



BY JARROD SHAPIRO, DPM

Networking to Build a Practice

Here's an effective way to increase patient volume.



Practice Perfect is a continuing every-issue column in which Dr. Shapiro offers his unique personal perspective on the ins and outs of running a podiatric practice.

When starting a new practice or even working to build a new associate's patient volume, several attributes should be considered. Hard work, a professional appearance, and unique and useful skills are very important components to market. But it's important to note that medicine and its subspecialties, podiatry included, has changed very much over the years. It's no longer possible for a new doctor to hang their shingle and fill up their waiting room with expectant patients. Like all human endeavors, building a practice requires one other skill:

Networking

For many doctors, networking is not something that we love to do.

Most of us would rather see patients in the clinic or do surgery. Performing a consultation in the hospital beats out pounding the pavement any day. Unfortunately, humans are social animals, and it becomes very difficult to build a new practice in isolation. Here are some suggestions for those of us starting out building their dream practices.

the medicine and surgery lounges. Drop your contact information off at the charge nurse desks. Everyone in the hospital, from admitted patients to doctors, nurses, physical therapists, and techs are potential patients. Offer to do a consult while there. You never know where that will lead. Go to the hospital staff meetings, offer to give a talk at the hospital (remember, you're the expert, and you have a lot to teach).

3) Enlist your staff—Bring your assistants into the process. They want your practice to be successful too.

Their jobs depend on it just like yours does. If you have a particularly friendly staffer who is great at social situations and you are not, bring that person with you. They may smooth the way a little and give you that opening to bring up those new services you provide. Make sure you discuss the goals and strategies of this before-

A professionally-made flyer, in color, with your key information is mandatory.

1) Get into the mindset—If being social is not your forte, work hard to get into the mindset. At the very least, remember that your survival as a podiatrist will depend on establishing relationships and receiving referrals. Put on a smile, take a deep breath, and go to it!

2) Use the hospital—This is a great place to build a network of colleagues and referrals. Have lunch in

hand, so your staff knows what you have in mind. You may think patients are coming to see you, but it's really your staff that will make or break the overall quality of patient encounters.


4) Bring marketing materials—A professionally-made flyer, in color, with your key information is mandatory. The back of the flyer should list all of the insurances you

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PRESENT Podiatry (podiatry.com) is a podiatrist-owned-and-run company that proudly serves as the largest provider of online CME to the podiatry profession. One of the key lectures in their online CME collection is highlighted below.

Featured Lecture

Windy Cole, DPM, CWSP
Adjunct Professor and Director of Wound Care Research
Kent State University College of Podiatric Medicine
Kent, OH


Improving Wound Hygiene, Biofilm Management & Antimicrobial Stewardship



0.5 CECH

In this Lecture...
Windy Cole, DPM, CWSP discusses the concept of wound hygiene to control biofilm. Dr Cole also discusses how biofilms and bioburden impair healing, describe the concept of antimicrobial stewardship, as well as how incorporating native cross-linked exercises of her matrix can assist biofilm management.

Scan to go to the lecture



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accept (especially in those states that are heavily into managed care).

5) Set goals—This is up to you. Pick a number of new referral contacts to meet per week and then aim to beat it. Have someone on your staff keep track of where patient referrals come from so you can determine where the best value for your future time will occur.

6) Hit the pavement when it matters—Schedule those visits to other offices, with the intent to be most productive. For example, plan to spend extra time at that large multi-doctor primary care practice around the cor-

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ner. Be cognizant of the times of day you do these visits. For example, never go to a doctor’s office at 4PM. That doctor you want to meet is trying to get out of the office at that time. They want to round at the hospital or go home and see their family. They will not want to speak to you.

7) Meet other podiatrists in the area—This suggestion covers a few different ideas. First, you might find a colleague to refer certain patients to you. Second, new surgeons will need mentors and they can often be hard to find. Third, it’s great to have friendly colleagues in the community. Don’t wait for them to reach out to you.

Those doctors with strong social acumen always seem to do well, even if they’re not the most highly skilled. Take their advice and be friendly and accessible. Demonstrate your undoubtedly strong skills to your community and, before you know it, the patients will be banging down your door. **PM**

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Dr. Shapiro is editor of PRESENT Practice Perfect. He joined the faculty of Western University of Health Sciences, College of Podiatric Medicine, Pomona, CA in 2010.