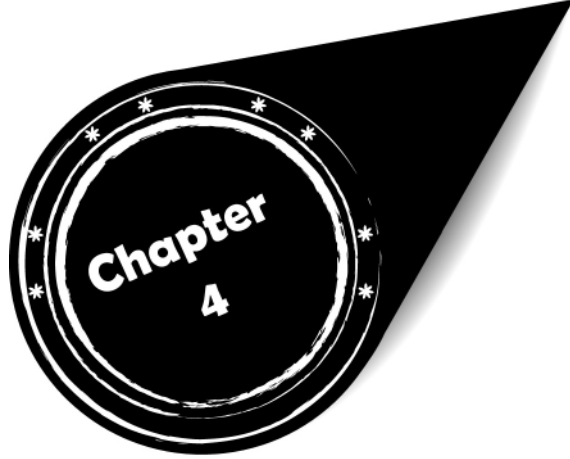
The great thing about your wrapped car is it can be utilized as so much more than just a company vehicle used to shuttle people around town. It can also be used at your grand opening or at grand openings for other businesses. It can be part of your booth at outdoor community events, and it can serve as your float in community parades. Additionally, when it is not in use, it can be parked in front of your urgent care center as an additional sign, without having to go through all the headache of dealing with the local planning and zoning commission.

Designing Your Car Wrap

If you've decided you're ready to turn the key and get started driving your new wrapped car, there are a few things to keep in mind as you design the wrap. First, negotiate the design fee as part of the purchase price for the wrap. Many companies will design the concept for free in exchange for getting your business. Second, if you

have, or are planning to have, more than one urgent care center in the same area, you may consider not putting the phone number or address on the car. Instead, use your company's website to direct people to if they want more information about your urgent care center.

Happy marketing, errr, I mean driving!



Maximizing Return on Sponsorships

"The Masters is a very important tournament. You don't want to jeopardize your chances. The sponsors understand that."

- Stuart Appleby

Congratulations! You're now making money and you've actively been showing up at community health fairs, courting businesses to utilize your services, and advertising like crazy to get patients in the door. Now that non-profits know you're open, expect to be inundated with requests to sponsor events, donate supplies, or just purchase things from area school children. The more successful you become, and the longer you're in business, the more sponsorship requests you will see. Most requests will come with a heartfelt message on why the organization needs your sponsorship, while reminding you your donation is tax deductible. So how do you decide which ones, if any, to share your hard earned dollars with? If you pick one, will it damage your opportunity to do business with another down the road?

There is a reason large companies designate one person, usually the marketing coordinator, to oversee all sponsorship requests. It can be a full-time job reading the requests and debating who the most deserving recipients are. The easiest way to deal with spon-

sorship requests is to set a Sponsorship Policy. Some urgent care centers select one or two large community events a year to sponsor and then set aside a certain amount of money to use to donate to smaller events. At the bare minimum, your Sponsorship Policy should contain information on how to submit a request, how much notice you require, and who to send the request to.

Sample Sponsorship Policy

All donation and sponsorship requests and advertisement proposals for local marketing programs must be reviewed by our owners in writing on your organization's letterhead at least 4 weeks in advance to your requested date of need. Please be sure to include a mailing address, contact name, phone number and event date or deadline. You may send your request via fax or mail to the Marketing Department. The fax number is 000-000-0000. The mailing address is Urgent Care Name, Address, City, State, Zip. All requests and proposals are reviewed on a weekly basis. Our team members do not have control over these types of requests. Due to high levels of donation and sponsorship requests, we are not able return follow-up or status calls. A written response will be mailed from our corporate office to the address provided on the letter submitted whether or not the request is approved. If we wish to receive more information, you will be contacted. Thank you.

Evaluating a Sponsorship Package

You may also consider setting up criteria for evaluating the requests. If this is done, a form starting the required criteria should also be created. When evaluating sponsorship requests, you should also think of each sponsorship as a joint venture with your business. In exchange for your marketing dollars, what are you getting in return? As you evaluate each request, ask yourself these questions:

1. How does the proposed sponsorship relate to our company's mission and priorities?
2. What objectives will we meet by entering into this sponsorship agreement?
3. How will the benefits from our sponsorship compare with our marketing plan and resources for the rest of the next year?
4. Do the practices of the organization or event we are sponsoring align with our business policies?

5. By agreeing to do this sponsorship, are there any conflicts of interest down the road?

As an urgent care center, you play an important role in your community. The very people who keep your doors open are the citizens of the community you serve. Therefore it is important that you fill the role of a good corporate citizen by giving back a percentage of what you make to help those in your community. Once you set that percentage, remember, it is okay to say no to requests. You only have so many dollars you can allot to sponsoring things and the people in your community know this. One of the things I have learned over the years is it's easier to pick one or two bigger community events to sponsor at the beginning of each year and then let those you cannot sponsor know you will consider them for the following year.

Another thing you may consider doing when turning down a monetary request for sponsorship is to offer manpower or supplies at an event. This is called a Value-In-Kind Donation. Offering to run the first-aid station at an event will give you free exposure in the community and also help the event organizers have one less thing to coordinate. At your first aid station make sure you display banners or other signage giving your urgent care center free publicity. If your budget and the event both allow for it, you may also consider handing out free bottled water with your company's logo on it, or passing out fans, along with literature on your urgent care center.

When someone comes to you with a sponsorship request, remember the packages they offer you in exchange for your donation are often negotiable. Make sure you evaluate everything included so you are getting a fair deal for your investment. Some of the things you need to consider include:

- **Media Exposure**

How often will your urgent care center's name be mentioned on the radio, in television ads, and how frequently will your logo or name appear in print magazines and newspapers?

- **Signage Given at the Event**

Will you be given the opportunity to display your company banners at the event, and where will they be displayed?

- **Number of Tickets Given for the Event**

Often in exchange for your sponsorship, organizations will give you free tickets that equate to the dollar amount you are donating. These tickets can then be used by you as rewards for your staff or as customer appreciation gifts.

- **Category Exclusivity**

If you are donating a large sum of money to an organization or an event, you have the right to ask to be the only urgent care or medical center as a sponsor. There is always negotiation room for this.

- **Pass-Through Rights**

For most community events you will sponsor, the chances of you needing pass-through rights are slim. However, you may want to request them nonetheless. Pass-through rights allow you the opportunity to pass the recognition you were going to receive on to another company or individual in the event something happens to your organization. This could come in handy if prior to the event your urgent care center underwent bad press or had to change your branding strategy. Though, the likelihood of this happening is fairly small for small businesses.

- **Use of Event Logo**

Finally, your sponsorship contract needs to afford you the right to use the events logo in your promotional materials throughout the year. This allows you to highlight your involvement in the community however you wish. Some urgent care centers may wish to put “Proud Sponsor of...” statements on their brochures, television commercials, newspaper ads, and other promotional materials. Before you spend the money printing these things, make sure your sponsorship contract allows you to do so.

Utilizing Your Sponsorship Benefits

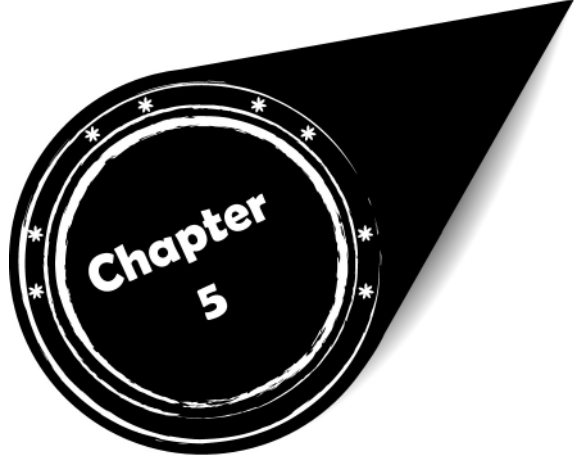
From a business standpoint, the sole purpose for sponsoring anything is to help your urgent care center achieve a specific business objective, typically brand awareness. Just because you sign a sponsorship agreement does not mean people will know about you anymore than they did before you gave an organization or event money. Once a sponsorship deal is reached, it is time for you to put a plan in place that will allow you to communicate why people associated with the event should utilize your urgent care center. This means you need to figure out how to utilize each of the things you were given as part of your sponsorship package to your best interest. Remember, you are probably one of many people sponsor-

ing an event or an organization, so you are going to have to spend more money than just the sponsorship dollars if you want to maximize what the sponsorship can do for you.

You will need to consider having custom banners printed, specific promotional items ordered to give out, and perhaps even custom flyers or brochures made that highlight how your urgent care center can fit the unique needs of the target audience. For example, if you are sponsoring an event that highlights breast cancer awareness, your target audience would be women. This means the promotional items and literature you hand out should highlight how your urgent care center is convenient for the working mom with kids. If you are sponsoring a local sporting event or an event where the target demographic is primarily male, your promotional items and literature might highlight sports injuries, DNA testing, and other services you offer that appeal more towards a male demographic.

Post Sponsorship Evaluation

Because the urgent care market is dependent on people actually being ill to visit your urgent care center, it is often hard to measure a true return on investment from your participation as a sponsor of an event. It is often easier to evaluate a return on your objectives. To analyze this you will need to go back to the five questions mentioned earlier. Remember for each sponsorship request you agree to, you must set objectives for what you hope to achieve from a business standpoint. Some of the things you may consider as objectives include improving employee morale, building brand awareness, and exciting the community about the services you offer.



Meeting Unmet Expectations: Dealing with Patient Complaints

“Dealing with people is probably the biggest problem you face, especially if you are in business. Yes, and that is also true if you are a housewife, architect or engineer.”
- Dale Carnegie

Your urgent care center’s success depends ultimately on one very important thing: The way you treat your customers. Perhaps the most critical point for your success to shine comes in how you treat your customers when they make a complaint.

There are a variety of reasons one of your patients may make a complaint. Perhaps they’re unhappy with the cost of the visit. Maybe their prescription did not get faxed to the correct pharmacy. They may not agree with the plan of treatment they have been given. No matter what the complaint is, each complaint can be canopied under: “Unmet Expectations.”

Rule of Expectations

Nelson Boswell has a simple explanation for understanding expectations, “Here is a simple but powerful rule – always give people more than what they expect to get.” It is with that philosophy you

should eagerly work to resolve patient complaints that may come in throughout the day. You will find that the majority of complaints usually boil down to the customers not feeling things measured up to what they were expecting before they walked in for service. Sometimes there is a simple fix for the problem. In fact, most of the time, all a patient wants to know is that someone is listening and concerned about why they feel their experience was not up to par. They are looking for a sympathetic ear. Part of that sympathy, of course, is being able to offer a solution or an explanation for why something went wrong.

Step 1: Listen

Before you can offer the solution, however, you have to really listen. When someone is angry, human nature kicks in and tells you to interrupt and try to offer the solution right away. Resist that temptation. The first thing you should do when a patient comes to you with a complaint is to listen to their whole story. Be their venting board.

Step 2: Apologize

After you hear the story, you should apologize for not meeting their expectations. This is often all it takes to change their mood and make them a repeat customer who recommends your clinic to family and friends.

Step 3: Reevaluate Training

If the reason for their complaint was due to an error on the part of your staff, figure out how to correct that issue quickly. Assure the customer you have training in place to fix the problem and apologize for the incident having occurred. Then make sure the team members who need additional training are trained.

The last thing you need to happen is for a patient to give you a second chance, only to be met with the same problems again. When you give your word to a patient that you are going to correct a problem, get it corrected.

In-Clinic Complaints

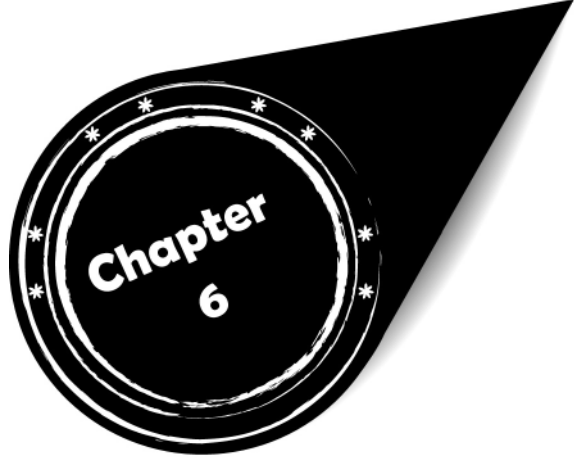
If you are lucky, most complaints about your urgent care center will never leave the clinic. When a patient has a complaint during their visit, make sure you take them somewhere private to discuss it. Not only does this lessen a scene in the middle of your clinic, it also

allows you to give your undivided attention to the patient. Always ask the patient, “What can I do?” These four powerful words let the patient know you value their opinion and their input. It allows the patient to be part of the resolution to the problem. Remind the patient you can’t fix a problem you don’t know exists, and thank them for bringing the problem to your attention. Most requests from a customer for a solution to their problem will be reasonable. If a patient asks for something outside of our authority to authorize, contact someone who can make the appropriate decision. Make sure you keep the patient informed about who you are contacting, why you’re contacting them, and what steps will follow.

