

Tips for Avoiding Marketing Traps

By **Margie Satinsky, M.B.A.**



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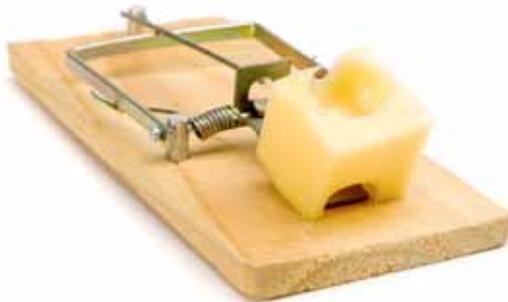
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Special thanks to Alice Saunders, president of Trisecta, who contributed to this article. Saunders is a marketing consultant and writer. For more information, go to www.trisecta.com.

This is the second article of a two-part series. Last month we covered the reasons for marketing and tips for marketing effectively. This month we'll identify traps to avoid.

TRAPS TO AVOID

Taking potshots with marketing strategy and budget. Many practices take a potshot approach and allocate marketing dollars according to the medium, e.g., website, print or outreach. You'll get better results from a carefully crafted and executed marketing plan that specifies key messages, measurable objectives, strategies and tactics for each audience you want to reach? Be sure you can track the effectiveness of what you are doing. What worked well five years ago may no longer be effective; public expectations change over time.



Saving a buck by hiring an inexperienced relative to do your website. This individual should be experienced in developing and maintaining professional websites using industry standards and mobile-friendly development tools and is committed to providing timely and ongoing support. Quality websites have sound information architecture or, in layperson's terms, "good bones." Over time, you want to be able to deliver better functionality and expand content and social media integration without redoing your initial efforts.

Looking and sounding like everyone else in your specialty. Focus on your uniqueness and forget about trying to be all things to all people. Highlight special fellowship training, the frequency with which you perform a particular procedure, your ability to offer a new service or procedure in your community, the depth and warmth of patient interaction and ease of making appointments. Ask patients and medical colleagues for written permission to use their comments as testimonials.

Misunderstanding your Google ranking. Google has made many changes in recent years to curtail search engine spamming techniques that historically allowed vendors to manipulate rankings. Clicks on a high-ranking link in Google may not translate to a conversion to a patient who enters your practice door. Engage a search engine marketing professional who has a good, recent track record with other practices, and ask those practices how they know their Google ranking is driving new patient acquisition.

Reinventing the wheel in the development of marketing materials and patient communications. Take time at the beginning to create comprehensive and understandable core content about the subjects that are important to you. Summarize, structure, and layer the information in a manner that enables you to refine but not necessarily rewrite over time. Use simple annotations in your core source documents in order to point to newer, more accurate and more effective information developed to support new marketing efforts. Should you decide to seek outside marketing assistance, a sound core structure can help you reduce meeting time and development costs.