

## **The 6 Most Important Things a Chiropractor Must Know to Maximize Success**

By Tom Necela, DC

If I had only a few minutes check under the hood of your practice, here are six things I would tell you to focus on to achieve maximum results:

*Quit Reaching For the Stars.* When forming your brand, be careful not to take too broad an approach. As new DCs, we are eager to tell the "chiropractic story" to everyone. As mature doctors, we dwell within our own chiropractic bubbles. Often, neither has a grip on reality. While 90 percent of people may need chiropractic, it is not practical to develop your brand as if you could serve that big a market.

Develop a small, specific niche. It's probably a lot smaller than you think. Become an interesting fish in a smaller pond so that patients will be attracted to you because you are the only perceived expert in that niche.

Be aware, however that wellness itself is not a niche, as it is neither unique to chiropractic nor small enough. Similarly, a family chiropractor doesn't really say anything unique either. If you ask DCs, almost all will indicate they adjust families, therefore you have no niche as a family chiropractor.

*Use Leverage.* When can  $1 + 1 = 100$ ? All patients are not created equal, and neither are all marketing vehicles. Some patients refer their friends in droves while others love your services but keep quiet about them. Spend your resources empowering your fanatics, rather than thinly spreading your marketing dollars across your entire patient base.

Track referrals and their sources. Then scale your spending by allocating more towards people and events that have a positive record of success. Also consider the type of patient that a referral source brings in. Market for quantity and quality.

*Bottom Line, Not Bottom Feeder.* Your fees are part of how patients view your services. All patients have egos and believe they get what they pay for. Often, the biggest resistance to fees is in our heads because the

first sale you must make is to yourself. Set your fees so that you don't end up in a bottom-feeding price war, but so that patients respect your expertise and so that you make a decent profit.

This requires tracking of expenses and overhead so that you know where your bottom line is. Many DCs ignore these vital stats to their detriment. Consult published fee schedules or use fee software so that you have a frame of reference.

*Become Your Patient's Most Trusted Advisor.* Always keep the patient's best interest in mind. Never recommend anything that only benefits your bank account. Under your guidance, the patient should be able to achieve a better lifestyle. As a result, they will see you as their only viable option because you are the doctor they trust. They will then refer their friends.

Review the way you currently make your recommendations. To achieve trusted advisor status, your patient must know that you have considered their situation carefully and given them options specific to them, not the same advice to everyone that walks in your doors.

Do not attempt to x-ray your patient's wallet. Many DCs withhold telling patients what they really need because they believe the patient can't afford it. Who are you to make that decision for them?

*Stop Worrying About New Patients.* If you have strategically positioned your practice, if you can deliver the results, and if you are a trustworthy resource, you can stop obsessing about new patients. Just because you have the potential to see more new patients doesn't mean you should. Expanding your potential will not result in success if your constraints hold you back.

If you feel like you are on a roller coaster ride, with one great month and the next one lousy, you have problems with your internal systems that no amount of new patients will fix. Analyze the constraints and fix these issues first. Any additional patients you flow into a flawed system will leak out anyway.

*Learn the Other Tools Of Your Trade.* You may believe that your hands are your primary tools. However, without proper knowledge of billing, coding and documentation, you can quickly be operating a free clinic. Worse, your lack of knowledge can cause you to lose whatever hard-earned money you did collect. Gone are the days where you could operate in ignorance of the other tools of your trade; the ones that enable you to get paid.

Take a billing or coding seminar. Hire an expert to review your procedures and documentation. Spend the time overseeing your billing service or staff to make sure they are doing their job. Remember, it's no longer "if" you will be audited, it's when. The reality is that everyone is on the insurance radar. Make things compliant or fix problems before it's too late.

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