Strive for Happy Endings

Obviously the goal of addressing complaints with your customers is to make them happy. But realize you will not be able to make everyone happy. Nonetheless, you should always genuinely try to satisfy or meet the customer’s expectation. Studies show that a satisfied customer will tell 2-3 people about his experience with your urgent care center. A dissatisfied patient will share their disdain with 8-10 people, and some will push that number to 20.

Remember a golden opportunity lies with an unhappy customer. Unhappy customers will become loyal consumers if you fix their complaints quickly. Eighty percent will come back to you if you’ve treated them fairly. That percentage rises to the upper 90s if you respond immediately. Every day you have the chance to transform your mistakes into returning customers – the kind who will tell other people good things about you. Remember, a smile goes farther than anything. When you mix it with a sincere apology, it’s unbeatable.



Adding a Touch of Kindness with Patient Call Backs & Surveys

“This may seem simple, but you need to give customers what they want, not what you think they want. And, if you do this, people will keep coming back.”
- John Ilhan

Recently I pulled into the drive-thru at a local business to order a late lunch. It took me eight minutes to get out of the drive-thru empty handed, after the lady taking my order provided the worst customer service I've ever received in a drive-thru. I decided I'd rather spend my money where I felt like a customer, not an inconvenience. I told her to cancel my order and took off across the street to a sandwich shop, where I ordered my usual, “veggie club”. As though I'd just made a big faux pas, I was quickly told, “We're out of cucumbers and tomatoes, would you like onions instead?” I wish I could've photographed the look on my face. I'm sure it was priceless. I don't know about you, but the last time I checked, onions tasted nothing like cucumbers and tomatoes. But I digress. It was more the tonality of the sandwich artist's voice, as though I should have known she was out of over half the vegetables I order on my sandwich, that shocked me. Perhaps starting with a sweet, “I'm sorry ma'am, but...” would have helped.

Nonetheless, I was hungry and in a hurry to get back to the office. I didn't have time to drive to yet a third restaurant to grab a quick bite to eat. In addition to the multiple challenges in the day of a marketing director, I knew I also needed to write my column for *Urgent Care Management Monthly*.

As I drove back to the office I pondered the lost art of customer service in our society. As I pondered I recalled a great experience I had in Jamaica at The Jewel all-inclusive resort. The resort earned its name as the jewel of customer service. It was full of all the kindness and "nice-ities" I love. As I look back on that trip, I realize the one person who made me feel the most special during my stay was a man named Clarence.

I became ill midway through the trip, and my husband, Brandon, called the front desk to have them bring me something to soothe my stomach. Clarence quickly brought some medication up to the room for me to take. He met Brandon in the hallway, so Clarence never knew what I looked like. The next morning at breakfast, I made it back from the buffet to our table before Brandon. As I sat down, Clarence approached my table. "How are you feeling this morning?" he asked. A bit shocked I replied, "Much better, thank you for asking." "I saw your husband at the breakfast buffet, so I knew it must be you. I just wanted to make sure there was nothing else I could do for you," he said. Then he smiled and walked away. In that moment I realized just how important the daily call backs we do at our urgent care centers can be to a patient. Taking just a moment out of your day to let someone know you care about them enough to follow-up can create a raving fan of your urgent care for life.

Then I thought again about my experience at two local restaurants. I knew they usually had a fairly high level of positive customer service. And I could only picture the horrified look of the owners faces if they truly knew how I'd been approached at both locations. I could empathize with how they would feel because one of my roles as director of marketing is calling back patient complaints at our urgent care centers. Usually what I learn on those calls is one of our team members dropped the ball on a "little thing" that made a really big difference in a customer's experience. Then I pondered conversa-

tions I have shared with other urgent care owners at conferences. I recalled a story one had shared about a horrible experience she had at an urgent care center while on vacation, and I realized that even in the urgent care industry, there are The Jewels and there are the “others.” Take a second today and ponder which one your business is. Ask yourself, “How is the customer service at our urgent care center?” More importantly, ask yourself, “How well do we live up to taking care of the little things every day?”

If you are building your brand on customer service (and you should be), then it is important for you to put steps in place to ensure you live up to your brand promise.

Step 1: Assign or Hire a Call Back Clerk

In order to make sure call backs are successful, you need to hire or assign someone to be a call back clerk for your urgent care center. Depending on the number of patients you see each day, this can be a part time or a full time position. It may also be a position your charge nurse can take care of. Realize the position requires a significant amount of patient interaction, so the person in charge of call backs must be genuinely interested in communicating with people over the telephone. On average, only about one third of the people you call will actually answer the phone, and of those, the majority of the calls will take less than a minute.

Step 2: Understand Why You’re Doing Call Backs

Sometimes calls last longer, and your call back clerk will have to be ready to handle problems. The person making the calls must be ready to handle a variety of questions, show compassion, and smooth over complaints. The primary reasons for doing call backs include:

- Promptly recognizing a change in patient condition;
- Uncovering patients’ concerns before complaints occur;
- Getting feedback on your staff’s performance;
- Minimizing complaints, claims, lawsuits, and payouts; and
- Enhancing your urgent care center’s reputation as a place that truly cares.

Step 3: Set-Up a System

When possible, all patients should be called back within 24-72

hours. Your urgent care center should train your call back clerk on the proper steps to handle complaints. Some complaints may be easy for the clerk to handle on his/her own. Other complaints, especially complaints involving medical care, may require a second phone call from the provider who originally treated the patient. Creating a formal system will help ensure all complaints are also addressed by the appropriate person on the same day they are received. Failure to contact a patient back quickly after they file a complaint can greatly decrease your chances of appeasing the discord when you do contact them at a later time.

Step 4: E-mail Patients

Remember, you may not be able to reach all patients by telephone. Collecting email addresses and sending daily emails inquiring about the level of service the patient received takes little time to implement and can provide a way for patients to contact you with complaints. Make sure emails are answered within 24 hours, and make sure the person answering emails knows to follow your urgent care center's patient complaint system. Even patients who write in positive comments deserve to be acknowledged for their kind words. Make sure you take the time to write back a thank you email, showing your gratitude for both their kind words and for them utilizing your services. Also remember to share praise with your staff.

Patient Call Backs Work

Patient call backs can be time consuming. If you do not have the budget to hire someone to do this job full time, train several people to do it part time. But make sure you give them the opportunity to give a customer on the phone their undivided attention. To this degree, your receptionist may not always be the best person to handle call backs.

The time and effort you put in to making sure your patients are satisfied with your service can pay off big. Studies show unhappy customers will become loyal consumers if you fix their complaints and do it quickly. Eighty percent of angry patients will come back to you if you've treated them fairly. That percentage rises to the upper 90s if you respond immediately.

The One Question You Need to Ask

As a business owner, when customers come into your urgent care clinic, you probably wonder if every aspect of their visit was just as you expected. As a marketer, I am one of few people who will take the time to answer long surveys sent out to me. In general, however, the more questions you ask someone about their visit, the less likely they are to complete your survey.

When I needed stitches late on a Saturday night two years ago, I had to visit the local emergency room. Three weeks after my visit a FOUR PAGE survey arrived in my mailbox. It asked me questions about every single part of my visit. There was only one thing I was unhappy about. The fact that I'd been asked, "Are you sure you're not pregnant?", no less than seven times before I saw a doctor to get stitches on my hand. Ironically, there was not a place on the survey for me to even comment on this. While I filled out the 52 questions on the four page survey, the hospital never got the chance to understand why I would probably never utilize them again in the future.

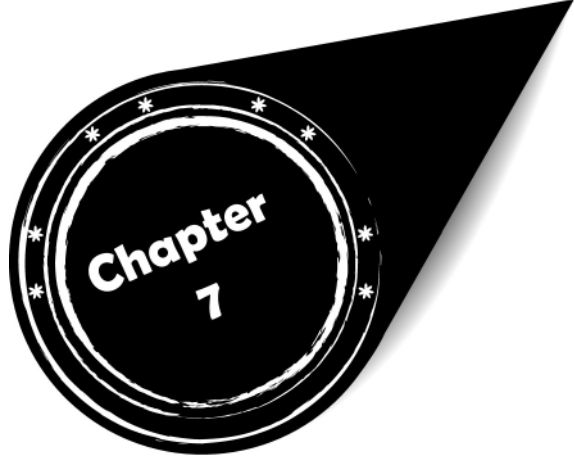
You can ask a million questions, but studies have found that there is only one question you need to ask your customers to find out if your urgent care business is going to be successful, "On a scale of zero to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend us to your friends or colleagues?"

This question is based off of something called the Net Promoter Score (NPS). Using your customers' answers to this one question, you are able to measure the difference between the percentage of customers who give high responses, called "promoters", to those who give low responses, called "detractors". Promoters are people who give you a 9 or 10. These people are most likely to tell their friends and family about you. Detractors are defined as people who give you a 0 through 6. These are people who were unhappy about some portion of their visit, and they are probably going to tell someone they know about their experience. You have a 24-48 hour window to contact them and try and fix the problem. People who give you a 7 or 8 are "passively satisfied". This means they were comfortable with their experience at your urgent care center, but they probably won't tell anyone about their experience.

At our urgent care centers we ask every patient to fill out a comment card. The card only asks the NPS Question and is followed by an area for the patient to leave a comment about their score, their name, and their phone number. Our staff knows the goal is to stay above an 88% NPS Score each week, and we post our score weekly. All positive comments about staff members are posted with the weekly NPS Report to continue to encourage staff to stay focused on providing amazing customer service to each person they encounter throughout the day.

Our comment cards are pulled nightly and anyone who gives us less than a seven is phoned the next day about their visit. Sometimes their complaints may seem petty in the eyes of most, but you would be surprised at how many people just want someone to vent to. Additionally, you would be surprised at how many of the minor complaints have actually led to positive changes in the way things are done at each of our clinics.

If you would like to set-up an NPS tracking program at your urgent care center, check out the NPS Tracking Program available for purchase in the Urgent Care Success Store (www.UrgentCareManagementMonthly.com/catalog). The package includes a template for your comment card, the NPS Tracking Template in Excel (along with a detailed information booklet on how to use it), the NPS Tracking Clinic Posting Sheet, and a Patient Complaint Tracking Form. With just a few clicks of a mouse, you can be on your way to tracking patient satisfaction at your urgent care clinic.



Changing Seasons of Urgent Care Marketing

"In marketing I've seen only one strategy that can't miss - and that is to market to your best customers first, your best prospects second and the rest of the world last."

-John Romero

For everything there is a season, and marketing your urgent care is no different. You cannot run the same marketing campaign year round and expect to get the same results. Instead, you must understand the four seasons of medical marketing. Understanding the seasons will help you know what to market and where to share your message at.

Summer Time Sizzle

If you want your urgent care patient volume to sizzle during the summer, you should plan on running campaigns about summer safety. The good news is many of these campaigns can be free. Contact the editor at your local paper or community magazine and ask if you can be a guest columnist during the summer months. Then provide free articles about summer safety. In-clinic marketing and traditional campaigns should focus on summer injuries and illnesses. Make sure patients know you can treat them for broken

bones and strains, poison ivy, sunburns and other ailments more associated with summer fun. For value added marketing, consider giving patients information on the dangers of wearing flip-flops and sandals during active periods of the day.

Remember summer is also the time when many families move or travel. Make sure area hotels and your local Chamber of Commerce are stocked with information to give people when they arrive in your town looking for medical assistance. Many towns also have festivals, events, and golf tournaments during the summer. These events are perfect for you to sponsor a first aid station or a water station at. Make sure your logo is prominently displayed at these events.

Flashy in Fall

As summer comes to a close, parents begin getting their kids ready to head back to school. The fall is the perfect time for you to promote athletic physicals and flu shots. If your state has a tax-free shopping holiday, contact your local mall to see about setting up an informational table during this busy shopping time. Be sure to have freebies aimed at kids to hand out at your table, along with great information on your urgent care clinic to give to mom and dad.

Consider contacting the booster clubs at area schools to see how you can support them this year. Sponsoring a fan night at a sporting event can be a great way to get your name out to the community. Sponsoring paper fans, hand clappers, and even footballs for cheerleaders to throw into the stands helps get your name into the hands of parents. Sponsoring the drink cups at the concession stand can save the athletic booster club lots of money and put your brand into the hands of all fans. Check with the athletic director or booster club president for rules on what can and cannot be sponsored at high school games.

Winning in Winter

As the chill of winter starts, so too comes the chance to build your urgent care clinic as the place to come for cold and flu symptoms. Many companies offer health fairs during these months. Make sure you are front and center teaching people how your urgent care center can save them both time and money should they become

ill. Another important thing to focus on during the winter months is fitness and healthy living. Many people neglect their health during the winter and in January they begin to look for ways to get healthy again. If your urgent care center offers a diet or wellness program, you should heavily market this during the winter.

