



The Top Ten Strategies to Acquire, Retain, and Win Back Patients

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**Now
Accepting
New Patients**

**Now
Welcoming
New Patients**

The Top Ten Strategies to Acquire, Retain, and Win Back Patients and How to Make Them Work for You!

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Health Care Is Changing

Like it or not...

*We are in an era of
unprecedented change*

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- Quality improvement as a benchmark for reimbursement

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- Software adoption to better manage care

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- From fragmentation to consolidation through merger

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- Software adoption to better manage care
- From fragmentation to consolidation through merger
- Accountable care organizations

We are in an era of unprecedented challenge

- Looming reimbursement cuts

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- Uncertain healthcare reform

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- The rising cost of technology
- New patient expectations and behaviors

Changing Expectations

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Require

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New Strategies

Expectation #10 - A Cure for Everything

Patients are exposed to so much fact, fiction and advertising that they think that there is a cure or treatment for everything.

Strategy #10 - Become a professional and community resource

Tactics:

- Make your website an education destination in your specialty
 - Standard of Care treatment sections
 - “Ask the Doctor” interactive – live chat?
 - Frequent Blogs supported with email blasts
- Set up an “Ask the Office” line – voice mail/live
- Work with your hospital to conduct public and professional educational seminars

Objectives/Benefits

- Be the Authority
- Pre-Manage Patient Expectations
- Pre-screen patient visits for triage

Be found on Google

Be sought by patients

Expectation #9 - Portable Medical Records

People THINK that they are a reality...until they get the ten pages of paperwork asking the same 100 questions – again.

Strategy #9 – Invest In EMR and Paperless Technology

Tactics:

- Take advantage of financial incentives while they last – there is \$16 billion out there
- Add encrypted, online, e-mailable or downloadable, fillable PDF patient forms and E-Tablet electronic POS capabilities
 - Use integrating PMR features
 - Use electronic patient history and information sharing capabilities when referring out

Objectives/Benefits

- Once patients experience this technology, providers without it appear backward
- Real technology = Perceived superiority
- Invest in Change – Profit from Efficiency
- Faster claims, less duplication => cash flow

25% of the cost of health care is paperwork

But it doesn't have to be

Expectation #8 - Accessibility

Patients don't necessarily go to the best or referred or highest ranked on Google – they go to the doctor that will see them.

Strategy #8 – Use Technology to Be Accessible Without Being Available

Tactics:

- **TRIAGE Appointments** - Have a clinician set them, not the secretary
- Publicize a mobile phone – encourage texting or calling (you can always forward them, block abusers) and synch the phone to your patient database to see who is contacting you
- Use and publicize all communication channels
- Visit/procedure follow-up calls

Objectives/Benefits

- Seeing patients promptly when they are sick or scared is a powerful loyalty builder
- Being accessible makes patients feel special
- Superior customer service is a competitive advantage

Health Care is a Service Business

Expectation #7 - Communication

Keeping the status quo in an era of dramatic change may be comfortable, but it is a slow death.

Strategy #7 – Be A Proactive Communicator

Tactics:

- **Invest** in bringing your patient contact database up to date
- **Invest** in training everyone who touches patient records to keep it that way
- **Invest** in a professional contact email management and mass outreach system or experienced servicer who understands medical practice
- *Touch each patient with an email, call, tweet or mailing at least once a month*

Objectives/Benefits

- Top of mind awareness:
 - Retains patients
 - Earns referrals
 - Wins patients back
- Consistently operate a similar program with referring physicians and allied health professionals.
 - Communicate new developments in your field.
 - Educate.
 - Build and maintain long term relationships.

Expectation #6 - Personalized Medicine

Advances, from genetic medicine to patient specific therapy programs are widely publicized.

Patients are coming to expect customized

treatments, fewer side effects and better outcomes.

Strategy #6 – Educate In and Out of the Exam Room

Tactics:

- **Keep up to date** on new treatment:
 - Options and advances
 - Costs
 - Insurance coverage policies
- **Communicate and educate** using blogs, emails, literature, newsletters, lectures, seminars

Just because it's available doesn't mean it's appropriate – or affordable.

Objectives/Benefits

- **Evidence based medicine** - Being a technology educator allows you to lead from a safe distance
- **Early adopter** – Being a technology educator confirms your authority

In either case, you are both setting and managing expectations for your patients.

Expectation #5 - Better Coordinated Care

Higher deductibles and co-pays, and millions of uninsured and under-insured people, have made patients acutely aware of the cost of care.

Patients expect costs to be controlled without compromising the quality of care or outcomes.

Strategy #5 – Treatment Partners

Tactics:

- Make financial considerations a part of your referral routine.
- Enhance focus on wellness and early detection:
 - Upcoming reimbursement changes will reward you
 - Consider local dentists as referral sources and early diagnosis partners for diabetes, high blood pressure and coronary disease (they are trained to identify oral precursors)
 - Get to know referral partners personally

Strategy #5 – Make Cost A Consideration

Tactics:

- Assign a knowledgeable staffer to assist the patient:
 - Help them with loan applications
 - Know who offers payment plans
 - Discuss cost/benefit considerations
 - Review insurance coverage policies and set cost expectations

Communicate these services using blogs, emails, literature, newsletters, lectures, seminars

Objectives/Benefits

Addressing uninsured, underinsured, high deductible, high co-pay while actively coordinating care has obvious benefits:

- Increased cash flow
- Strong competitive advantages
- Builds patient loyalty
- Earns patient referrals
- And, improves outcomes by reducing stress

Today's competitive advantage is tomorrow's necessity.

