



Paul E. Okamoto, D.C.

Back Talk

Set Yourself Apart (The fourth installment of this series)

In this article, I would like to talk about how one distances himself/herself from the rest of the pack. In other words, when a person decides to see a chiropractor, how can you set yourself apart or project yourself higher to be the doctor of choice?

Before I address my thoughts on this topic, I thought that I should first state that many of the things that I mention are things that I have heard from others who are pioneers in the profession and have much more knowledge and experience than I. Much of who I am as a chiropractor is not the result of my intellect or insight, but rather an accumulation of information that I have gleaned from others. I am a firm believer of not re-inventing the wheel. In a past article, I mentioned Dr. Cecil McLeod, who I had the blessing of being an associate under while in Anchorage, Alaska. Since I learned so many things from him, particularly Christian attitudes and practice behavior, I will undoubtedly mention things that he taught me. Of course, some of the information that I will share is common business sense or things that I have observed through years of private practice.

In the last article, Business Principles, I mentioned several opinions, but did not give personal references. However I believe that I should give credit where credit is due. I mentioned that it is best to treat a person for relief and some stability and then let that patient go instead of promoting lifetime maintenance care. It is my understanding that Clarence Gonstead, probably the most successful of all chiropractic practitioners, has that opinion. I took this thought from him. He realized that by letting a person go after providing symptomatic relief, he could build up a successful practice by referral of those satisfied patients who told their friends and relatives about Dr. Gonstead. Additionally, he had the confidence that when that patient had another bout of symptoms, he/she would once again visit his office. He did not promote the practice of lifetime maintenance. Although I understand that thought behind lifetime maintenance or wellness care that is presently popular in our profession, I see two problems behind this idea. The first is that a person can become chiropractic dependent. The second problem is that philosophy prevents others who have never tried chiropractic from entering the chiropractic door, as they are looking only for symptomatic relief from their ills, rather than a commitment to lifetime care. Thus the potential patient is too scared to even consider chiropractic.

The other thing I noted in Business Principles was to treat each person like it was your father, mother, sister, or brother. That thought was also not my origination, but came from James Parker. Dr. Parker had many excellent business thoughts, and he often used acronyms to remember them. One similar idea of treating each patient like you would treat a relative was LSMFT. For those of you who are old enough, you might remember the television advertisement for Lucky Strike cigarettes. That company used those initials to represent, "Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco." However, Dr. Parker used those initials to represent, "Loving Service, My First Technique." I am confident that

**"Treat each
person like it
was your
father,
mother,
sister
or brother."**

continued on next page,

1st Fruits



Years ago, the CCA implemented a concept of giving known as the "First Patient of the Month." Members set aside the revenue from the "first" office visit as a contribution to the CCA, the Christian organization of your profession. This past fall, the board of directors implemented an improvement to this program as an incentive. Members who commit to this endeavor will have their dues waived for each year they continue their regular giving.

The Home Office can set this up on an automatic charge to your credit card if that would be convenient to those members who choose to participate.

Please contact the Home Office if you have any questions or if you would like to sign up.

800.999.1970
or e-mail:
cca@frii.com

*Please consider
this for 2011*



Back Talk, concluded,

that would have helped that person. I forgot because I was so preoccupied with socializing about something that was not of consequence to their health.

Also, give more service than what is paid. I am not talking about giving free service, although each of us faces that circumstance from time to time when someone comes in who needs care but cannot afford it. Rather I am saying that every Christian should follow Christ's teaching and go the extra mile. Do more than what you are paid for. Patients understand and appreciate that and are more willing to refer others to you.

Consider being on managed care panels. When you are just starting out in practice, it is probably wise to be on as many panels as you can be in order to accelerate your growth. However, once you are at a comfortable practice level, look at each panel to determine the pros and cons. Some panels are quite generous in their reimbursement rates while others are quite skimpy. Thus, you can pick and choose which panels to join. My practice overhead is quite high, so I have chosen not to participate in panels that reduce my reimbursement above 30%. Of course, the lower the overhead, the lower the reimbursement rate can be and still be profitable.

If you advertise, make your advertisement professional. Do not give advertisements about yourself that are shoddy. The public will often conclude that the care you provide is consistent with the advertisement that they see or hear. If your ads are of poor quality, they will assume that your treatment will also be of poor quality. Conversely, if you decide to advertise and provide a professional ad, they can come to the conclusion that your care will probably be professional as well.

When you market, consider marketing to a particular group of people and learn how best to market to that group on a consistent basis. It may be your local chamber of commerce, a group of personal injury attorneys, ser-

**If you
advertise,
make your
advertisements
professional.**

vice clubs, athletic teams, etc. Really the list is endless. In order to market to others, a person must be willing to get out of their comfort zone. The majority of my marketing has been through Christian and conservative talk radio. It has been expensive, but has made my name a common household name in the Christian community. Lastly, pray and ask God for ideas. The more that you look to Him for advice and assistance, the more He will be involved in your practice in unthinkable ways. In the following article, I would like to speak about advertising and marketing, both in clinic and out of clinic. Have a blessed day!

Dr. Paul E. Okamoto is a 1974 graduate of Palmer Chiropractic College and has been a member of the CCA since 1977. His practice, the Master's Touch Chiropractic Clinic, is located in Portland, OR.