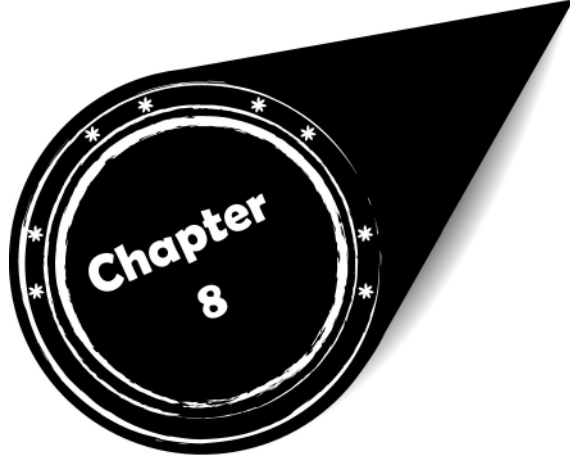
Spring into Success

The sneezes of spring can mean additional revenue for your clinic if patients know you treat allergy related illnesses and symptoms. You should begin marketing for allergies in mid-February and continue thru mid-May. Spring is also the time many people begin planning their summer vacations. For lots of travelers, including honeymooners getting married in the summer, this means they will need travel vaccines. Make sure you promote your travel medicine program at bridal fairs, travel agencies, and even at government offices. Additionally, spring is when people begin to think about getting into their swimsuits. Promoting weight loss and ways you can help improve skin blemishes can increase your bottom line.

Every Season is Urgent Care

No matter the season, there are things your urgent care center should always be marketing. People must know you provide quick and convenient care. They should know you accept insurance and that you are open evenings and on weekends. You should promote being a clinic for families and children. These messages should be shared with your community thru traditional means like radio and newspaper and through promotional items like door hangers, magnets, brochures and pens.

Remember, people communicate in more than one language. In communities with other cultures, find community advocacy groups and share your information with them in their language. Consider developing relationships with school and company nurses, too. The success of your urgent care center is not seasonal. It is something you must work at throughout the year. Just make sure you are sending the right messages at the right times.



Marketing for Cold & Flu Season

“Normally when pressure comes on a business, one of the first areas to feel the effects is the marketing side. However if marketing is reduced or cut, then the whole machine can grind to a halt.”

-Unknown

Sneezes, runny noses, watery eyes, and long waiting times at primary care doctor’s offices make your urgent care center a great place for people to turn to during cold and flu season. With shorter waiting times and same-day service, urgent care centers can be a blessing to those who are ill. But they are only a blessing if people know about them. To help increase the number of patients to your center during cold and flu season, you must have a great marketing campaign in place. Your marketing should include a mix of traditional marketing, social media marketing, occupational medicine marketing, in house marketing, and amazing customer service to ensure return visits and word-of-mouth referrals.

Traditional Marketing

Cold and flu season should be the busiest time of the year at your urgent care center, and therefore, it should also be when you plan to spend a large majority of your marketing budget on traditional marketing. Radio, television, newspapers, magazines and bill-

boards are all traditional ways of educating the community on what you do. Since you are an expert in the field of medicine, you should also make contact with the health editor at your local newspaper and offer tips on how to keep people healthy during the cold and flu season. Establishing a good relationship with the health editor will help get you free publicity in news articles throughout the year. Your center's name mentioned in a news article about health is not only free, but it is also more credible than advertising.

Because December is also a heavy travel month, you should make sure your brochures are in every hotel in your city. Often sick travelers will stop in your town overnight, and the hotel staff can direct them to your center. Because the staff often changes frequently at hotels, you should visit them at least every three months to drop off additional brochures and remind them you are still there to service their customers.

Social Media Marketing

Social media is a great way to keep in touch with your established patients. Your website should have a "news" or "blog" section, where you frequently post updates about how to stay healthy this season. When your local newspaper publishes information about illnesses hitting your area, your blog should respond to the various topics. If you copy the articles verbatim, remember to always attribute them and link back to the newspaper's website.

Occupational Medicine Marketing

One of the services you should consider offering companies who utilize your urgent care center for work related injuries and drug testing is an on-site flu clinic. Companies should pre-book the number of vaccines they will need to ensure you have enough vaccines on hand to sustain both your urgent care and occupational medicine businesses. You should also have companies pre-pay for the flu shots you order (or sign a contract), so you do not end up with unused inventory should a company change their mind before you give them their flu shots.

When talking with the safety coordinator or HR Director at the companies where you schedule the on-site flu shot clinics, ask them if you can provide free flyers to be posted in break rooms and on

company bulletin boards. One way to ensure high turn-outs at flu-clinics is to ask companies to allow employees to get the shot as part of their work day. Many companies will also consider offering free incentives to employees for getting a flu shot. Remember the more employees who get a flu shot, the more profits your urgent care center can make and the more likely the company will invite you back again next year.

To show appreciation to both the company and their employee for utilizing your occupational medicine services, you should also consider sponsoring light refreshments and snacks during the flu clinic.

In-House Marketing

Perhaps the cheapest way to market your center as the place to visit during cold and flu season is to do things in-house. Marketing flu shots to your patients can be easily done by posting flyers in rooms and having your staff wear promotional buttons. Many suppliers of flu vaccines will give your company free flu-shot promotional kits to help you get the word out about the importance of flu shots.

Always remember people come to your urgent care center for many reasons. Someone who comes to your center with a broken leg may not realize they can also be seen for strep throat or a cold, unless you tell them. You should always be ready to cross-promote your business to patients. Consider putting together a quarterly patient newsletter that each patient takes home with them when they leave. Have brochures about all the services you offer available in the rooms and in the lobby. If you offer an occupational medicine program, make sure each person who comes in for occupational medicine also realizes you have an urgent care center.

One of the biggest mistakes urgent care centers make is not educating their new patients about all of the services they offer. Many times people who come in for a drug screen never realize there is another side to your center. If they were happy with the treatment they received while getting a drug screen, chances are they will be more than happy to give you a try when they become ill at a later point. Each person who visits the occupational medicine side of your center should leave with a brochure about your urgent care center.

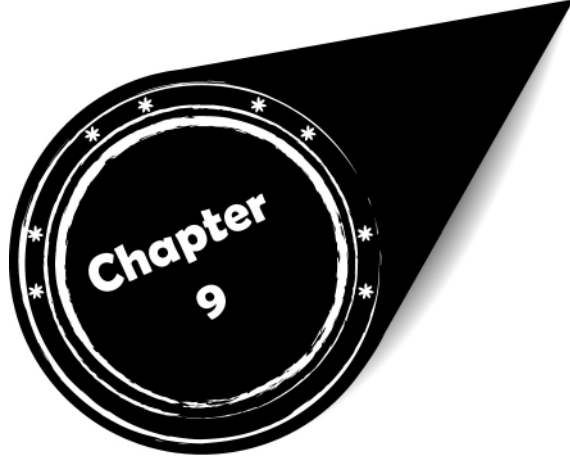
Amazing Customer Service

Finally, the most important thing you can do to market your urgent care center during cold and flu season is to provide amazing customer service. If your patients feel good about the service they received at your center, they may tell their friends and family about you. But if your patients feel great about the service they receive (i.e. you give them something positive to talk about), they will tell their friends and family about your center.

There are several things you can do to make sure your patients leave your center wanting to tell others about you. For starters, your staffing levels must be adequate. Because your center will experience higher than normal patient volumes this time of year, you need to have the staff in place ready to take care of each person. While understaffing can save you money, it will also create overworked and stressed employees. This can lead to bad attitudes.

Your patients should also receive more than they expect when they visit your urgent care center. One way to do this is to offer free hot coffee, hot cocoa and hot tea in the waiting room. Purchasing a Keurig Coffee Maker and putting it in the lobby is an easy way to offer a variety of beverages to your patients. If you order coffee, teas, and hot cocoa in bulk, you can find great deals on supplies for your Keurig on-line at www.greatcoffee.com.

For children, visiting your urgent care center can often be traumatic. To help smooth their visit to your center, have a variety of things on hand to entertain them. Handheld games, coloring pages and books in the waiting room can distract children as they wait to be seen. Stickers and balloons are also great ice breakers or rewards for great visits. If your budget allows, custom mini-plush animals are also good to have on hand, especially for children who have to get IVs or heavy lab work. The mini-plush animals provide a “friend” to help them through the experience. Remember, marketing your center during cold and flu season is important. People need to know about you in order to utilize your services.



Using Social Media to Market Your Urgent Care

*“The Internet will help achieve friction free capitalism
by putting buyer and seller in direct contact
and providing more information to both about each other.”
- Bill Gates*

What is your brand? You should have a very good answer to this question by now, and your answer probably includes something to do with urgent care, your slogan, your unique selling point, and hopefully customer service. What is your social media brand? That may be a harder question to answer. Do you even have one? If you don't, it's time to get busy. Social media is a great way for you to do marketing, provide customer service, and to a degree, sell. It also defines your brand in an entirely new way. There are several different ways you can implement social media into your marketing campaign. As you do so, remember the golden rule of this form of marketing: Social media is a conversation, and no one likes to be sold to in a friendly conversation.

The New Relationship Marketing: Facebook

Facebook is the number one social media marketing tool right now. If you do not have a Facebook Fan Page for your urgent care clinic

yet, get one. They are free and fairly easy to set-up. At minimum your Fan Page should include a photo of your clinic or logo, a clinic tour photo album, and photos of your staff. As your page grows, work to include photos and videos weekly, along with useful health facts your Facebook friends want to know about. If you already have a developed Facebook Fan Page, you need to make sure it is visually optimized. The website SocialMediaExaminer.com offers some great tips on how to utilize Facebook's newest Fan Page Layout to promote your brand.

Remember the goal of your Facebook page is to build a community for people who like your urgent care center. Anytime someone posts a comment on your page, make time to respond to it. This helps create a conversation. Through the conversation you will gain insight, support, suggestions and even inspiration to grow your urgent care center from things your Facebook friends tell you.

All friends like to receive gifts and hear stories. Your Facebook friends are no different. Consider offering monthly events or giveaways to your Facebook friends. During the summer months you might offer kids who bring in a coupon you post on your page a free Frisbee with your logo on it. Or you may consider holding a monthly health seminar for your Facebook friends to attend. Offering incentives to your friends keeps them interested in what you are posting on your page.

Because your Facebook friends are also your patients, share stories with them. If you have an employee of the month, highlight them on your Fan Page. If your employees dress up crazy on a holiday, share photos. Sharing stories and pictures on your page helps create the community environment your friends are looking for when they "like" your page.

Blogging Your Way to Business Success

Another important part of your social media campaign is blogging. If you do not have a blog or news section on your website, you can get one for free using software from WordPress.com. Your IT Department, or a local tech-guru, can install this software onto your website in about 30 minutes. Not only does a constantly updated blog give value added marketing to your patients, it also helps im-

prove your ranking in search engines.

Google search engines like it when your website is updated regularly. The blog gives you the ability to do this fairly seamlessly. Trying to figure out what to blog about may be difficult at first. Remember why people are coming to your site. They are looking for health information. Consider utilizing the Health section on Google News to find out what the latest national health related stories are. Then blog about those stories weekly, giving them a local twist.

If you have Facebook, you can use a Facebook App called Networked Blogs to pull the posts from your blog directly to your Facebook page. So blogging weekly allows you to not only provide additional information to visitors of your website, it also allows you to provide good content to your Facebook friends with no real extra effort on your part.

Marketing Your Urgent Care on YouTube

Did you know more people do searches for things on YouTube now than they do on Yahoo? YouTube has become a search engine in its own right, and your urgent care center's online presence may be lacking if you haven't taken the time yet to set-up a YouTube channel and fill it with videos. Making videos doesn't have to be difficult, but it should include an array of topics. And the great news is, with just a minimal upfront investment, creating your videos can easily be done in-house.

Do you take pictures of things you do as a group in the community? Do you take photos when you dress up for things like St. Patrick's Day? Your company culture and involvement in the community can be shared with the world in just a few clicks of a button using online slideshow making software like Animoto.com. They even provide an array of music to use in the background. Once you're done, you can download your videos and share them on YouTube or Facebook.

New Services Offered Videos

Is your urgent care center offering a new service like allergy testing or a weight loss program? Recording a short video (1-15 minutes) demonstrating it, or highlighting its features, may improve the number of people who ask about it when they come into your clinic. The

video can be posted on YouTube and also placed on your company's website page describing the service offered. Not sure if video is worth it? Consider this. According to Rico Nasol, a content team senior manager at Zappos.com, the site sells between 6-30% more merchandise when the product is accompanied by video content.

Informational Videos

Does your receptionist or marketing team find they are answering a lot of the same questions daily? Why not take your FAQ page on your website out of 2005 and get with the times by turning your most frequently asked questions into video blogs? This may not only increase the number of people who find you via searches on YouTube, but it may also prove to be beneficial on your urgent care center's website.

These are just a few ideas for getting you started with a presence on YouTube. Most of them can be accomplished using a standard digital camera or the latest Smart Phone. Your limitations are only bound by your creativity. If you want to add words or music to your videos on your own, AVS Video Editor, is a cheap and easy to use software that's perfect for novice video editors.

E-Newsletter

Take a moment and imagine how successful your urgent care business would be today if every single one of the patients who has ever walked thru your doors still used your services. It doesn't take a math major or an accountant to realize your profits would be higher, your word-of-mouth marketing cheaper, and your patient volume higher. Now ask yourself this question, "What am I doing to retain my established patients?" According to the Harvard Business Review, 91% of medical practices don't do anything to retain existing patients. Isn't that shocking? Yet anyone who has ever read a book or article on marketing to established customers knows it is 6 to 7 times more costly to acquire a new customer than to retain an existing customer. So how can you be part of 9% of practices who are doing something to retain existing patients? One cheap, and fairly easy, thing you can implement is a patient newsletter.

