

Marketing 101: Promoting your veterinary practice

Be wary of quick-fix marketing strategies. Even the most creative gimmicks often produce few or no results.

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VETERINARY ECONOMICS

There are a lot of promotional gimmicks out there. Maybe you've seen advertising on the back of a bathroom stall door or a business logo on the sleeve of a to-go coffee cup. Would these tactics work for you? Keep in mind that if your practice's customer care, pricing, location, and hours, aren't in tune with the needs of the marketplace, promoting your practice to a bigger audience won't give you the results you're seeking. And if a coffee cup is all it takes to get new clients in the door, most marketing firms would be out of business!

Promoting a veterinary clinic is a complex proposition. When choosing a veterinarian, pet owners go through a process of gathering information, asking friends for recommendations, and perhaps stopping in for a pre-appointment visit. While an ad on a coffee cup might convince someone to check out a new quick oil change place—or an inflatable cartoon character in the parking lot might get you to buy a hamburger—the decision to try a new veterinary clinic is a bigger proposition. So, assuming your practice is offering what pet owners want, you can spread the word about it without breaking your promotional budget.

To be most effective, promotions should help you reach predetermined goals. Consider specifically what you want to accomplish. How will you measure the results? The most effective promotions elicit an immediate response: for example, a clients seminar that leads to increased appointments for a special dental exam and cleaning package.

Also consider your audience. It's easier to get current clients to visit more often than it is to get new clients to walk through your door. Therefore, the best—and most cost-effective—promotions target the clients you already have. You have a better shot at getting the attention of people who already know and like you.

For one, you already have channels for reaching current clients: your lobby, client mailers, and your newsletter. You already know these folks own pets and want to take care of them. Reaching out to them is a much more targeted than a promotion that tries to reach everyone and ends up being a shot in the dark. Remember, if you choose your audience wisely and tailor your promotions to that audience, you'll ace Marketing 101.

Don't miss part two of this series, Marketing 102: Quick Marketing Strategies.

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