



Using the New Media: A Modern Plan

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A *adaptability* is defined as the ability “to adjust to new conditions or a different environment.” It is a word that should be ingrained in the mindset of any sales-minded urgent care clinic.

I believe that lack of adaptability is the primary cause of less than stellar sales and marketing initiatives. In a business world that is changing daily, yesterday’s approach is, well, so *yesterday*.

You need to adapt quickly to our rapidly changing environment. Right now, the sales and marketing theme appears to be social networking. In order to ride this wave, you should:

1. Commit to the *concept* of change before you define exactly what change you want to invoke. If you are more reactive than proactive, you are inevitably backed into the yesterday corner.
2. Browse the Internet for the latest marketing trends, read the hottest marketing books and periodicals, and watch how savvy marketers approach you and others. Healthcare tends to be a step behind when it comes to sales and marketing; borrow from beyond the healthcare planet and you are likely to be a step ahead of your competitors.
3. Balance your portfolio. Although investor strategies vary by economic circumstance and personal risk adversity, many professional financial advisors recommend earmarking 10% (or so) of your stock holdings in higher risk/higher return holdings rather than sticking with a 100% conservative allocation.

Your commitment to tomorrow should be firm and consistent, but by no means should you go “all in.” Rather, strike a balance between forward-thinking tactics and currently effective traditional tactics.



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Networking

Marketing experts point to networking, including and going well beyond social networking, as the “next big thing.” The time will come when an urgent care clinic will never need to send a routine introductory letter or place an introductory telephone call to a total stranger. Rather, the name of the sales/marketing game will be to network your way to that prospect through existing contacts.

Using LinkedIn

LinkedIn is compelling because it is a social networking venue for professionals (whereas Facebook is more personal-use oriented and Twitter is something else altogether).

Using LinkedIn can help an urgent care clinic market its services in numerous ways:

1. Whenever your clinic has developed a good relationship with a company or other member of your business community, you should establish a link with that person. If they are not involved or familiar with LinkedIn, you should encourage their participation and send them an invitation to get the ball rolling by linking to you.

Over time, you will be linked to scores, if not hundreds, of local decision makers and in most cases will have access to everyone who is linked to them.

For example, if you are linked to 100 local professionals and each of them is linked to an individual of interest to your clinic, you can encourage your contact to “introduce” you to their contact. It certainly beats the old “I’d like to introduce myself” foot-in-the-door sales method.

2. LinkedIn offers an easy path for any of your linkages to write a short recommendation about your clinic or sales professional. It will henceforth be available on your LinkedIn page and readily available to anyone who passes by the page. Likewise, it certainly beats the old fashioned way of spreading references.
3. You can announce just about anything to everyone you are linked to. Tell them about a new product, a new col-

league, or a soon-to-open clinic. It is a modern way to spread information and is a welcome adjunct to email blasts and advertising.

Facebook

Granted, as mentioned previously, Facebook is more of a personal networking site, but its sheer numbers of subscribers (more than 500 million active users worldwide, according to its own data) make it attractive.

You can use Facebook in various ways, as well, in that you can create a business page and use it for just about anything, including interesting photos, videos, event invitations, games and contests, discussion chains and sub-pages for selected subgroups of your client universe. Further, you can and should connect on a personal level with many of your clinic's contact base; the more your clients consider you a friend the more likely they are to refer you to other companies and offer strong recommendations.

Mobile Device Marketing

Moving out another step out into the solar system, we find the new world of mobile device marketing. This is the world of apps and text messages, and a new avenue to clinic brand awareness.

In the near future, apps are likely to be available on almost any topic, thus providing mobile-device users with immediate access to any specialized information they deem valuable or essential.

Healthcare apps could range, for example, from a detailed medical dictionary to a summary of work-related conditions. Some insurance companies have even come up with apps to help users locate the nearest urgent care center.

Although it may seem onerous, using text messages to transmit information to your constituents is almost certain to get bigger and bigger. Remember, a nuisance can become a thing of joy if the information being transmitted is of value to its recipients.

It seems that virtually everyone these days has a multi-functional mobile device basically attached to their body. Never before in marketing has there been such a direct track to the consumer.

In summary, two core messages emerge from the networking frontier:

1. Take full advantage of those you know to facilitate up-beat, reassuring connections with new prospects.
 2. Touch your prospects more often, and make each touch briefer and ever more valuable to its recipients.
- In short, network and connect. ■

Citation: Shehab N, Schaefer MK, Kegler SR, et al. *Pediatrics*. 2010;126(6):1100-1107. Epub 2010 Nov 22.

A voluntary market withdrawal of orally administered, over-the-counter, infant cough and cold medications (CCMs) was announced in October 2007. The goal of this study was to assess CCM-related adverse events (AEs) among children after the withdrawal.

Emergency department visits for CCM-related AEs among children <12 years of age were identified from a nationally representative, stratified, probability sample of 63 U.S. EDs for the 14 months before and after announcement of withdrawal.

After withdrawal, the number and proportion of estimated ED visits for CCM-related AEs involving children <2 years of age were less than one-half of those in the pre-withdrawal period difference, whereas the overall number of estimated ED visits for CCM-related AEs for children <12 years of age remained unchanged. During both periods, two-thirds of estimated ED visits involved unsupervised ingestions (i.e., children finding and ingesting medications).

Further reductions will likely require 1) packaging improvements to reduce harm from unsupervised ingestions and 2) continued education about avoiding CCM use for young children. ■

Evaluation of Consistency in Dosing Directions and Measuring Devices for Pediatric Nonprescription Liquid Medications

Key point: Most pediatric OTC liquid meds have problematic dosing directions.

Citation: Yin HS, Wolf MS, Dryer BP, et al. Evaluation of consistency in dosing directions and measuring devices for pediatric nonprescription liquid medications. *JAMA*. 2010;Nov 30. [Epub ahead of print.]

Researchers examined dosing instructions for 200 top-selling pediatric liquid medicines (analgesic, cough/cold, allergy, or gastrointestinal) in 2009. Among the findings:

- One fourth of medicines did not include standardized measuring devices.
- Of those that included such devices, nearly all (99%) had inconsistencies between the label's instructions and the accompanying device. For example, a dose given on the instructions might be missing from the device.
- Most directions were missing definitions for abbreviations listed (e.g., TBSP=tablespoon)
- Six percent of products used nonstandard units of measurement such as drams or cubic centimeters.

The authors note that such problematic labeling is a "root cause of consumer confusion with a high potential to lead to unintentional misuse of products." ■