

Zero-Cost Enhancements to Add Value to Your Practice

By Raza Shah, ND

The OAND Convention 2010 featured New Business Stream Workshops; one of the three presentations was made by Dr. Shah. The presentation, which this article is accordingly titled after, delved deeply into tactics and strategies for marketing your business at no cost. This article directly coincides with the principles discussed at the session, so that those who were unable to attend can benefit and grow their practice.

Tight cash-flow is always an issue. Whether you're that new grad trying to start a practice or that ND who's been practising for years, you always seem to spend what you have and what you have left over is just enough to get by. After a few years of practice and spending money on marketing ideas that didn't work, I became quite frustrated and thought to myself that there must be free ideas out there that would give me a good return on investment. So I decided to sit down and write out everything I could possibly think of that would benefit my practice without spending a single cent. Here are a few of those ideas.

Clinic Attitude

Perhaps one of the most important free suggestions is altering the attitude of the clinic. People don't buy what you do; they buy WHY you do what you do. There are hundreds of NDs out there marketing their practices with the 'what they do.' They have marketing material that merely lists what they do: "Hi, I'm John Smith naturopath, I use homeopathy, clinical nutrition, lifestyle counseling," and the list goes on and on. When is the last time you saw an ad for a muffler shop that said, "Hey, come on and get your muffler repaired here, we use a two-ton hoist with chrome vanadium tools." You don't care! You just want to get your muffler fixed. This is the attitude of the majority of patients; they just want to get healthy. Structure your marketing material in this fashion, tell people that they won't have to wait, tell them you'll listen, and most importantly be confident and don't be scared to tell people that your clinic has seen patients with x, y and z conditions. Cater your marketing material accordingly; instead of telling people what you do, tell people why you do what you do, and you'll be sure to attract more patients.

Create a Calendar of Events

Using a large desk calendar write down seasonal-specific conditions upon which you can base your marketing. Whether it is a newsletter or seminars that you may be doing, this can be very helpful in giving you a reason to promote your practice. Such conditions and events could be as follows:

- Fall and Spring Cleanses
- Awareness Months
- Prominent Conditions – such as cold and flu, allergies, musculoskeletal issues, etc.

Patient Referrals

At the end of your 'wow' visits don't be afraid to say, "I know you've really benefited from naturopathic care. Here are a few business cards – if you wouldn't mind, could you please give them to someone else whom you think would also benefit?"

Facebook

In a recent survey of over 1000 women, 42% admitted they check Facebook prior to going to the bathroom. You'd be surprised to see who's online and what a powerful marketing tool this can be. Put up a simple clinic page to start, you'll be sure to benefit from this.

Connect with Local Businesses

As small business owners we're all trying to get by. With a little help from one another we can successfully spread the word and grow local business. Try contacting a few businesses you deal with locally and hand them a few newsletters or information about your clinic. Tell them you'll promote them in return or have their information at your clinic.

Newsletters

A simple suggestion, but you'll be surprised who ends up with a copy and then comes to your clinic. Email works great, too! Try using a free site like Mail Chimp or others out there to manage your newsletter distribution. Sites like this can also tell you who has opened the newsletter and give you reports on what's worked and what hasn't. These sites also have tutorials and suggestions to help you better create and distribute your newsletter.

Implement

The most difficult suggestion so far is this one. In a busy day it becomes difficult to actually do something that takes time to help your clinic, like implement a few of these suggestions. Delegate if need be. You'll never know what might happen if you actually incorporate some of these suggestions. Hey, after all it's free and you have nothing to lose!