

The One-Page Marketing Plan

These steps help attract new patients to your practice.

BY MARK TERRY

The idea of a one-page marketing plan is out there, but is it a real thing? The short answer is probably “no.” For example, this article describing a one-page marketing plan—kind of—will run several pages. But to cover the main points and to have an outline for a plan, yes, that can definitely fit on a single page.

Rem Jackson, CEO of Top Practices (Las Vegas), says, “You should probably say that Rem Jackson at the outset of this interview doesn’t agree with the premise of this article. There’s no such thing. Marketing is something that needs to be, in my opinion, something that is built into the DNA of your practice.”

The author of this article believes that you *can* have a marketing plan that fits on a single page, but he

agrees with Jackson that it’s really just an outline. In any case, there are four major points to a marketing plan, which we will discuss. They are:

- 1) Identifying your patients.
- 2) External marketing.

Are you a surgical practice? General podiatry?

The second part is determining what type of patients or conditions you *want* to treat. Once you determine that, you can target that patient population.



Rem Jackson

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- 3) Internal marketing.
- 4) Community marketing.

Identifying Your Patients

One of the keys to any marketing program is understanding the market. With a podiatric medical practice, this is a two-part issue. First, if you’re already in practice, do you understand the nature of your practice? Does it lean heavily toward sports-related care? Diabetic care? The elderly? Wound care?

Jackson says, “If you haven’t defined who your preferred, perfect patient is, then you can’t begin to start a marketing plan, one page or 50 pages. You have to define who it is you want walking in the door. And that means you need to niche your practice, even if you have a general practice and you’re willing to see everybody. You still need to pick the three, or even five or seven main areas you want to see and define those.”

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Gregg Neibauer, DPM, Alpine Foot & Ankle Clinic (Missoula, Montana), points out that he saw general patients in the past, but “as we moved on, I found certain conditions I would rather treat. I think when your practice is younger, you tend to take all-comers. But as you continue, you find which types of conditions are most gratifying.”



Dr. Neibauer

As a result, Neibauer’s practice started marketing to those conditions, moving more toward amputation prevention and diabetic patients. To approach that, they “specifically concentrate on endocrinologists, but also capture patients who don’t use endocrinologists—like primary care docs—and encourage them to perform diabetic foot exams, to be more thorough in their exams. We already have relationships in place, but we work to get those notes back to them and to kind of train them so they understand what to look for.”

Of course, it’s not always possible, or even desirable, to focus solely on the types of patients you like to see. There’s another element, which is the type of patient or condition that will generate the most revenue and profit for the practice. Jackson says, “You also need to focus on the stuff that’s going to make you a healthy business.”

Pardis Kelly, DPM, Las Vegas Foot-care, originally had a practice in San Carlos, California, but moved two years ago to Las Vegas. Her husband, Christopher Kelly, handles marketing for the practice.



Dr. Kelly

Christopher Kelly said, “My marketing strategy at the beginning was just to throw all the spaghetti against the wall so we could learn the market here, which includes patients, the health care system in its entirety, and insurance.” He points out that initially, they got on as many insurance plans as they could, but as the new practice became busier, they began to eliminate insurance plans that didn’t pay enough or didn’t support the patient profiles they preferred to care for.

External Marketing

External marketing is simply any marketing conducted outside the walls of your office. That is very broad, and can include your website, any outreach to physicians’ offices, mailings and events (although for the purpose of this article, events will fall under community marketing).

Christopher Kelly said a big part of their early marketing was talking to other medical practices. “We, of course, have a website, but when we first moved to Las Vegas, that was pretty much all we did. With a new website, you don’t have a lot of reviews, and to get ranked with Google, you need to get good reviews. As we got good

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reviews, our website ranked more highly. But to do that, you have to get patients in so you can request reviews.”

In fact, when the Kellys came to Las Vegas, Christopher essentially took a month and drove north, south, east and west, found a “promising corner” and Googled doctors nearby. Then he visited the practices he found. “I tend to think of this sort of external marketing as the point of the spear. In my opinion, the external marketing is to health-care providers, primarily primary care and other specialists that coordinate with podiatry, like endocrinologists, and maybe a little bit of vascular endocrinology.”

Although it undoubtedly varies from practice to practice and location to location, Christopher Kelly says about 42% of their new patients come from doctor referrals (as of 2023) and 25% were from the Internet, primarily Google.

The Kellys also identified the primary care physician for every one of their patients, whether they were referred

“They could see who the podiatrist was that they were going to refer to, literally door to door.”—Dr. Kelly

to them or not, and Pardis and Christopher delivered the notes directly to those doctors, at least until Pardis became too busy with patients. Pardis Kelly adds, “That was another way of marketing directly to the doctor. They could see who the podiatrist was that they were going to refer to, literally door to door.”

They also used snail-mail thank-you notes when physicians referred to them. Their practice mailed information to primary care practices who hadn’t referred to them “just to say thank you for the referrals, even though they didn’t refer to us,” Christopher Kelly said. “Just to get the name in front of them.”

