



Empathetic Marketing: Be Kind

By Wendy Lewis

CCOVID-19 came upon us suddenly and sent shockwaves across every industry. It has changed how we market at least for the short term and has catapulted us into a digital transformation perhaps sooner than expected.

The sudden shift in consumer behavior has caused everyone to adapt quickly to a new model. Those who were slow to adapt may find their practices lagging behind the competition. This period has made it clear that your marketing approach should be more customer-focused than before. Right now, the best way to reach new patients who may convert to real patients in 2021 is to take a patient-centric approach; talk less, listen more, and be more sensitive to their current struggles.

To remain competitive, strong and relevant digital content is a critical success factor to help consumers engage, build connections with your audience, and retain their interest in your practice for when they are ready to have surgery, a treatment or to purchase skincare. Traditional methods to acquire new patients may not work at all or as well anymore, so you need to pivot quickly. By converting live events, patient visits, and consultations to virtual options, many practices I talk to are thriving once they were able to open full-stop.

At least a certain group of patients will be more cautious in their choices and timing, which may mean that the time from initial consultation to pulling the trigger will be longer. Patients may need multiple touchpoints, more nurturing, reassurance and convincing before they sign up, especially for the most invasive procedures. This is also true specifically among an older population of patients who may be more concerned with their health, and mothers who are worried about the pending school situation.

Marketing should be redesigned to take a more personalized approach to send the right message to the right people at the right time. For example, aggressive weekly eblasts promoting your special offers may not be looked upon kindly now. Printed materials, brochures, forms and regular mail may no longer be practical, especially as text messaging can put you in touch with patients in a matter of seconds.



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Tactics that are designed to build relationships directly with patients based on empathy will serve you well in the long term. Speaking more closely to their challenges, fears and concerns about the current state of the world puts you in the position of being a welcome friendly source. An intimate, open conversation will go far to build long-lasting trust and customer loyalty. This starts with listening more closely to what patients are posting and commenting.

Consumers' expectations and perspectives have also shifted. In-person encounters have been minimized across the board which necessitated other ways to build authentic connections with people. Thus, social media has emerged as the number one way to create personal connections. Aim to meet your current and future patients where they are spending the most time, which means Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, TikTok or Reels or the next hot platform.

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This requires a different tone from pre-COVID.

Leverage your best content to nurture conversations through blog posts, Instagram Live, webinars, Facebook communities, YouTube videos, and more. Listening closely to your customer's responses will provide vital clues as to their wants and needs. Be careful not to create content that is insensitive to how their lives may have changed. Keep content useful and relevant to your target audience to maintain them. Format your content in the most appealing ways; for example, less text and more visuals, more targeted key messages and a lighter, friendlier tone.

Digital marketing offers the most direct and effective methods for lead generation at a lower cost and with measurable outcomes. The need to diversify your marketing strategies and adopt more digital opportunities is the clear path to emerging successful on the other side.

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