



PROMOTING NEW PHYSICIANS IN YOUR PRACTICE AND FILLING THEIR SCHEDULES

Cuinn Merrigan

Adding a new physician to your practice is a big deal—both for your own staff and certainly your patients. Often there can be apprehension on both ends of the spectrum. Questions are likely to arise, such as will the new physician...

- Take away potential patient volume from other doctors?
- Possess a level of expertise that will result in increasing patient volume?
- Have a conservative or “early adaptor” approach to technology?
- Be rigid, or flexible and willing to change?
- Fit within the current office culture?
- Provide the same level of care your patients are accustomed to receiving?
- Match or exceed the level of commitment you provide for patients?

To seamlessly integrate a new physician into your practice, you must have a strategic plan in place well before the physician’s first day on the job. This action plan should include both internal and external methods to spread the word about your practice’s growth.

INTERNAL PROMOTION

Even experienced physicians don’t want to be thrown “to the wolves” at a new practice—especially those who are naturally shy or complacent. By having an orientation prepared in advance, you show that you are committed to helping your new doctor succeed, and you demonstrate that your practice is organized and ready for that doctor to take charge.

The orientation should include a variety of training sessions to get the physician up to speed on your internal

processes. The more knowledge the new doctor has about how the office runs, the more confident and capable the doctor will appear to patients.

Have a staff member ready to provide

- Practice management training
- EMR training
- Billing training
- Technologies and services offered

Internal promotion also includes introducing the new doctor to the entire team. All staff members should know exactly what experience the doctor has and what specialties, procedures, or treatments will be offered so this can be cross-promoted to existing patients when appropriate. Make sure that these services are only cross-promoted when the doctor is ready to accept new patients.

Reciprocal shadow schedules should be arranged with other doctors and

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technicians so the new physician has a good understanding of how the office flows during consultations, regular office visits, and surgery days.

SINK OR SWIM

There is no magic timeframe for when to have new physicians begin seeing patients; you will have to gauge the readiness of each physician individually. It is recommended to start slowly and to gradually increase patient load. The old “sink or swim” strategy is inappropriate when it comes to the care of your patients. Make sure the physician smoothly picks up the pace to a full workload.

EXTERNAL PROMOTION

Once you have your physician up and running, it's time to promote services externally. One of the best ways to start is by encouraging the physician to get out in the field and meet peers. Provide an OD or MD network list and help them foster strong relationships with other doctors. If the physician is uncomfortable doing this alone, schedule other doctors for these activities so that the two (or more) of them can make introductions together.

External promotion will also include targeted marketing activities designed to get the new physician's name out in the public and promote the growth of your practice. For the best chance of success, implement as many of the following suggestions as you can:

- Write professional, attention-grabbing press releases, and contact the news media directly if appropriate.
- Spotlight the new physician in your practice newsletter or in a special email communication to your

current patient database. Be sure to include information about the physician's specialties.

- Promote the doctor's specialties in social media with updates on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and more. Remember, these are meant to be “social,” not instructional, so take a lighthearted approach.
- Update your local business listings online, highlighting the new physician's name and contact information wherever possible.
- Add the new physician's information to your website. For consistency's sake, make sure the write-up matches those of other doctors on your site. Include a comprehensive bio, professional photo, and personal information such as hobbies and family to provide a more human touch to the bio.
- Update your website to include Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for the new physician. Include the doctor's name on different pages of your site to boost SEO by name or specialty.
- Send a newsletter or email blast to your OD or MD network announcing how your practice has expanded. Invite doctors to submit patient referrals to the new doctor.
- Encourage community involvement by introducing the new physician through local sponsorship opportunities, health fairs, seminars, sporting events, etc. Get creative and have a little fun with these sponsorships to promote the “human” and caring side of your practice.
- Set up grassroots marketing by promoting the new physician's specialties to local businesses, schools,

churches, community centers, or other sectors of the community that could benefit from their services.

OUTFLOW = INFLOW

The ultimate goal of these efforts is to help the new physician build professional confidence. By taking these strategic approaches to promoting your new physician both internally and externally, you will ultimately increase leads into your office and boost your bottom line.

As the new physician becomes more integrated into your practice, continue to provide the doctor with feedback from wins and losses. You can boost confidence by acknowledging difficulties and providing the tools necessary to make changes if needed. **AE**



Cuinn Merrigan (cuinn@fast-trackmarketing.com) is the chief operating officer at Fast Track Marketing in Broomfield, Colo.

IN A BLINK

- Use internal and external methods to promote new physicians in your practice.
- Inform staff members of the doctor's specialties to cross-promote to existing patients.
- Implement targeted marketing activities to get the new physician's name out in the public.