Urgent care marketing is retail medicine. This means you have to consistently focus on top-of-mind awareness for both new and ex-

isting patients. It also means you need an avenue to let patients who have used you in the past know when you're offering a new service. If you don't tell them you're now offering allergy testing, occupational medicine, or another service, who will?

Good news! You don't have to have a degree in journalism to create your own newsletter. In fact, you don't have to write an article at all. You can find free articles on healthy tips and current events related to your urgent care center all over the internet. A few of my favorite places to get free articles for our newsletters include www.LivingEveryMinute.com, www.StatePoint.net and www.SelfGrowth.com. If you have someone on your staff who is good at writing, you should also consider inserting articles on new products you offer, seasonal reasons to visit your urgent care center, and announcements about new providers on your medical team. Depending on the frequency of your newsletters, you may also find your publication to be a great place to list job openings at your urgent care.

How Can I Add Pictures for Free?

Let's face it; a picture is worth a thousand words. Not only do images make your newsletter more visually appealing, but they also help fill space in a newsletter where you may lack content. Many of the articles on the State Point Media website have free photos you can run with your article. But there are other sites on the internet where you can get graphics for free too. One of my favorite sites is www.sxc.hu for downloading royalty free photos. Another site I visit weekly is iStockPhoto.com, where you can download a free featured photo each week to build your image library. Additionally, you can purchase photo royalty rights from them for a minimal fee. If you have a graphics background and want to use vector images, the website all-free-download.com is a great place to start your search.

How Do I Send My Newsletter?

Once you have gathered content for your newsletter, your next decision is how to distribute it. One option is to give each patient who leaves your clinic a printed copy of your newsletter. A Microsoft Word Template can easily be created to make your print version. But that doesn't really help you communicate long term with established patients. Another option is to purchase a marketing e-mail

software and create a weekly or monthly e-zine to send to your patients. While I have used several e-mail softwares in the past, my personal favorite is iContact. For about \$80 a month we use their services to regularly e-mail our database of almost 10,000 people. If \$80 a month is too much for your marketing budget right now, there are a few free alternatives. One is to publish your newsletter on your website. Include an insert about the newsletter in your patient statements directing patients to your website. Another option is to publish your newsletter articles in the notes section of your Facebook page. Of course, even if you pay to use a software, you should still cross-post your newsletter on your website and Facebook, too!

Yelp! Your Connection to Being Found on the iPhone

If you have an iPhone you've probably spent a great deal of time playing around with Siri. Designed to be a voice activated personal assistant, Siri helps you send messages, schedule meetings, and much more. One heavily utilized feature on Siri is helping iPhone users find the nearest restaurant, gas station, store, or other nearby place. This feature is critical for urgent care marketers to be aware of. You can simply talk to Siri and find local businesses around you. Have you searched for your urgent care business yet on Siri, and if so, do you show up? If your business isn't showing up in the results Siri gives to users, there's a chance you're missing out on new customers.

If you're not showing up, it's probably because you haven't yet taken the time to set up your Yelp Business Page. It's free to do, and in my opinion, well worth the 15 to 30 minutes it will take you to claim your business on their site. Visit Biz.Yelp.com to claim your business page. In addition to helping you be found on Siri, claiming your business page also allows you to:

- Track and respond to reviews of your business
- Add photos and information about your business
- Monitor views of your business page on Yelp.

Once your business page is set-up, it's time to start getting reviews. Just keep in mind that unless the patients reviewing you on Yelp regularly review other business on Yelp, too, their positive reviews of your urgent care center may be hidden from the public, as Yelp

filters out reviews they deem unreliable. Should you find your reviews are being filtered out, contact the people who wrote the reviews. Send them an e-mail saying the hard work they put into their review is being hidden by Yelp. Offer to help them complete their profiles and encourage them to review other businesses, too.

Additionally, you can add each person who reviews your business as a friend on Yelp! The more friends a user has, the more credibility Yelp tends to give them when they review a business. Also consider sending each reviewer a compliment and vote their review as useful, funny, or cool depending on the context of what they wrote. If you're Siri-ous about wanting to be found by iPhone's personal assistant, take time this week to set-up your Yelp business page.

Monitoring Your On-Line Reputation

Good or bad, people like to talk. Before the internet, talking and complaining about a company often fell on deaf ears. Now, "talking" has turned to texting and typing about things online - and those things have a way of sticking around for a LONG, LONG TIME. You should be monitoring these online conversations to make sure your urgent care center's reputation isn't at risk. More importantly, you should be using these conversations and listening to them to find out how to improve your business. Below are a few ways you can monitor online conversations about your business and even join in on some of them.

1. Google Alerts

You can set-up Google alerts by going to www.Google.com/alerts. Anytime your business name is mentioned, Google will e-mail you an alert. You pick how often you want to receive alerts and the types of content you'd like to be made aware of. After setting up Google Alerts, you'll get notifications in your inbox on a regular basis. In addition to setting up alerts about your business, you may also want to set up alerts for the urgent care industry and for your competitors.

2. Google Local Plus Page

Once you've setup and customized your Google Local Plus Page for your urgent care (see next chapter), you should check it regularly for new reviews customers write about your business. While I don't

encourage responding to negative reviews online, I do encourage you to contact patients who leave negative reviews. If you are able to rectify their complaint, you may be able to get them to retract or amend their review.

3. Twitter

Even if you do not have a Twitter account for your urgent care clinic, you can still visit search.twitter.com and type in your business name to see what people are tweeting about your business. Things people tweet about can include everything from they just left your urgent care to a 140-character review of their visit. If you want to respond to any tweets, you will need to setup a Twitter account.

Following conversations about your business online is only one step. You should be proactive in contacting patients offline to rectify problems and ask them to post retractions or addendums if you are able to satisfy them. You should also utilize the things you learn about your business online to reach out to your customers and improve your urgent care operations.



Getting Ahead with Internet Marketing on Google

*"Do you ever want to sacrifice tone and feel for what you know the search engines are looking for on a page? That answer is no."
-Heather Lloyd-Martin, Successworks*

When someone wanted to find medical help 10 years ago, they picked up the Yellow Pages and searched for a doctor. Today, a large number of people are turning to the internet to search for medical help, and one search engine, Google, continues to lead the pack. Google estimates 97 percent of consumers search for local businesses online.

If your urgent care center has a website, chances are you still may not be utilizing Google to its fullest potential to ensure the maximum number of people who need your services can find you. There are a lot of things you can do to ensure you get the most out of Google.

Google Local Plus Page

The first step to maximizing your exposure on Google is to claim your Google Local Plus Page (formerly a Google Business Place Page). This free page often pops up at the top of searches on Google un-

der “Places” and also on searches in Google Maps. To claim your page, you must verify either your business phone number or mailing address with Google. To do this, you will need a Google Account. The second step to setting up your page is to add customization. Update your phone number, physical address, methods of payments accepted, and business hours on the page. Also add photos of your clinic and your clinic’s commercials in the photo and video sections.

Having a Google Local Plus page allows your patients to add reviews about your urgent care center. In addition to reviews placed directly onto Google, Google also pulls reviews from third-party websites where ratings about the services you offer may already exist. Realize you may receive negative reviews from unhappy patients. While you have the ability to negate those reviews, the standard practice is to leave them alone. If you’re able to identify the customer, contact them to try and fix the problem and then ask them to update the review. If you believe the review is posted by a competitor, you have the right to contact Google and report the review as abuse.

While Google Local Plus Pages are free, some businesses opt to use Google Boost to pay for specific targeting of their page on Google Maps and in Google Search results. You can learn more about Google Boost and Google Place Pages at www.google.com/placesforbusiness.

Google Adwords

The next step to optimizing your reach on Google is to set-up a geo-targeted Google Adwords Campaign for each location where you have an urgent care clinic. Geo-targeting your campaign means you select the areas where your ad shows on Google Searches. If you only have a clinic in Dallas, Texas, there is no reason to pay for Google Ads to show across the United States.

While setting up a campaign is fairly easy, setting up a campaign to generate a positive return on your investment takes some education and a fair amount of time. Brad Geddes offers a two day seminar called Adwords Seminars for Success, where you can learn a great deal about how to maximize your Google Adwords Campaign. You can learn more about his conferences at www.bgtheory.com/adwords-seminars. I highly recommend setting up a Google Ad-

words account and toying around with the Google Adwords interface before attending the conference. I also teach a similar, though much shorter, class at the Urgent Care Success Summit.

Google Search Psychology

Before starting a Google Adwords campaign, you must understand the psychology behind searches. In general conversation, people typically ask questions. In internet searches, people typically type concepts into the search box, and before they hit the search button, they already have an expectation of what they want to see in the results. If your Google Ads do not meet those expectations, they will search again. Thus your Google Ads become the 140 character bridge between your website's landing page and your prospective consumer's thought process.

For example, a person may think, "Where can I get medical attention on a Saturday?" They are looking for an answer stating, "Urgent Care, Open Saturday". The phrase they may type into Google will be, "Saturday medical clinic" or "walk-in clinic Saturday". Your campaigns need to be customized with keywords and ads matching your consumer's thought process.

You also have to understand people search Google at different stages in their readiness to visit your clinic. The majority of searches on Google, 75 percent, are informational in nature. This means people want to know the answer to a specific question before they decide to visit your urgent care center. Thus, the landing pages your Google Ads link to must provide direct answers to their questions. Generic landing pages will result in minimal returns on your advertising efforts.

Remember, people think differently. Searchers who become ill at 8:00 p.m., may attempt to find your clinic in different ways. Things they enter into Google may include: "Local urgent care", "night clinic", "urgent care phone number", "emergency medical clinic", "urgent care website". If your Google Ads and landing pages do not handle these searches uniquely, or if you do not have the right keywords associated with your ads, you may miss a click on your ad, and ultimately a patient conversion.

Google Keywords

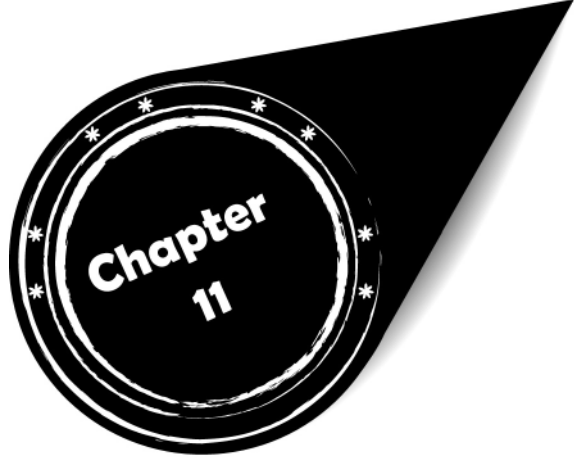
Setting up your keyword and ad campaigns can be daunting at first. If you plan to do it by yourself, allow at least three days to work on the project. You can use the Adwords Keyword Tool to help generate keywords. Remember, however, that just because Google tools suggest you use a keyword doesn't mean you should actually use it, so never use the "add all" option for suggested keywords. Make sure keywords are specific to your urgent care center and the services you offer.

Once you have your keywords picked, divide them into categories, called Ad Groups. Each Ad Group should focus on a specific category with ads devoted just to that category. Each ad should have no more than 10 to 20 unique key words. Those words should appear in each ad's copy. Thus you should create unique ads for specific keywords. As you write your individual ads, remember ad copy should direct your potential patient to take an action, establish your credibility, and use action words. Ads should offer benefits and not highlight features. Benefits are why people are likely to utilize your urgent care center.

Optimized Landing Pages

Finally, make sure the pages on your website where your ads direct people to (called landing pages) offer answers to what your ad promises the searcher will find. Landing pages also need to have calls to actions on them. If you offer online registration, make sure there is an option to encourage a visitor to check-in on the page. If you offer DNA Testing or other services where you can offer a discount, consider having a place where the consumer can email you for a coupon. This will not only give you the contact's information, it will also allow you to remind them about your services. Also have brochures available for searchers to download. Downloads give you a presence on the searchers desktop long after they have left your site.

Utilizing Google Places and Adwords takes time to learn, but don't be afraid to give it a try. For as little as \$0.10 per click, you can greatly increase the number of people finding your urgent care. Often you can get coupons to try Google Adwords for the first time, so go ahead and get started.



Educating Your Community thru Telemarketing

*“When a telemarketer calls, give the phone to the nearest child and tell them it’s Santa on the phone!”
- Unknown*

Are there ever periods in the day at your urgent care center when your staff is sitting around with nothing to do? As a marketer, that is a question you never want answered with the word, “Yes.” But it happens. In times like this, what should you do? I think it is the perfect time to motivate your staff to help ensure it won’t happen frequently. How? Simple. Train them to be community educators via phone calls.

The idea behind telemarketing your urgent care center may sound crazy at first – I know because it sounded crazy to me. The idea was first introduced to me by the president of our company, who heard the idea from his ranch hand when they were discussing ways to grow one of our newest locations. I think the craziest part about it was how simple the concept was, and yet I had never thought of it. For many people, the word “telemarketing” has a lot of negative connotations. No one likes to be bothered at home by pesky salespeople trying their best to sell a gadget you don’t really need. And

because of that, inspiring you staff to become telemarketers can be difficult, but not impossible. One of the simplest reasons tele-marketing can work for urgent care centers is because you really are not selling anything to the people you talk to. In fact, if anything you are educating them on how they can save time or money on their healthcare if they ever need to utilize your services.