The digital aspects of external marketing

Internet marketing is necessary for an obvious reason—it’s where people are. People look for services and companies on the Internet, they communicate via email and text messages, they carry phones with them everywhere they go 24/7, which allows for instant communication and access to most of the information on the planet. In terms of marketing costs, it’s also one of the more affordable ways to market. Important components include:

- *Website*—Your practice website is the hub of your practice communication and marketing strategy. Every marketing message and strategy should direct patients or potential patients to your website so they can take action, whether that’s calling for an appointment, making an appointment via the website, requesting high-quality educational information, reading more information about a con-

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dition, watching videos, interacting with staff, or downloading important documents.

The website should be engaging, professional, and updated regularly because you're adding new content. Modern websites should also be responsive, able to detect whatever device is being used to access it and be device-compatible, whether by phone, tablet, or computer. In particular, is your website phone-compatible? The majority of patients and potential patients will access the Internet and your website by phone. But if your website is frustrating to access via phone, you may be chasing away potential patients.

- **Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**—Having good reviews on your website and at other online review sites is important to increasing your overall SEO. Local SEO is the top priority. By having accurate, updated data on platforms like Google Business Profile and other local di-

reviews and provide links to where they can do so.

- **Video**—A few good, short, professionally-produced videos on your website can go a long way toward increasing traffic to your practice. Not only having videos on your website but using them on various other

“Let patients know you're taking new patients and put it on your website. Send emails to people on your lists, offer information regarding foot health, and make it easy for your patients to refer family and friends.”

Another key aspect of internal marketing is your list, or database, of people you know, who like and trust

“The best marketing is high-quality communications.”—Jackson

forms of social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, or YouTube can help drive traffic to your website and to your practice.

- **Social media**—Use it. Or don't. But be very careful if you do. It can be a great way to reach your local market, for example, with Facebook. But use best practices—no politics, no religion, for example. Create guidelines for your practice's use of social media and stick to them. Keep

you. Jackson believes you should “commit to sending a high-quality email to your entire list every week.” To avoid “message fatigue,” work to make those communications educational, inspirational, and helpful. In other words, make sure that the message has value to the people you're sending it to.

Of course, the best internal marketing is a friendly and helpful staff.

“The best marketing,” Jackson says, “is high-quality communications. You and your staff should be committed to it, it should be integrated into your practice in such a way that your staff, and all their training, ensure they clearly know what your plan is and how everyone is to execute the plan. In addition, you can't expect a busy staff that's already stretched to go that extra mile without investment in the tools and people who will implement the marketing plan.”

“Let patients know you're taking new patients and put it on your website. Send emails to people on your lists, offer information regarding foot health, and make it easy for your patients to refer family and friends.”—Neibauer

rectories, your visibility in local Internet searches will improve. Utilizing relevant keywords for your practice and integrating them into your website content and meta descriptions is also important. You must determine the most common search terms that patients are using to find practices. Other aspects of SEO include regular updates and new content, whether it's blogs, videos, or readable information.

- **Online reviews**—Related to Local SEO, the more 5-star reviews your practice has online, the higher on the search engine results you will be. One way to get more reviews is to simply ask your patients to write

in mind, social media can be such a landmine that many practices decide not to use it at all. And in many cases, that's a good idea. Proceed with caution.

Internal Marketing

Internal marketing refers to any marketing that goes on within the walls of your practice. The most important part of internal marketing is providing the best possible care you can, taking care of patients to the best of your ability so that they recommend you to their friends and family.

Neibauer notes that a lot of patients ask if he is taking new patients.

Community Marketing

Community marketing largely refers to sponsoring local sports teams, attending local events such as 5K runs, or even local advertising such as billboards. Jackson emphasizes that a good marketing plan—even a one-page marketing plan—needs to have something from all four categories, but that this last category should be the lowest priority.

“The mistake,” Jackson says, “is that people focus on one of these at the expense of the others. And of course, I just said to focus on the first three. I have clients who drive a lot of business by using broadcasts and

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things like that, but only after they're prepared to receive those leads."

Christopher Kelly agrees, noting that when they were in San Carlos, they did some community marketing, such as volunteering at the medical tent for a yearly run, but it was never a big component of their marketing plan. "The return on investment was very small, generally."

Perhaps the best reason to do community marketing, particularly of the participation type, is to be part of the community. Neibauer says, "I definitely get more return from web and internal marketing. As a clinic, we do some races and walks for veterans, because that patient population is a big part of our practice. But I think that's just serving the community. With Special Olympics, I've done some sponsorships. I think it's good community involvement, but so-so advertising."

Your One-Page Marketing Plan

If you really want to boil your marketing plan down to one page, write down these 4 points with plenty of space between each one:

- 1) Identifying your patients.
- 2) External marketing.
- 3) Internal marketing.
- 4) Community marketing.

Beneath each, list three action steps you can take to accomplish each of those. Put a timeline or deadline for each step, then determine who on your team will be responsible (it could be you) for each step and make sure they have the resources to do that task. If necessary, hire someone to accomplish them.

But again, this is simply an outline of a much more complicated aspect of your practice. Jackson notes, "The main mission of podiatrists is to heal their patients and to give them the best possible outcomes they can and to practice excellent

medicine. That's their mission, it's what they're trained for. And that is what almost all of them are really, really good at. But the business they're also in is to be an entrepreneur and business owner. As a result, the business they're in is marketing and managing a podiatry practice. That's their business."

Marketing is also a part of the service you provide. You need to get good at it and have it become an integrated part of your day-to-day practice. **PM**



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