

Bangalore Physiotherapist Network

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Marketing In The Modern Era

India is witnessing an era where new hospital / clinics / clinics are being built at a pace like never before. There are exciting challenges that these hospital / clinics are facing while they are being commissioned. One daunting task that every hospital / clinics, new or old, small or big, is facing today is the task of marketing itself. Owing to stiff competition, for the last few years, it has changed its hue from subtle to more aggressive.

Here is the mantra of creating a fruitful positioning for a hospital / clinics in the mind of the prospect:

Be Unique

Ever heard of the phrase 'Differentiation' or USP [Unique Selling Proposition]? Be original, be genuine and be different. Do not imitate what the others are doing. Anyways, who will buy a cheap imitation when the original is already available? There are a lot of creative ways to be different. You could be the most experienced. You could have the best technology. You could also be the most reliable. You could be doing the same procedures differently. Whatever your differentiation stance, it will work as long as it is authentic and well communicated to the target market. Communicating your marketing stance is yet another big topic. I will throw some light on that. But I can not resist stressing that don't copy someone else's uniqueness or don't cut your fee to be different.

Value Proposition

Ensuring value proposition is essential. Value proposition need not mean high quality at a low price. It means, even if the hospital / clinic's charges are high, it must offer the best service, technology and most importantly, emotional assurance.

Brand / Name

The nomenclature too plays a critical role. It should depict the services the hospital / clinics specializes in (for instance Asian Heart Institute), should be short (Max Healthcare), must be self explanatory (Jet Airways), easy to pronounce (Tata) and easy to remember (Sony).

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Targeting the Stressed Patient

At the time of check-in, a patient is naturally stressed. This is when the patient and his/her relatives need the hospital / clinic's emotional support the most. "If that stress is taken care of, then be rest assured the customer will remain loyal and in turn recommend your hospital / clinics,

Customer Delight

Technical support and best-in-class services are now basic expectations of patients. "hospital / clinics must look at customer delight, which is offering more than they expect. This can be easily given to them through a personal touch and emotional assurance," The hospital / clinics must treat everybody related to the patient as its customer, be it the relatives .

Media Activities

Press meets can be conducted at regular intervals to brief the rare cases & procedures performed with latest techniques using modern state of the art equipment ,there by answering all the Doubts and quires rose on behalf of the public and clarifying the same. Informative news can be published in the Dailies & Local newspapers every week. Telecasting live physio interviews wherein; the public can get their doubts clarified over telephones. Advertisement on Special Camps and Special Concessions on specific treatment and investigations can be released in Daily News Papers and Televisions, write-ups on seasonal diseases and rare cases can be published.

Public Programmes

Making public to gather in an auditorium or any common place and physio's can explain them how to prevent specific diseases and how to live happily with diseases. The public will show great interest in these programmes and thousands of public will be benefited. These Awareness programme can be conducted at Schools and Colleges,residential areas also in clubs like Lions & Rotary etc..

Referrals

The people living in Interior Rural areas are deprived of modern medical facilities. Periodically meeting the doctors and highlighting the facilities, infrastructure and the latest equipment available, so that they can refer the cases anytime to the clinics.

Continuing Medical Education (CME)

In order to update the knowledge CME programmes can be regularly conducted in every districts of the region in collaboration with the local Physio associations. Senior consultants of various medical specialities can invited for Guest lectures as well as experience sharing. There by also honoring the doctors for their innumerable services to the patients. Through CME programmes referrals can be increased.

Special Concession & Camp Division

Different speciality physio camps in association with respective doctors can be conducted at different places where the public can directly consult the doctors as well as physio's. Free consultation and medicines can be given, when the patient comes to the hospital / clinics referred in a camp, they can be given discounts on the medical & physio treatment. There by resulting in word of mouth marketing also they become the unpaid marketing ambassadors of you. As patients are the best ambassadors, it is important to take care of their needs and provide them with best possible care. Their apprehensions should be addressed so that they have the courage to come back to the same facility. In this business, every satisfied customer brings thousand new customers."

CRM

This is the thing for tomorrow. CRM or Customer Relationship Management as it called is a very important tool to retain your customers and to make sure that the word of mouth publicity is ensured for the long term. It is a well known fact that if we retain our existing customers and make sure they come to us again and again we can increase our business by 10 to 30 per cent. Also it is cheaper to retain existing customers than to find new ones. Loyal customer will recommend you to others. You may find their friends, neighbours and relatives coming to you over a period of time. Essentially, a CRM would include systems of staying in regular touch with your customers. You may need to regularly send them cards, gifts, etc. It will also include inducing the past patients to participate in activities being carried out by your hospital / clinics for social causes. Having feedback forms filled by the patient is one useful CRM exercise.

Focus

Last word of advice from me is- Don't try to be many things for many people. I will go to the extent of saying that don't be many things for the same set of people. But please don't play with your brand image by making it too confusing for your target market to understand. Ever noticed, why MacDonald's is not selling potato parathas? They can try to sell pizzas, but who will eat a pizza at MacDonald's when Pizza hut is specialist Pizza chain? Strategy is a long term proposition. So don't expect to get instant results. It will take time and perseverance. But remember what the old and wise say. They say- 'Good happen to those with patience.' It is essential for a hospital / clinics to reach out to its customers (patients), if it wants to survive the competition. This can be achieved only by building a bridge of trust between the hospital / clinics and the community, so that the community can crossover to the hospital / clinics. One needs to understand the fact that patients do not flock to a hospital / clinics just because its services are cheap, but because of its good name and good image.

A hospital / clinic's primary objectives are usually humanitarian, philosophical or regulatory and based on some perceived need. However, a problem may arise when what the patient 'needs' is different from what the patient 'wants'. For instance, what a patient needs from a hospital / clinics is reasonable good quality medical care. Yet market research over the past few years has shown that patients want a variety of amenities not associated with their need for reasonable good quality medical care. They want smiling, empathetic staff, and a quick response to their needs. To stay ahead of the competition, it is essential to keep the customer happy. Only satisfying the customer needs and wants and delighting the customer by exceeding his expectations with unanticipated benefits can achieve this.

With this article, I have tried to add another dimension to marketing. External marketing is not the only form of marketing that exists. We can get all the customers we want, but it will be detrimental to have all those customers if we are not equipped to deliver on our promises and their expectations. Let us make our hospital / clinics 'market worthy' before marketing them. Let us win our own people before setting out to win the world.

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The editor in chief requesting all the Bangalore physiotherapist network members to send more news & article for news letter.

The organizing committee also welcome the updated articles / books on different topic on physiotherapy for e-book preparation and e-circulations.

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