Step 1: The Script

You never want your staff to call people without a script. Much the same as you would train a marketer on what to say in the community to promote your business; you must also train your staff on what to say over the phone. This is where it is important to develop a script for your team members to read, rehearse, and memorize. They should also be trained on what questions they are allowed to answer about the services you offer.

When writing your script, think about the people you are calling. Don't include things like, "If you could save \$100 on your medical care, you would, wouldn't you?" Instead, in your opening, script something that will peak interest in what you have to say and open dialogue to allow you to continue speaking to the person on the phone. Another thing to avoid is starting the call by saying, "I was just calling people in your area..." People want to feel like they're the only person you're calling - not just one of the masses from a list of compiled names.

Before you ever allow someone to make their first phone call, you should make sure they have been trained and have done mock phone calls with you. Simply handing someone a piece of paper and telling them to read it is not a sufficient training program.

Step 2: The Do Not Call Registry

Even though you are not directly selling goods over the phone, you are participating in a marketing campaign to sell a service. For this reason, you are required to register with the National Do Not Call Registry as a seller before ever making a phone call. Additionally, you must follow all the government's rules, including downloading updated numbers added to the Do Not Call Registry every 31 days. Depending on the size of the area where your business is located, you may not have to pay for this information. Data for up to five

area codes is free. After five, you must pay an annual fee of \$55 per area code of data up to a maximum annual fee of \$15,058. You can learn more about the Do Not Call Registry on their website (<https://telemarketing.donotcall.gov>). It is important to note if you call someone with a number listed on the Do Not Call Registry, you may be fined up to \$16,000 per incident. So do not skip step two.

Step 3: The Phone Book

Once your staff is trained, you can give them pages from your local phone book to call during downtime at your urgent care center. Make sure you have checked the numbers listed on the pages in the phone book against the database you have downloaded from the Do Not Call Registry. This can be time consuming because you have to do it manually, but it is important to note that approximately 10 percent of all residential addresses have a telephone number available for telemarketing. Reaching those 10 percent is much higher than the response rate on most direct mail pieces. Another option is to purchase a telemarketing list from a database company and then use their electronic version to compare against the Do Not Call Registry List.

Step 4: Ongoing Training & Monitoring

Because your staff will enjoy downtime at work more than they will enjoy telemarketing, it is important for you to provide them with ongoing training, to remind them why they are participating in the calls, to ask them for feedback, and to monitor that they are actually making calls. Sometimes creating a competition with a good incentive among the staff for who can make the most calls in a day, a week, or a month, can help encourage them to do this part of their job.

Once you have your telemarketing system set-up, it is not a difficult marketing tool to utilize to grow your business. It is important to note this marketing technique may not be right for your urgent care center or for the community you live in. But ask yourself this question. Why would I not want to utilize the staff I am already paying to use the phone lines I am already paying for to grow my business during downtime at my urgent care center?



Hiring an Urgent Care Marketer

“The successful person makes a habit of doing what the failing person doesn’t like to do.”

-Thomas Edison

I remember it like it was yesterday. After giving a presentation at a conference in Chicago on branding your urgent care, one of the audience members and I ended up in the same van back to the airport. For almost 30 minutes I had to defend my presentation to him. Usually I like debates, but this one just went on and on. The thing he was arguing over was my statement of something similar to the effect of, “If you want your urgent care center to grow, I would encourage you to hire a full-time marketer whose sole purpose is to focus his or her time on growing your business.”

His argument, “Of course you’d say those things. If you didn’t, you wouldn’t have a job.”

Snapshot: Marketers in Urgent Care

Over the course of the last four years, I’ve realized my position as a full-time urgent care marketer puts me in an elite minority. Most practices do not employ someone to handle all of the things I do for our urgent care centers. For the most part, depending on the size

of the urgent care centers, my position is split among several staff members, or it is done, when time allows, by the clinic manager or the physician's spouse. In the larger urgent care centers, one person handles all of the marketing for multiple locations.

Then there is me. When I started in 2008, I was hired to replace the physician's wife's role as marketer. As you already know, we had two urgent cares at that time in two different states. My job was to market them. There wasn't a true marketing plan in place. There was no training. There was just me, the skills I'd developed in my two prior roles, and my phenomenal co-worker, Kim, who had built our occupational medicine program at what is now our headquarters in Texarkana, Texas. Together, it was our job to grow the occupational medicine business at our clinic in Arkansas that had been open only three months, and my job solely to increase awareness of that clinic in the community. Where to start?

I Don't Need a Full Time Marketer

Lucky for you, today there are sites like Urgent Care Management Monthly, where marketers in our industry can go and get ideas on what to do. Even better, there are conferences like the Urgent Care Success Summit, where marketers and urgent care owners can go to get the latest and greatest industry-specific ideas on how to grow your business. Those weren't around when I started. But trust me, I kept busy.

Since I first started, we have opened several more clinics, and with vast expansion plans to open plenty more over the next five years, I know I'll be busy. Many urgent care owners think marketing is a onetime deal. Shoot a commercial, design an ad, put up a website, dabble in social media, send out a post card, create a brochure, and attend a few health fairs. For the most part, do it once and the people will come. In some locations, that model may work great. For us, our clinics are not the only urgent care center in town. But many people will tell you otherwise. Why? Because we're everywhere.

What Does a Full Time Marketer Do?

You can outsource a lot of things. In fact, everything I listed above except the health fair can be outsourced to someone. And if that is

your only plan, your clinic manager can probably coordinate all of that. There are pros and cons of outsourcing your marketing, but we have found over the years doing it in-house and having a full-time marketer is well worth the investment.

Our busiest urgent care center sees between 125-150 patients a day during the spring and summer. In the fall and winter, that number can grow to over 200 per day. Our newer clinics see between 40-60 a day depending on the time of year, and that number continues to grow each month. Why? Because our owners recognized the need to have someone who worked full-time developing and implementing strategies to grow their business.

When I first started my position four years ago, our website averaged between 8-15 visits a day. We now have over 300 visits a day. That is in large part due to a lot of internal legwork developing our website and managing our PPC campaigns in-house. Let's face it, if you're not being found online, your competitor is getting your business.

Another thing your full-time marketer should be responsible for is growing your occupational medicine business. If this is a service you offer, this role has a potential to be a full-time job. Our marketers, however, on average spend at least two days a week working solely on this. The remainder of their time is spent on grassroots marketing. From daycare presentations, school athletic events, and community volunteerism, to civic club presentations, Chamber of Commerce events, and B2C marketing, our community educators easily put in 40+ hours a week.

Can I Really Justify Another Salary?

I think the question you need to ask yourself isn't, "Should I hire a full-time marketer?" The question you really need to ask is, "Can my business grow the way I want it to if I don't?" For \$30,000 to \$60,000 per year (depending on cost of living in your market), you can hire someone to fill this role. Do the math. If your average reimbursement per urgent care patient is \$100-\$150, and your marketer helps bring in an additional 40 new patients per month, that means you're making an extra \$4,000-\$6,000 per month or \$48,000 to \$72,000 per year. Now multiply that by the lifetime

value of that patient. And you haven't even added in yet the money you can make by growing your occupational medicine program. After six years of being open, our oldest clinic still sees over 494 new patients every single month. Is my salary as a full-time marketer worth it? You decide.

Hiring Your Urgent Care Marketer

As an urgent care owner, you probably have the interview process down for hiring nurses, receptionists, and medical providers. In fact, if you have a medical background, it is very easy for you to interview on skills for these positions. Possibly, your challenge is hiring someone to market your urgent care center. Don't feel alone. One of the top requests I get weekly at Urgent Care Management Monthly is to provide hiring tips for adding a marketer to the urgent care center's staff.

I have been responsible for building our marketing and sales team for our different clinics for years. When I first started hiring marketing coordinators for our individual clinics, I looked for someone with a background in traditional marketing. I soon learned that while having those skills is an added benefit, the most successful marketers I have hired have had a strong background in sales.

Understand the Marketing Role

Before you decide to hire someone for marketing, you should set goals for what you expect the added salary expense will add to your business. If you want to grow your referral base from area doctors, hiring someone with a background in pharmaceutical sales or physician recruitment is a good idea. If you want to grow the number of companies utilizing your occupational medicine services, hiring someone with outside sales experience is a plus. If you are looking for someone to manage your social media marketing, obviously you will want to look for someone with a background in internet marketing. In reality, you probably want someone with experience in all three areas. Finding that person is rare. The good news is, if you hire someone with the right personality, all of the skills can be taught. If, however, you hire someone with all the skills and no personality, you will be setting the new marketer up for failure.

Inside vs. Outside Sales

Our marketing coordinators primarily fill an outside sales role. During interviews they are told that 80 percent of their time will be spent outside of the office marketing the clinic to area businesses, daycares, schools, and at community events. The biggest mistake we have made in the past is hiring people with inside sales or marketing experience. Most people with inside sales or marketing experience may be great at talking on the phone or coming up with marketing concepts. The biggest problem, however, is it becomes hard to get them to leave the comforts of their office setting to actually market your clinic in the community.

Your front desk staff and nursing team members can help you with inside sales and marketing tactics. If you are going to spend money on a marketing salary, find someone who wants to spend time outside selling the concept of your urgent care center. And make sure the person you hire has experience selling and marketing companies in the same stage as your urgent care center. If you are a start-up business, you need a marketer with experience marketing start-up concepts. If you have been open for 10 or more years, you need a marketer with experience marketing to and retaining established patients.

Skill Set

Once you have determined the marketer has the personality you need, make sure he or she also has the skills. To start with, your marketing coordinator needs great written and communication skills. Your marketing coordinator should be able to write press releases on a bi-monthly basis, pitch stories to area radio and television stations, and be able to answer media inquiries as needed. Additionally he or she needs to be able to coordinate newsletters you send to your patients. During the interview process, ask your marketing coordinator to write a press release on a certain topic.

Your marketing coordinator should also be organized. He or she will be responsible for coordinating your monthly, quarterly, or yearly contracts for advertising in the newspaper, on television and radio, and on the internet. The marketing coordinator will also have to coordinate ordering supplies for health fairs, community events, and in-house marketing. Another responsibility will be to stock local apartment complexes, area RV parks, hotels, and even the local

Chamber with promotional literature about your urgent care center on at least a quarterly basis. In order to be successful, your marketing coordinator must be a multi-tasker who is not afraid to put in long hours when needed.

Smart and Gut

I ran across an article on hiring for marketing recently that said to remember two words when hiring a marketer: Smart and Gut. Simply put, look for “smart” when interviewing and trust your “gut”. Smart people will quickly pick up knowledge about what your urgent care center does. They will adapt to your company culture and instinctively know how to transition their skill set into your company. And no matter what position you hire for, you should always trust your gut. If the marketing candidate sitting across the table from you rubs you the wrong way, they will probably rub your potential clients the wrong way, too.

Questions to Ask During Your Interviews

1. Give an example of a marketing plan you have implemented in a previous job. What were the reasons it failed? What were the reasons it was successful?
2. From what you know about our company, what would you immediately recommend we change and why?
3. Do you have a problem submitting daily (business logs), weekly (tasks lists), and monthly reports (analytics)?
4. As the marketer, what reports do you think you need access to in order to evaluate where we’re currently at and how you’re doing in your job?
5. Coming into this position, what standards do you think you should be held to in order to evaluate your job performance?
6. If you were to start tomorrow, what do you think you need to do as the marketer over the next six months in order to consider yourself successful?
6. You will spend a majority of your time doing cold calls, promoting our occupational medicine clinic and urgent care center to area businesses. What do you enjoy the most about making cold calls

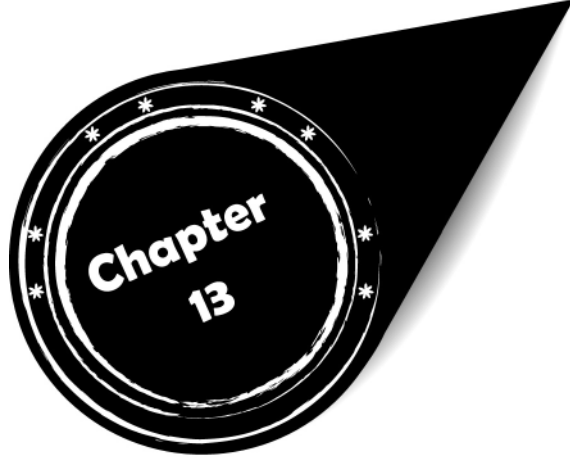
and visiting businesses on a daily basis?

7. Coming in, what marketing strategies do you think are the most important for marketing our company?

8. While this position is typically 40 hours per week, as a salaried employee, there may be weeks when you have to work more than 40 hours. Do you have a problem working additional hours?

9. Do you have a problem working evenings, when needed to cover events and marketing activities?

10. We are interviewing several other candidates for this position. Outside of everything else you've told us today, why should we hire you?