Expectation #4 - More Outpatient Procedures

These equate to less expensive procedures with less down time and recovery time.

With high unemployment and increased demands to perform, people can rarely afford long recovery times or hospitalizations unless there is no other choice.

Strategy #4 – Stay Current, Know Who You Refer To, and Who Refers To You

Tactics:

- Meet regularly with those you refer to, and those that refer to you. Visit their offices and the facilities they use. Are they safe, friendly, caring, competent, technologically up to date?
- **Surgery Practices** – Consider a dedicated purpose ASC on site – control your practice
- **Non-Surgical Practices** – Refer to surgeons with dedicated purpose ASC's when practical – quality is higher, infection risk is lower, quality of service excels

Objectives/Benefits

*Those to whom you refer, and those who refer to you
reflect upon your practice equally.*

*This is about quality of care, quality of service and
quality of outcome.*

Expectation #3 - New Alternatives To Pay For Care

High out of pocket expenses are a fiscal reality that is allowing easily treatable conditions to progress into more complex, expensive and acute stages.

Strategy #3 – Emulate Elective Practices Such As Dentistry and Plastic Surgery

Tactics:

- Help your patients while you help yourself:
 - Discuss cost/benefit and payment options
 - Offer medical finance options:
 - CareCredit® Healthcare Finance
 - Chase Healthcare Finance
 - GE Healthcare Financial Services
- Assign a knowledgeable staffer to assist the patient
- Communicate these services using blogs, emails, literature, newsletters and in lectures, seminars

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Expectation #2 - Customer Service, Technology and Outcomes

Three fundamental systemic changes have taken permanent root:

- access to information via the Internet,
- expectation of quality service and quality care because the cost is less hidden
- the patient *perception* that technology has evened the playing field making skill less of a factor.

Strategy #2 – The Superior Patient Experience

Patient Experience is not just patient service, it is a combination of credibility, technology and caring that, together, promises a positive outcome.

Tactics to Strategy 2 - The Superior Patient Experience

1. Be On Time:

- a. **Telephone** – Most practices, no matter how large, have the lowest paid, least skilled person answering the phone. Direct calls to the best qualified person.
- b. **The Waiting Room** – Is it the Ritz Carlton or the DMV?
- c. **Managing Patient Expectations** – You can't always be on time...if you're not?
- d. **The Culture** - Are your patients customers or supplicants?

Tactics to Strategy 2 – Your Window to the World

2. The Internet:

- a. **Website** – Eight of ten prospective patients do their research on the Internet and *they are not seeking doctors. They are seeking solutions.* Your website MUST present your practice as the solution to their concerns, and make the case clearly, concisely and compellingly.
- b. **Search Engine Ranking** - Where you rank in search engines is not just a matter of traffic – high ranking is perceived to be a representation of quality, competency and capability. That is why the #1 position gets over 43% of the views.

Tactics to Strategy 2 – Differentiate From the Competition

3. **Research** – Understanding your competitors, their strengths and weaknesses, their capabilities versus yours, delivers enormous competitive advantages if you use what you have learned. An investment of less than \$10,000 can deliver up to a 50 times return.

Tactics to Strategy 2 – Employ Professionals

Example – website search engine optimization

- a) Size doesn't matter – in fact, it can be a liability
- b) Experience – if they don't understand health care, they don't understand what to optimize for
- c) Expertise - SEO and SEM are as much art as science
- d) Software Tools – have they invested?
- e) Planning – founded on research, planned with expertise.

Investing in professionals provides a return on investment.

Tactics to Strategy 2 – Deploy Your Assets Wisely

How you present your practice is not a matter of clever wording or pretty pictures – it is business.

5. Focus on generating the *right kind* of traffic and patient retention.
6. Mine the contacts system and create a contact database.
 - a) Clean and update the database.
 - b) Gather complete contact information as a matter of policy and procedure.
 - c) Send a focused message at least monthly.

Tactics to Strategy 2 – Say What You Do – Do What You Say

Sharpen your operational processes.

7. From the first telephone encounter to discharge, make services equal parts quality of care and quality of service.
8. Patients are paying more. Treat them as paying customers.

Providing quality service equates directly to the perception of competence.

Objectives/Benefits

You may be getting away with doing things the way they have always been done, but not for long.

The industry is changing, and perceptions and expectations have changed, and are changing, with it.

Those who fail to adapt will likely be employees of those that do.

Expectation #1 - Access to Care

The primary decision metric for most patients is accessibility.

It impacts physician and patient referrals, patient retention, patient acquisition, patient attitude, patient perception and a host of other issues.

Tactics to Strategy 1 – Triage

Long waits for appointments have much more to do with patient screening and the quality of the referral system than logistics.

1. Set at least one hour, three days per week aside for new patients and use the excess to see existing patients with new concerns promptly. Reschedule follow-up appointments if necessary.
2. Let your best referrers know you will see their patients within three business days and the same day if it is urgent.
3. Let the patient's condition, stress level and status determine urgency, not the schedule.

Tactics to Strategy 1 – Triage

4. Train your staff, educate your patients.
5. Lead your education, promotions and outreach with your most desirable diagnoses.
6. If you have a lot of emergencies and urgencies, plan for them.

*Your schedule and waiting room are not
for waiting –*

They are for STAGING.

Objectives/Benefits

Attracting appropriate patients, and using RNPs or PAs to assess patients can broadly expand accessibility – and solve a myriad of problems.

Meeting patient expectations is more than accommodation—it is:

- **Risk management** (happy patients do not sue).
- **A competitive advantage.**
- **Improved clinical care** (good patient experiences lead to better outlooks, outcomes, an enhanced sense of security and wellbeing).

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