

# Medical News

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## Marketing Your Practice: "So, what's your story?"

By ERIN SOMERS

I ask you this most crucial question because marketing your practice is all about *telling your story* to the general public and to those all-important referring physicians. Is your current marketing *effectively* telling your story well enough to drive traffic through your front door?

Many physicians (and practice administrators) find the whole marketing process slightly perplexing, which is understandable. You went to school to learn how to heal, not how to advertise. But that *does not* mean you have no responsibility to understand how or where your hard-earned money should be utilized to expand your patient base.

As a professional who has successfully marketed everything from medical practices to imaging centers, let me share some insights with you.

First and foremost, this is *not* the time to *not* market. Many doctors have the knee-jerk reaction to cut their marketing budget when money is tight. If your current marketing is not working, do not drop it, *change it!*

Second, you *must* think "outside the box." That old box blew up with the stock market in September of '08. Ac-



cept the fact that those days are gone and move forward in a creative and effective new direction. How do you do that exactly?

Third, you need to find the right marketing professional who can help make smart choices in this new world economy. Someone who can assertively and uniquely showcase *all* that you do and what sets you apart from the rest. Always remember...you can have the best practice or medical facility in town, *but if no one knows about it, it does not matter!*

You have two ways to get patients in your door. You can advertise to potential patients through the general media or you can market your practice directly to the physicians who will be referring patients to you.

In my professional experience, the

*most effective* way to increase your patient load is to have good, strong relationships with as many referring physicians as you can. Real estate is location, location, location. Marketing is relationships, relationships, relationships! If you and your competitor offer the exact same services, the referring office will *always* send to the physician with whom they have a relationship.

People in general tend to be "followers" and that is why it is so important to have referring physicians lead the patients to you! Do all these physicians know your *full* story and all that you offer? (i.e. board certified, locations, accepted insurances, etc.)

Besides enlightening these doctors to all your terrific services, you also must make it easy for them to refer to you. Convenience counts! We are a nation of convenience. We have drive-thru bank tellers, fast-food joints and a gas station on every corner. Additionally, many referring offices are now working with smaller staffs to reduce costs so their referral coordinator may be wearing several different hats. Referral coordinators no longer have the luxury of time when coordinating referrals to other doctors.

Your information *must* literally be at their finger tips.

Do these referral "decision makers" know your full story? Are they up to date with all your latest offerings and is it easy to refer to you? The answers to these questions should be yes, yes and yes.

If not, we need to talk...seriously. If not me, find an experienced, effective marketer to tell your story, the *whole* story as it needs to be heard.

A good marketer will come *free* of charge to consult with you and learn about your practice and your needs. During your second meeting, the marketer should present a detailed marketing strategy. If the game plan meets your goals, hire them. If not, look for an alternative professional who can fulfill your needs for the practice. *Do not* hire a marketer without a detailed plan in place. Marketers have many varied talents and philosophies and some are more effective than others. A marketer who listens to your goals, understands your needs, enjoys working with your staff, and creates an effective and affordable plan to tell your story will soon become one of the most valued members of your team.

"So, what's your story?"



Erin Somers has a diverse medical background which includes marketing, customer service training, recruiting and more. Marketing is at the forefront of Erin Somers Consulting and her expertise includes increasing revenue for practices and medical companies during these challenging economic times. You can contact Erin at [erin.somers@gmail.com](mailto:erin.somers@gmail.com).