

Reprinted from *Medical Practice Improvement News*

By *Reed Tinsley, CPA*

Physician CPA, Healthcare Consultant, Certified Valuation Analyst, Author, Speaker

Tactics to Improve Patient Retention in Your Medical Practice

[Attracting new patients to your practice](#) is one thing, but keeping them can be an entirely different issue. The days when you got to treat all members in a family from the cradle to the grave are long over, and regular attrition is an ongoing concern. You may not be able to avoid losing patients who move from their current location to another city or state, but you can try to avoid losing patients to other medical practices.

From primary care physicians through optometrists and gynecologists, patient retention is an important factor in the success of the practice. Here are 7 tactics you can use to keep your patients coming back for more.

Tactic: Think of Your Patients as Clients

Let's face it, your patients need you probably more than you need them. Far too often, however, medical professionals treat patients as if they are doing them a favor by seeing and treating them. Even if it isn't true about your practice, how certain are you that your patients feel as if you value them? By thinking of them as clients and fostering a customer service attitude among your practice staff, you can ensure that your patients feel important and cherished. The customer doesn't always have to be right – he just always has to be king!

Tactic: Live Up to Your Promises

Personalized health care? 24/7 Accessibility? No waiting for appointments? Make sure you live up to your claims if you want patients to stay with your practice. No matter how much your patients love you, they're going to get fed up if you're constantly overbooked or late for appointments and they have to spend 30 minutes or more waiting for you to see them. The best marketing strategy in the world can't overcome poor service, so keep the promises you make when you come up with your unique differentiators.

Tactic: Stay in Touch

Include regular communications in your medical marketing strategy. If the only time your patients ever hear from you is when they are sick or you need them to pay a bill, there's little reason for them to stay with you. Stay top of mind by sending them quarterly newsletters, birthday and holiday greeting cards and reminders about vaccinations or annual checkups. A basic patient relationship management program will provide all the tools you need to automate much of the process, but your patients don't need to know that fact. Remind patients the day before their appointment with a telephone call, email message or text to their mobile phone.

Tactic: Be a Resource

Stats show that [85% of people use search engines to look for information on medical conditions](#) and healthcare issues. Much of the time, the material they find is inaccurate and misleading, which makes your job harder because they come to you with preconceived ideas and beliefs. You can both prevent this and cultivate loyalty by creating resources for your patients by a few of these examples:

- Publishing educational materials on your website
- Providing links to authoritative websites
- Offering an online forum for discussion and questions
- Setting up virtual support groups for various patient categories

Tactic: Manage Your Team

You may be fabulous, but if your employees aren't then your team will let you down. How often have you heard of patients leaving a practice because of the rude receptionist or the unfriendly nurse practitioner? It happens more than you think, because your staff have good days and bad days and to them it's a job – not their professional reputation that's on the line. Conduct regular training sessions to create awareness among your employees of specific issues. Start a recognition program to reward random acts of kindness, or let patients vote for the team member of the month and present the winner with a small gift.

Tactic: Get Reviews and Testimonials

Testimonials and reviews are a hugely important aspect of a comprehensive medical marketing strategy, so [ask your patients to tell you what you're doing right](#). Get feedback by means of online and email surveys, your social media profiles, in-practice feedback forms and personal requests. Publish positive testimonials anonymously so others can read them and address any negative reviews individually and manage your online reputation by setting up alerts and responding to anything you find. Include these patient retention tactics in your medical marketing strategy to improve the success of your practice.

Reed Tinsley, CPA is a Houston-based CPA, Certified Valuation Analyst, and Certified Healthcare Business Consultant. He works closely with physicians, medical groups, and other healthcare entities with managed care contracting issues, operational and financial management, strategic planning, and growth strategies. His entire practice is concentrated in the health care industry. Please visit www.rtacpa.com

Published by Reed Tinsley CPA

Copyright © 2015 Reed Tinsley CPA. All rights reserved.