

Medical News

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Medical Marketing in the “New Normal”

BY ERIN SOMERS

When the calendar flipped January first, 2020, little did we know our lives were about to be turned upside down. I never imagined I would hear the term “new normal” so many times, but here we are. The new normal is proving to be challenging for many, especially in healthcare.

On the clinical/administrative side, we follow guidelines that are clearly defined to keep our patients and our medical teams safe. With marketing, it's a completely different story. Things are far from black and white. Practice administrators and managing partners are scrambling to find the new normal in marketing. As an experienced medical marketer, I can see many issues, especially with independent practices and facilities. It's confusing, frustrating and there is a serious concern for the bottom line during these uncertain times. If you are reading this and thinking, “This is me,” let me assure you, you are definitely not alone.

One big change is the role of the physician liaisons, once a vital part of medical marketing. Unfortunately, most of them are now working in a decreased capacity, if at all. Additionally, most health fairs and community outreach events have been postponed or cancelled outright.

Declining revenue is also affecting marketing efforts. As an experienced medical marketer, let me offer you one piece of advice. Don't stop your marketing efforts, change them. You must modify your marketing into our “new normal.” If you don't know how, hire someone who does.

This time is reminiscent of fall 2008 when the U.S. stock market took a big hit. The knee jerk reaction then was to stop spending money on marketing, which turned out to be a big mistake. During times like these, it's time to think outside of the box.

You may be thinking that diving into social media

is the primary answer, but a tweet is not going to pay your bills. Your social media needs to be properly strategized and supported with other elements of marketing.

How do you find the right medical marketer to guide you through the new normal? All medical marketers are different and every marketer has their own program and skill set.

Meet with potential candidates and let them know what your needs are. A good marketer will listen carefully and take notes. Share your marketing efforts as well as the challenges you currently face. Before meeting, a strong marketer will become familiar with all your current marketing efforts.

Marketing is about telling your story, so share how you are currently utilizing your website, social media, medical writing, podcasts, field work/events and printed collateral material. Can your candidate take your practice to the next level after seeing what you have already done?

When interviewing, I cannot stress enough how important it is to follow your gut. Remember, clinical/administrative is black and white, while marketing is gray. There are many shades to choose from. Is this candidate the right shade for your needs? How well will they complement your current marketing and, more importantly, how will they improve it?

You must be honest in your evaluation of your current marketing. Are you consistently adding new written/video content to your website? How strong is your medical writing? Are you blogging on a regular basis? Blogs need to have discipline. If you are only blogging once in a great while, you are missing out.

During this new normal, I would seriously recommend adding more video to your website, and using it on other social media platforms. I'm not talking about a phone video from your twice removed cousin Sal. I'm talking about professional video that will last a long time and give you a good ROI. Not all medical marketers can provide quality video production. It's very important you hire someone with that experience. The wrong hire could end up costing you time, money, and reputation.

According to Hub Search research in early 2020, 54 percent of consumers wanted to see more video content. More than 50 percent of consumers wanted to see more videos from the brands they use... more than any other type of content. A staggering 90 percent of consumers said video helps them make final buying decisions. These findings were before the COVID-19 crisis, and I believe these numbers will trend even higher next year.

How are your competitors doing? How are they maneuvering with the new normal? A great way to find out is with a competitive analysis. A strong marketer can do this task and provide priceless insight for you and your leadership.

During these challenging times, don't over-stress about handling your marketing. Instead, hire someone who understands your vision, is able to tell your story, and will set you apart from your competitors.

It's important to remember that patients are consumers. They have a choice as to where they spend their healthcare dollars. A skilled medical marketer will help them choose you. Now is the time to strategize on your marketing so you can thrive in the “new normal.”

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