Cultivating & Growing Physician Referrals to Your Urgent Care

“Business is never so healthy as when, like a chicken, it must do a certain amount of scratching around for what it gets.”
- Henry Ford

A recent survey by the Center for Studying Health Center Change found that “when selecting new primary care physicians, half of all consumers relied on word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and relatives, but many also used doctor recommendations (38%) and health plan information (35%), and nearly two in five used multiple information sources when choosing a primary care physician.”

How does this apply to the urgent care setting? Relationships with primary care physicians (PCP) can be a great referral source for your business, especially after hours, when a PCP’s office is over-booked, or when a PCP wants to go on vacation for an extended period of time. When working on getting physician referrals to your urgent care clinic, the old adage, “you scratch my back, and I’ll scratch yours,” applies. For the last six years I have built and handled physician referrals to our urgent care centers, and the most important thing I have learned is the doctors we refer the most

patients to are the same ones most likely to send patients our way. Additionally, the doctor's offices in town with whom we have built the best relationships with are also our biggest fans. In the world of urgent care, the major boost to growing these fans comes through education. Since urgent care centers are still a fairly new concept in many communities, it is important that this educational process start before you open your doors.

Step 1: Physician Education

Physicians in the community need to understand that you are not the competition, but you are in fact a great business partner for their practice. When we go into a new community, we contact the area physicians and tell them our role is to fill the gap between their patients and the ER, and to provide a place for patients without a personal physician to get their medical care. A PCP with a relatively busy practice will at times have patients that need to be seen quickly, and an appointment book that just won't allow this to happen. In this instance your urgent care center has the opportunity to be an extension of sorts for a primary care clinic's practice. They can refer patients to your urgent care center knowing their patients will return to them on a scheduled basis.

Step 2: Continuity of Care

As part of building a referral program with area physicians, you may find it mutually beneficial to provide visit records from your clinic to them indicating what their patient's chief complaint was, along with the treatments you provided.

Step 3: Establish Reciprocal Referrals

The next thing you can do when talking with physicians is find out if they are accepting new patients. In an urgent care setting you may not be able to treat problems like high blood pressure, chronic pain, or diabetes. You will need somewhere you trust to refer your urgent care patients to. Most doctors will welcome the help in patient recruiting.

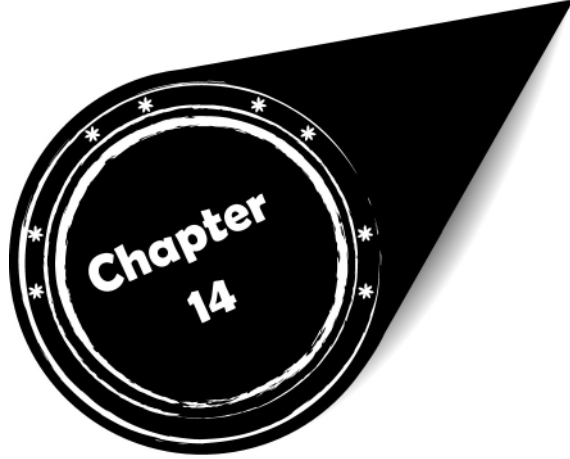
Step 4: Train Your Staff

Next you need to make sure your office staff responsible for making your outgoing referrals knows who to reach at the appointment desk at those physicians' offices. Properly educating your staff on

how each physician's office prefers to get their referrals is important. Each office will have their own way of doing things. The easier you make it on them, the better off your business will be. One extremely important thing to remember ... the physician's office staff speaks with the patients much more than the physician does. They are the ones fielding the calls when patients need to be seen. When they see that your office staff is genuinely concerned with doing things correctly, they will be appreciative. A good relationship between your staff and outside offices is a major key in the success of referrals being sent to you.

Step 5: Relationships are Ongoing

Getting someone to refer to your urgent care center is just the first step. You must continually make sure each clinic referring to your office is happy with the services you are providing - even if it's only a five minute stop to say hello and ask if your office is doing everything correctly, or if there is anything you're not doing. Basically, you need to have the "What else can we do for you?" conversation with them often. Your office manager, marketer, or clinical coordinator is perfectly capable of doing these visits. Finally, at least once a year, make one of your visits a gift bearing visit. Your gifts don't have to be big. Small things with your urgent care center's logo on them (pens, notepads, magnets) help keep your name fresh in their minds and also serve as a small token of appreciation for your business relationship.



Handling Media Sales People & Sticking to Your Budget

“The salesman knows nothing of what he is selling save that he is charging a great deal too much for it.”
- Oscar Wilde

When I first started working in the healthcare field as a marketer, I was impressed by the number of people who wanted to visit me to get my advertising dollars. All too quickly I was overwhelmed by the sheer number of advertising opportunities, sales calls, and sponsorship requests I received. I learned a valuable lesson – I could spend my time marketing, or I could spend my time being marketed to. I picked option number one. After attending several urgent care conferences, and also serving as a marketing consultant for urgent care centers around the U.S., I have learned this is not something unique. I have also learned many urgent care owners or office managers have no real experience in media buying, and they’re quickly overwhelmed, too. With so many choices, what should you do?

Step 1: Create a Marketing Plan and Budget

Reread step one, and you’ll notice a specific order to the words “plan” and “budget”. If you create a budget first, you will quickly

find ways to spend every dollar and then call it a plan. This is a BIG mistake. Throwing dollars away and calling it marketing is a sure fire way to disaster. And if you do not have plan, you are throwing your dollars away.

I recently consulted with a doctor who told me he fired his marketer and scaled back his budget. He had attended a two hour seminar, lunch included, put on by the local radio station, selling a yearlong package at a “great rate”. Not only would they create his jingle for him and write his commercials, but he would also be on four of the areas biggest stations and get prime spots for 12 months. Additionally, they would give him his own “expert page” on their website, and they would show him just how many visitors went to that website every month. He was sure that was the best plan. So he put all his eggs in the radio basket.

Really??? Would you be surprised if I told you his patient volume had not increased like he had hoped? He was, after all, spending \$2500 a month on radio advertising...shouldn't his numbers have grown? He also couldn't answer questions like how his patients had found him over the past six months or the past year. He had no clue who his target demographic was, and more importantly, he could not tell me how his clinic was any different than the other clinics in his town. He has a lot of work to do, but he is also stuck in a year contract. Why? He had no plan, only a budget.

Step 2: Evaluate What is and isn't Working?

Each year in November I sit down and plan out the following year. While I evaluate monthly what is and is not working over the previous months, I take at least two days each year to truly evaluate the success of the previous year. I reevaluate our marketing plan, our strategies, our target demographic and messages, our strengths and weaknesses in each community, and the events we attended the previous year. Then I set goals for the next year and make a plan. From that plan I decide where I am going to spend the advertising dollars for each urgent care center we run, what events our urgent care will sponsor or attend, and what promotions we will run.

Step 3: Guard Your Time Wisely

Once you have step one and two down, you will be able to guard your time and not let media sales people steal it from you. Instead of letting them contact you, contact them at the beginning of each year and ask for their rate sheets. Remember rate sheets typically increase each year, so you'll need to get new prices each January. Let your sales person know what your plans are to utilize them throughout the next year, and ask them to put a package together for you around your plans. Never allow them to sucker you in on the next "good deal" they have, unless you really think it is a good deal that meets your needs.

As a marketer, your number one goal should be to be outside marketing your clinic to the community and building relationships that equate to patients coming in the door. If you have the right marketing plan in place, the amount of time you spend with media sales people in the office should be minimal, and your return on investment should be good.

Understand Media Industry Jargon

Finally, if and when you decide to meet with a sales rep for radio or television advertising, it is important you understand some of the terminology used in media buying and how it relates to the contract you ultimately sign.

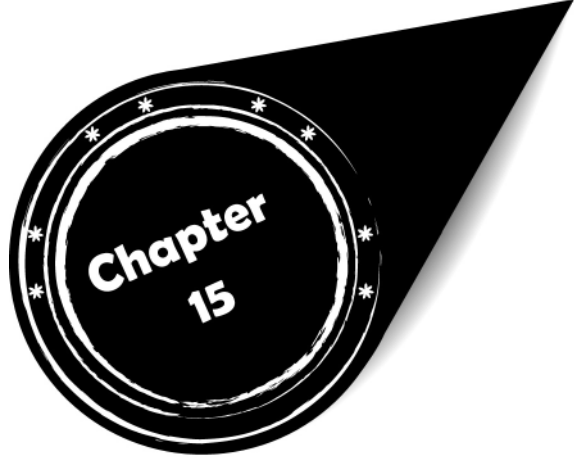
The two most important terms you need to understand are "reach" & "frequency". Reach refers to the size of the audience your message will be delivered to. Frequency refers to how many times they will be exposed to the message. Reaching a large number of listeners without enough frequency is ineffective. But reaching too few people with a lot of frequency may not produce good results either. In general, I recommend never entering a contract where you are not getting at least a frequency of four because it typically takes three times for someone to hear your commercial before they begin to recognize it and four times for them to begin to recall it. If your sales representative doesn't understand what you mean when you say, "I want a frequency of at least four," ask for a new sales representative.

Additionally, many media purchases will throw in "added value" pieces. These are the extras like sponsorships, banner ads on the

internet, streaming commercials on the internet, free production, and special promotions. Don't be afraid to ask for them before you sign a contract. But also, don't sign a contract simply because it is full of these added value pieces. Always remember what you initially set out to buy and make sure you are getting what you truly want. The bonus things thrown in should be just that - a bonus!

To determine the reach on radio, ask to see the station's "Arbitron ratings". Arbitron is an unbiased research company that specializes in providing radio survey reports. While the accuracy of these reports is limited, comparing the ratings of one station to another station when deciding which will offer you the better frequency allows you to compare the proverbial "apples-to-apples". In television, you would ask to see the "Nielsen ratings" for each station.

Before you sign any contract, make sure you understand the terms under which you can cancel your purchase, including understanding the required amount of time for advance notice and any applicable financial penalty. Standard practice allows for no penalty with a cancellation notice two weeks prior to the date of the first broadcast, and 45 to 90 days written notice to cancel after the first time your commercial is broadcast.



Marketing Occupational Medicine

“In business, one of the challenges is making sure that your product is the easiest to experience and complete a sale.”

- Mark Cuban

Business relationships are the cornerstone of building your occupational medicine program. So how do you grow your program and build relationships? Creating and implementing a successful sales and marketing plan specifically targeted at key people in different businesses is the key.

Part 1: Develop a Prospect List

The first step in any marketing campaign is identifying your target audience. For occupational medicine, your goal should be to reach the decision makers in a company who handle safety, hiring, and health related issues. In small companies this may be the business owner or office manager. In larger companies, this could be the director of human resources or the company’s safety manager. Finding out the right person to contact at a company can often be as easy as visiting the company’s website or calling the company directly. You can also contact your local Chamber of Commerce for a business or member directory list to build your prospect database from. When all else fails, persistence in showing up at the

company repeatedly with small gifts for the secretary at the front office may help score you a meeting with the right decision maker in the company.

Part 2: Finding Your Unique Selling Point

Making the initial contact with a decision maker is usually the hard part. Many decision makers are busy, and finding the time to fit in a meeting with someone selling occupational medicine is not usually at the top of their list. They are looking for ways to make their jobs easier, to make their company run better or safer, and to save their bottom line. This is where it is important for you to understand how the services you offer outweigh the benefits they are currently receiving elsewhere. Seldom will you find a company who is not already utilizing an occupational medicine program of some sort within your community. Prior to your initial meeting, find out what benefits you offer that your competitors do not offer. Benefits can include things like:

- Cleaner facility,
- Shorter wait times,
- Drug testing, physicals, and injury treatments all under one roof, and
- Improved communication between physicians, injured workers, and the company.

After your initial visit, you may learn other things the decision maker is unhappy about with their current company. Use those emotional buttons in all future correspondence until you are able to close the deal and bring the company on to use your occupational medicine services. Then, make sure you deliver and keep the customer happy.

Part 3: Marketing Your Program

Your resources, most notably time, are probably limited when it comes to marketing occupational medicine. You may have a full time sales and marketing person, but their time will be split between marketing your urgent care, attending community events, managing in-house marketing tactics, and promoting occupational medicine. Dedicating at least one day a week to occupational medicine is a solid way to make sure this part of your business is not overlooked. Outside of visiting business owners at their offices,

below is a list of tools you can also employ to market your occupational medicine program.

1. Telemarketing

Develop a script for promoting your occupational medicine clinic, and then start calling people from your prospect list. Another option is to have your front desk staff participate in telemarketing during downtimes by calling businesses out of the area yellow pages. Make sure the staff is trained on how to answer basic questions about your occupational medicine program before they begin making calls.

2. Email Marketing

Setting up a series of automated weekly emails to potential businesses can help educate them on why they need your services and the benefits you offer. Often times you can obtain an email list of business owners from your local Chamber of Commerce. Other times you may have to do a bit of work seeking out email addresses from company websites, business cards you have collected, and advertisements in local papers.

After a company signs up to utilize your services, send them monthly articles focused on educating them and helping them understand ways to keep their employees safe on the job site. Done right, this value added marketing piece can help you stand out above your competition.

3. Lunch & Learns

People like to do business with their friends. What better way to build a friendship than over lunch? Consider holding lunch and learns at your company several times a year. Invite a mix of potential clients and established clients to attend. Remember that, in addition to offering a free lunch, you also need to provide great content. Topics to discuss at the different events can include:

- Ways to reduce workers compensation costs,
- Drug testing to improve workplace safety, and
- Decreasing OSHA reportable incidents.

