

Steps Business Should Take When Relocating

04/18/05

We are relocating our business to Yorktown Heights, NY with plans to open our doors in May. We serve a growing demand amongst consumers for dental care that integrates a holistic philosophy with state-of-the art dental technology. What would you recommend as the most cost-effective way to get our message out in the media?

Let's talk about this move from Fishkill to Yorktown and how to expand the practice in the new location. Doing it right includes surviving the move, retaining current patients who may want to make the move, and paving the way for new patients in the new location.

Plan the move details carefully. Try to avoid moving around the 1st, 15th, or 30th of the month. Most leases typically expire on these dates, and by avoiding them, you may get lower rates and/or better attention from vendors.

Require a written estimate, check references, and get insurance because you're going to be moving a lot of expensive equipment! Line up the Phone Company and Internet provider, and stay on top of them. Get into the space early, if you can, to clean, paint and wire phones. Don't lose a single phone call! Roll all phones to an external voice mail box providing a cell phone number to call in

emergencies. Don't forget to forward lines from your old office.

In business, often one of the hardest things to get, but the easiest to lose, is a customer. Involve your staff in building and implementing a plan to retain as many customers as possible. Try a personalized mailing with a map quest of the trip from each client's home or office address to the new location. Publish a map of the surrounding area, with highly visible landmarks, to help patients find you. Introduce employees and existing customers to the new site as early as possible, through an open house and office tour. Explain to employees and customers why you are moving, and help them see how the move will benefit them.

From here on out, it's all about marketing. Be crisp, professional, and confident. The old adage, *a picture speaks a thousand words* is actually true. The human brain thinks in pictures, words require translation inside the brain. Get someone to design a logo for your practice – distill what you do into a visual image.

Focus on outcomes. It's great that this owner offers health-promoting services including; acupuncture, nutritional therapy, cosmetic dentistry, crown and bridge work, help with head face and TMJ pain, mercury-free fillings, orthodontics, treatment of

gum disease, wellness education & the use of medicinal herbs and homeopathy. Answer the following questions. Do people live longer, better lives as a result? Will patients save money by treating the cause rather than the symptom? Why would someone care about the things you offer?

Produce an introduction, tri-fold flier that you can hand out in the community.

In marketing, the standard theory is that it takes 6+ impressions with your target market before your name and image are recognized. Visit local merchants and ask them to post your brochure. Ask them where they advertise and if it helps them to bring in new business. Find out about local volunteer organizations and offer to place an ad in their newsletters. This is usually a low-cost advertising opportunity, and links you into spheres of influence.

Get to know the town, and look for referral sources. Be sure to introduce yourself to the town police, fire, and ambulance departments, and tell them about your services. You may also find potential clients on the force, which can be a way to spread awareness through word of mouth. Participate in town events. Get on the planning committee for September's Grange Fair: 914-962-3900. I assume you've done your homework, and know that as of

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the 2000 census Yorktown had nearly 8,000 people living in 2,700 housing units. Introduce yourself to the local real estate agents – they probably know the town as well as anyone, and are certainly in a position to refer you, or hand out your brochure. Consider offering all of your referral targets a tour of your.

Focus time, effort and money on your website, and refer people to it. Page one should include your logo, a brief description of how people benefit from what you do, and a map. Add client pictures to testimonials. Hire a copy writer to clean up text, get rid of typos. Distill your message down to its essence. Learn about website design, optimization and hosting on April 19 at a Westchester County Exchange seminar, in White Plains, events@contactadvocate.com.

Think of your email address as branding. If you have a great website address; use an email address that matches. Do the same with your staff, so they can build brand identity when they communicate through email.

To penetrate a market, it is all about reaching out and personal contact – through letters, phone calls, email and local visibility. Figure out how many patients you need, months 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12. Work backwards, implementing marketing activities now, to achieve those goals. Build a database. Buy a list. Hire a

service to contact people, or ask your staff to mail introductory letters, then call to follow up. Encourage your staff to eat lunch in town and introduce themselves to shop owners and drop off brochures.

Develop a questionnaire to help people assess their *Dental IQ*, or *Dental Health*, with an offer to contact your office for more information. Mail it out to the entire town. Write a script that your staff can follow consistently when prospects call for information.

If you think you and your staff are not in sales, think again. It takes sales to make paychecks. Most professional practices make the mistake of setting up a nice office, on the theory of, *if you build it, they will come*. Maybe they will, and maybe they won't, but getting your name out there will make a difference. Tell everyone in your office that you expect them to contribute to growing the practice.

Looking for a good book? On the marketing front, try *Guerilla Marketing* by Jay Conrad, which offers lots of practical ideas you can implement on a budget.

If you're just starting to think about moving, consider the *Company Relocation Handbook* by Sharon Kaye Ward and William Gary Ward, which includes worksheets to compare locations, and helps you to define objectives for a move.

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