4. Manufacturing & Industry Expos

If your community offers industry or manufacturing expos, consider

attending them to network and meet people in the industry. Carry brochures and business cards with you, and never be afraid to ask the people you meet who the best person to contact at their company is regarding safety information. Also ask them for permission to use their name when contacting the decision maker at the company.

5. Chamber Events

Finally, a great tool for relationship building is your area Chamber of Commerce. You should attend all groundbreaking, ribbon cuttings, business after hours, and other events hosted by the Chamber. Being involved in your community through the Chamber shows you care about the success of area businesses. It also gives you the opportunity to network with area business owners and establish friendships.

Creating an Occupational Medicine Marketing Handbook

I still remember my first occupational medicine sales call. I had been on the job two weeks and hadn't received any true formalized training. We had two urgent care centers at the time, and my job was to grow our occupational medicine business at the new locations. The center had been open two months and had a low volume of people utilizing it for occupational medicine reasons. So needless to say I was excited I had landed an opportunity to speak with the safety supervisor of the largest trucking company in the town.

I could regurgitate the answers to basic questions on all the services we offered. I had practiced my opening pitch. I had created a beautiful presentation folder detailing how our services could help the trucking company. I felt more prepared for this presentation than I had ever felt before. As I pulled into the parking lot 15 minutes early, I was eager to get inside. I reviewed my notes from the phone conversations I had with my prospect to ensure the presentation I was about to give was going to accurately assess his needs. Then I headed inside to "close the deal."

The first five minutes of the presentation went great. Then came a question I hadn't prepared for. My response, "Let me call our occupational medicine director to get the answer to that." I don't even remember what that first question was now. Nor do I remem-

ber how many times I repeated the phrase, “Let me call our occupational medicine director to get the answer to that.” What I do remember is by the end of the hour (and I’m still surprised he talked to me for an hour), I knew I had not landed the account. My lack of adequate training in occupational medicine made our company look as though we weren’t knowledgeable about the services we were providing. Two weeks later when I attempted a follow-up call, I couldn’t get the man to return my message. Over the next six months I tried in vain to score a second appointment to redeem myself and try to earn their business, but the meeting never happened.

You only get one chance to make a good first impression, and too often a bad first impression can kill all future hopes of landing an occupational medicine account. Fast forward several years. It is now my job to train our marketing and sales teams. One of the things I realized our teams needed was an Occupational Medicine Handbook to take with them when they go on sales calls. While I don’t expect them to know everything on their first call, I do expect them to know where they can turn to in their handbook to reference information.

On the pages that follow I am sharing parts of our handbook. You will need to tweak your handbook to fit the services and turnaround times you offer. But it is a great starting point for you in developing your own handbook for your sales and marketing team.



Occupational Medicine Handbook

DNA (Paternity) Testing

A paternity test is determined through DNA testing of the child, the mother and the alleged father. A paternity test can be performed without testing the mother; however it does reduce the statistical value of the test. Every effort should be made to test the mother when she is available. During the test, a photo is taken of all individuals being tested to send to lab. Both cheeks of each individual are swabbed two times for 15-20 seconds. Each person has their own swab envelope sent to the lab.

There are two types of paternity tests, private and legal. The only difference between the two types of tests is the documentation procedures used at the time of sample collection. The laboratory methods are identical. A personal paternity test can be collected anonymously. Samples for a legal test must be collected or witnessed by a neutral third party with no interest in the test's outcome and proper verification of identity documented for each person. Personal DNA Test The private paternity test is a quick and economical solution perfect for families who are seeking the truth regarding paternity for personal information. This test is useful for families with lingering doubt, adult children wanting verification, and families wanting to know before incurring legal costs.

Legal DNA Test A legal paternity test is a conclusive, legally binding test that uses DNA to determine if a man is the biological father of a child. The primary difference between a legal paternity test and a private paternity test is the Chain of Custody; a documentation process used to ensure test results are legally admissible. This test is useful for child custody cases, child support cases, immigration, and inheritance cases.

Drug Screens

9 Panel Drug Test

The standard drug test for pre-employment and random drug screens is the 9 Panel test. It uses a urine sample to test for drug use. This simple test is able to indicate drug use up to 60 days depending on the drug used. The 9 Panel test tests for marijuana, amphetamines, opiates, PCP, cocaine, methamphetamines, benzodiazepines, barbiturates and methadone.

Chain of Custody (C.O.C.)

“Chain of Custody” refers to the course of action of documenting the management and storage of a specimen, from the moment a donor gives the specimen to the collector, to the final destination of the specimen and the review and reporting of the final result

Consortium

A consortium is simply an association of independent businesses that belong to it for a common purpose. In this case, the purpose is to provide a random drug and alcohol testing structure. Thru the consortium, we serve as a “Third Party Administrator (TPA)” between the employee and the company.

Hair Tests

Hair testing can detect drug use for the previous 90 days. Hair testing generally uses 1-1/2 inches of hair, representing about 3 months. It is generally accepted that in order to test positive, the drug in question must have been used 3 times or more within the window of the test. After a drug is used, it takes about 7-10 days for the hair containing the drug to grow out of the scalp enough to be cut. Therefore, the hair test will not include drugs used in the

week prior to the test. The drug remains in the hair, growing out much the same as hair dye and “dark roots”. Hair can be collected from several head locations and combined to obtain the required amount of hair. If the head hair is too short, body hair can be used as a substitute. If body hair is used the timeframe represented by the test is approximately one year due to the different growth pattern in hair below the neck.

Medical Review Office (MRO)

A Medical Review Officer (MRO) is a licensed physician responsible for receiving and reviewing laboratory results generated by an employer’s drug testing program and evaluating medical explanations for certain drug test results. An MRO provides quality assurance review of the drug testing process for the specimens, determines if there is a legitimate medical explanation for laboratory confirmed positive, adulterated, substituted and invalid drug test results, ensures the timely flow of test results and other information to employers, and protects the confidentiality of the drug testing information.

Nail Tests

Fingernails and toenails are composed of a hard protein called keratin. Drugs are incorporated into nails from the blood stream and remain locked in the nail as it grows. Nails grow in both length and thickness. Drugs enter the nail from the base as the keratin is formed and via the nail bed that extends under the full length of nail. The method of screening for drug use in a fingernail test is the five panel, Enzyme Multiple Immunoassay Test (EMIT). The fingernail is put in a chemical solution to rid the nail of external contaminants and is then liquefied. Nail testing can detect drug use for the previous 8 months and tests for marijuana, cocaine, PCP, opiate, amphetamines.

Pre-Employment Drug Screen

The US Department of Labor has estimated that drug use in the workplace costs employers up to \$100 billion dollars annually in lost work time, accidents, health care costs and workers compensation costs.

Drug use affects a company’s bottom line. Workers who do drugs are more likely to change jobs or skip work. The good news is you

can put programs in place to make sure your workplace is drug-free. A good drug free program includes testing applicants prior to their hire date and doing random drug testing throughout their tenure with your company.

Generally, these requirements for pre employment drug screening are followed by employers:

- Employers have a written drug testing policy that requires job applicants to be drug-free.
- Written notice of testing is given before the applicant may be tested. Many drug and alcohol testing laws require that job applicants be notified in advance that they may be tested and under what conditions.
- Written notice is given to the applicant that employment drug screening is required before hiring. This may be done through the employment application form or on a specific form given out at the first interview.
- The written notice details the type of drug testing that will be carried out and lists the over-the-counter medications that may produce a positive result.
- The same testing program should be implemented for all applicants in a particular category or there could be implications of discrimination.

Random Drug Screen

We maintain an employee database for a company or organization and randomly select employees for testing. This reduces the company's or organization's liability, as the employer is removed from the selection process. We can set up Random Drug Testing to be done as frequently as required by the company. We maintain a consortium for the random drug tests.

Quick Tests

These tests provide results in less than 10 minutes. Non-negative tests are sent to the laboratory for confirmation testing. These tests are convenient for employers that need to have immediate test results. These tests are not available to employers that fall under federal testing program guidelines.

Physicals

Audio/Hearing Test

We can do audio/hearing tests at all locations. These are often required for DOT and pre-employment physicals. We have sound-proof rooms or hearing booths at all locations.

Comprehensive Metabolic Panel (CMP)

Also known as a Chem 12; Chemistry Panel; Chemistry Screen
Used to gain information about the current status of kidneys and liver as well as electrolyte and acid/base balance and levels of blood glucose and blood proteins; to monitor known conditions, such as hypertension, and to monitor the use of medications to check for any kidney- or liver-related side effects

DOT Physical

The Department of Transportation requires all Commercial Drivers License (CDL) holders to receive periodic physical examinations, officially called a “Department of Transportation Medical Examination,” to ensure the ability of the driver to safely operate a commercial vehicle. A DOT physical exam is valid for up to 24 months. The medical examiner may also issue a medical examiner’s certificate for less than 24 months when it is desirable to monitor a medical condition.

Electrocardiography (EKG or ECG)

Electrocardiography (ECG or EKG from the German Elektrokardiogramm) is an interpretation of the electrical activity of the heart over a period of time, as detected by electrodes attached to the outer surface of the skin. The recording produced by this noninvasive procedure is termed as electrocardiogram (also ECG or EKG). An EKG is used to measure the rate and regularity of heartbeats, as well as the size and position of the chambers, the presence of any damage to the heart, and the effects of drugs or devices used to regulate the heart, such as a pacemaker.

G6PD Testing

Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) enzyme testing is used to screen for and help diagnose G6PD deficiencies. G6PD deficiency is an inherited condition in which the body doesn’t have

enough of the enzyme glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase, or G6PD, which helps red blood cells function normally. This deficiency can cause hemolytic anemia, usually after exposure to certain medications, foods, or even infections.

Ichihara Test

The Ishihara Color Test is a vision test for red-green color deficiencies, or color blindness.

Lipid - Blood Work

The lipid profile is a group of tests that are often ordered together to determine risk of coronary heart disease. They are tests that have been shown to be good indicators of whether someone is likely to have a heart attack or stroke caused by blockage of blood vessels or hardening of the arteries

Pre-Employment Physical

Pre Employment Physical Examinations, or also know as Post Offer Physical Exams, are done to determine if an applicant is physically capable of meeting the essential functions of the job, while maintaining the examinee's privacy and medical confidentiality.

School & Athletic Physicals

Prior to starting school, and prior to playing UIL sports, students are required to have physical exams.

Urine Analysis Dip (U.A. Dip)

A urine dipstick test is often done as part of an overall urinalysis, but it can also be done on its own, depending on the doctor's concerns. Once a urine sample is collected, a nurse or technician will place a specially treated chemical strip (dipstick) into the urine. Patches on the dipstick will change color to indicate the presence of such things as white blood cells, protein, or glucose.

Pulmonary Function Test (PFT)

PFTs measure how well the lungs take in and release air and how well they move gases such as oxygen from the atmosphere into the body's circulation. PFTs are required for employees around fumes and are conducted once a year.

Respirator FIT Test

Before an employee may be required to use any respirator with pressure tight-fitting face-piece, the employee must be fit tested with the same make, model, style and size of respirator that will be used.

TB Test

A tuberculin skin test is done to see if you have ever had tuberculosis (TB). The test is done by putting a small amount of TB protein (antigens) under the top layer of skin on your inner forearm. If you have ever been exposed to the TB bacteria (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*), your skin will react to the antigens by developing a firm red bump at the site within 2 days.

A tuberculin skin test cannot tell how long you have been infected with TB. It also cannot tell if the infection is latent (inactive) or is active and can be passed to others.

Titmus Test

The Titmus Tests is a vision test that screens for visual acuity, muscle balance (horizontal and vertical phoria), depth perception, color perception, and binocular vision.

Visual/Eye Test

As part of physicals, a person's vision is tested using a vision chart. (We also offer Ichihara and Titmus Testing).

Vaccinations & Travel Medicine

Some vaccinations and travel medicine often require several doses prior to travel, so as soon as people know their itinerary, they should make an appointment with us to secure their travel vaccinations in time to allow their immunity to build up prior to travel. For instance, Hepatitis B requires a booster after 30 days to increase immunity.

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is an acute bacterial disease transmitted through respiratory droplets and personal contact. Diphtheria affects the mucous membranes of the respiratory tract (respiratory diphtheria), the skin (cutaneous diphtheria), and occasionally other sites (eyes,

nose, or vagina).

Diphtheria remains a serious disease throughout much of the world. In particular, large outbreaks of diphtheria occurred in the 1990s throughout Russia and the other former Soviet republics. Travelers to disease-endemic areas are at increased risk for exposure to toxigenic strains of *C. diphtheriae*.

Areas with known endemic diphtheria include Africa, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti and Paraguay; Asia/South Pacific — Afghanistan, China, India, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam; Middle East — Iran, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Yemen; Europe and other countries.

Malaria

Malaria is a mosquito-borne disease caused by a parasite. People with malaria often experience fever, chills, and flu-like illness. Left untreated, they may develop severe complications and die.

Each year 350-500 million cases of malaria occur worldwide, and over one million people die. About 1,300 cases of malaria are diagnosed in the United States each year. The vast majority of cases in the United States are in travelers and immigrants returning from malaria-risk areas, many from sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent.

Travelers to a malaria risk area should avoid mosquito bites and take a preventive anti-malarial drug.

Meningitis (Travel)

Meningitis is an infection of the fluid of a person's spinal cord and the fluid that surrounds the brain. People sometimes refer to it as spinal meningitis. Meningitis is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection.

Viral meningitis is generally less severe and resolves without specific treatment, while bacterial meningitis can be quite severe and may result in brain damage, hearing loss, or learning disability. Some forms of bacterial meningitis are contagious.

The meningitis bacteria are spread through the exchange of respiratory and throat secretions (i.e., coughing, kissing). Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as things like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been.

Overseas travelers should check to see if meningococcal vaccine is recommended for their destination.

Tetanus

Tetanus is an acute disease characterized by muscle rigidity and painful spasms, often starting in the muscles of the jaw and neck. Severe tetanus can lead to respiratory failure and death. Tetanus is caused by a neurotoxin produced by anaerobic tetanus bacilli growing in contaminated wounds.

Lesions that are considered “tetanus prone” are wounds contaminated with dirt, feces or saliva, deep wounds, burns, crush injuries or those with necrotic tissue. Tetanus has also been associated with apparently clean superficial wounds, surgical procedures, insect bites, dental infections, chronic sores and infections, and intravenous drug use. Tetanus occurs almost exclusively in persons who are inadequately immunized and can occur anywhere there are inadequately vaccinated persons.

Typhoid Fever Vaccination

Typhoid fever is an acute, life-threatening febrile illness caused by the bacterium *Salmonella Enterica Typhi*. An estimated 22 million cases of typhoid fever and 200,000 related deaths occur worldwide each year. Approximately 400 cases of typhoid fever, mostly among travelers, are reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention each year.

Typhoid risk is greatest for travelers to the Indian subcontinent and other developing countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Travelers who are visiting relatives or friends and who may be less likely to eat only safe foods (cooked and served hot) and beverages (carbonated beverages or those made from water that has been boiled) are at greater risk.

Typhoid Vaccination is particularly recommended for those who will be traveling in smaller cities, villages, and rural areas off the usual tourist itineraries, where food and beverage choices may be more limited.

Yellow Fever

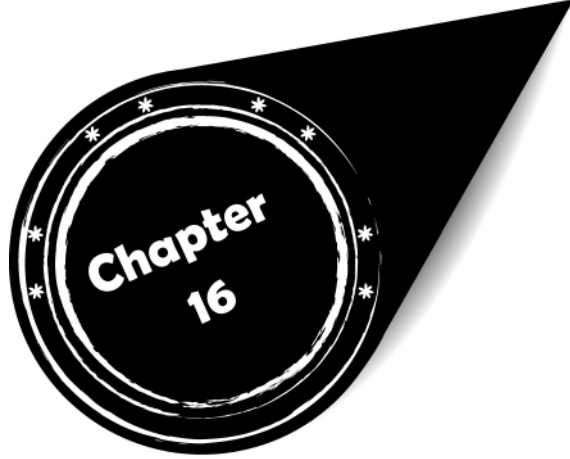
Yellow fever is a viral disease transmitted between humans by a mosquito. Most countries have regulations and requirements for yellow fever vaccination that must be met prior to entering the country. General precautions to avoid mosquito bites should be followed. Yellow fever vaccination proof is required for entry to many countries such as India and Brazil. Yellow fever vaccine is a live virus vaccine which has been used for several decades. A single dose confers immunity lasting 10 years or more. If a person is at continued risk of yellow fever infection, a booster dose is needed every 10 years.

Worker's Compensation

Recordable vs. Non-Recordable Injuries:

All employers are required to comply with regulations for recording and reporting occupational injuries and illnesses per regulations set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The OSH Act of 1970 requires the Secretary of Labor to produce regulations that require employers to keep records of occupational deaths, injuries, and illnesses. Our providers are knowledgeable on recordable vs. non-recordable injuries and are mindful of how their treatment affects a company's OSHA log.

An injury or illness that requires medical treatment more than simple first aid must be reported.



Putting It All Together Writing Your Marketing Plan

“Every year the marketing landscape changes, every year the customers become more demanding, every year they’re wanting more things. You have to always be sprinting to stay ahead of the competition.”

-Jacob Hawkins, Overstock.com

You may be surprised to learn that for the first four years as an urgent care marketer, I didn’t have a formalized plan on paper. You may be shocked. How can someone write a book on urgent care marketing and not have a traditional marketing plan? The reality is, I knew it all in my head. I had event calendars, a yearly and monthly budget, and a project management system in place to make sure I hit the goals the company had set. But I had never taken the time to combine all of those into a formal marketing plan, mainly because it takes time to write a written plan, and I was busy implementing all the strategies as they happened. In other words, I was spending all my time working “in” the business and not spending time working “on” the business.

Then something happened. We started adding new locations and hiring new marketers at each location. I quickly realized having a

lot of great information in my head was of little use to the marketers I was now training. Even worse, I found it difficult during their trainings to impart all of my knowledge. As we hired new marketers, I was growing frustrated by their lack of understanding of what our marketing plan entailed. Then I realized, basically through their training I had given them an oral rendition of this book. But I hadn't given them the strategies and tactics outlined to make them successful in their jobs. So I enlisted their help in creating a marketing plan for each location. While I set their marketing goals and outlined our customer profile, I had them work on researching their competitors and outlining our strengths and weaknesses in the market. I encourage you to do the same thing. On the next pages you will find an outline for creating your own marketing plan for your urgent care business.

Marketing Plan

Target Market

Summarize your urgent care target market in one sentence.

Write your elevator pitch (1 minute description of your business) to your target market.

Geographics:

Lives within the ZIP codes:

Demographics:

Sex:

Marital Status:

Age:

Family Status:

Home:
Education Level:
Income:

Psychographics:

Values:
Habits:
Behaviors:
Religious Affiliation:
Political Affiliation:
Why They Use Us:

Repeat this for other services you offer (occupational medicine, weight loss, etc...)

Competition Analysis

Company	Prices	Strengths	Weakness	Differentiate	Advantages

Based off the information in the chart, list your strengths as compared to your competitors. Then list your opportunities.

Strengths:

Opportunities:

Marketing Goals

Set-up goals that have both deadlines and factors to be measured. With each goal list the strategies you will utilize to accomplish the goal and the tactics you will utilize to accomplish those strategies.

Example:

Goal 1: Increase new patient volume by 30% in the next year

Strategy #1: Improve awareness in the community

Tactics: (See Calendar of Events)

Strategy #2: Develop and test targeted external advertising campaign

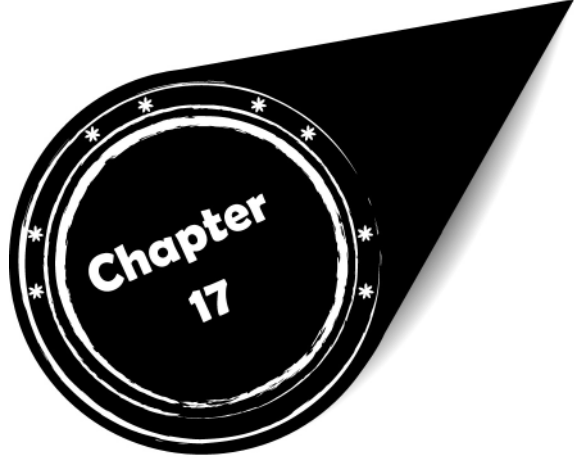
Tactics:

1. Develop and test new television commercials
2. Advertise on the following channels: _____
3. Develop and test new radio commercials
4. Advertise on the following stations: _____

Marketing Calendar & Budget

Month (Layout Each Month)			
Date	Tactic	Cost	Notes
Monthly Budget:			
Monthly Themes:			
Internal Marketing Strategies:			

Yearly Expenses			
Item	Tactic	Cost	Notes
Misc. Yearly Budget:			



Final Thoughts

“There are no magic wands, no hidden tricks, and no secret handshakes that can bring you immediate success, but with time, energy, and determination you can get there.”

- Darren Rowse, Prologger

My motto in life has changed over the years. I no longer have to “Fake it ‘til I make it” because I have realized that no matter what you do in marketing, you’ll always be learning. The most important thing you can do is find mentors, try ideas, and never stop looking for new ways to grow your business.

Now I live by a new motto: “When you kill time, you kill your opportunity for success.” I read those words a few years ago, and my entire outlook on how I spend my days changed. I now pre-plan every minute of my working day before it starts. Each day directly reverts back to reviewing my plan for the week, month, quarter, and year. In addition to scheduling time to review numbers and results each week and to work on new campaigns or marketing tactics, I also always make sure to schedule in time to learn something new and study the industry.

It’s been said that success leaves clues, and I have found that to be

true. One of the most useful things I've learned over the past several years is you can't learn it all by yourself. I have gathered many mentors from both the urgent care industry and also from other industries to learn from. I'm never afraid to pick up the phone and call them for advice. Through these friendships I have learned more about the ins and outs of the marketing world than I've ever learned in a book, teleseminar, or event. Don't get me wrong, I still regularly partake in all of those, too. In fact, many of the mentors I now turn to for advice were the very authors and speakers I once studied from.

My favorite weekly meeting is a Leads Meeting I was invited to attend when I first took my job as an urgent care marketer. Each week I eagerly look forward to learning from other marketing professionals in different industries as we share ideas for how to grow our businesses. My other favorite part of my week is partaking in the urgent care mastermind calls I host as part of my consulting program, where I join other urgent care owners and marketers from across the United States to share ideas on how to improve our businesses. It is truly amazing how many mistakes you can avoid making simply by taking the time to learn from others who have been in the industry longer than you. Sometimes I am the one giving advice, and other times I'm the one learning from advice given. That's the joy of having a great group of minds to share with ... it's a give and take. The reality is, "Fake it 'til you make it" was a motto I used to hide behind. I now realize you don't have to fake it if you take the time to learn from others and take the opportunity to invest in a continual pursuit of knowledge.

Growing up I always wanted to be an elementary school teacher. Now I realize you can be a teacher in more ways than one. My role has changed vastly since I first started as an urgent care marketer, promoting two clinics in North East Texas. Now I oversee several marketers for our company. While I still handle most of the decisions about our traditional marketing and manage our entire on-line marketing campaign, I rarely spend time outside of the office doing the grassroots tactics I believe so strongly in promoting as one of the most successful ways to grow awareness about an urgent care business. A large portion of my day is now spent serving as a resource and a coach for our marketing team. It's a new chal-

lenge, but it's one I am enjoying. I have realized that as a "supervisor" it's my job to figure out how to lead a talented group of people I've handpicked to represent our company in each community. I wish I could say I did it perfectly from the start, but it too has been a learning curve. Luckily, I've found a new set of mentors to seek advice from, and much like the mentors I've sought before them, these mentors have been eager to share their knowledge with me each step of the way.

The most difficult challenge I've had teaching them how to become successful is the same challenge I face teaching the people who hire me to serve as their marketing consultant. And that is convincing everyone that there is no "magic marketing tactic" you can employ to bring in the masses. Throughout this book I have shared with you how to implement many of the tactics I have found to be the most successful over the years. They are a wide mix of traditional and non-traditional things. Some you may find success with. Others may not work in your market. The key is making sure you're implementing ways to track your marketing efforts, so you'll know when to stop using one tactic and start using another one.

The other key is making a commitment to never stop marketing. Just because your patient volumes appear to be growing doesn't mean you should pull the plug on your marketing efforts. It also doesn't mean that just because a tactic worked great for six months that it will continue to work great for six more months, or that when you attempt to use it again in another market you'll get the same results. Yes, success does leave clues. The one thing I can tell you from my success in marketing is the biggest clue is not everything works the same everywhere.

If you take nothing else away from this book, take this away. You cannot focus all of your time and attention on just one thing. In order to be successful, you must be capable of juggling many marketing balls at one time, and the best way to do that is to create a plan and work it.

Additional Resources

“There are no magic wands, no hidden tricks, and no secret handshakes that can bring you immediate success, but with time, energy, and determination you can get there.”

- Darren Rowse, Prologger

If you enjoyed what you learned in this book, but you're still in search of even more resources, then please check out the following:

Urgent Care Success Summit

This 4 Day Conference is held twice a year and taught by the staff at Urgent Care Management Monthly. Tina Bell teaches several classes on marketing your urgent care at this event.

www.UrgentCareSuccessSummit.com

Urgent Care Marketing Mastermind Group

Join one of Tina Bell's Marketing Mastermind Groups. The groups are made up entirely of marketers in the urgent care industry. Call 903-490-7520 to find out more information. Spots are limited.

Urgent Care Management Monthly

Urgent Care Management Monthly (UCMM) offers:

- Weekly articles written by an experienced team of industry experts focused on providing information on finance, marketing, billing, and HR (including hiring, staffing, physician recruiting, and more)
 - Peer-to-Peer information on the latest in the urgent care industry
 - Leadership and team development ideas and strategies
- www.UrgentCareManagementMonthly.com

Resources Just For You

A special website was set-up with resources available just for readers of this book.

www.UrgentCareMarketingBook.com/special