

# ChiropracticProducts®

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## Captain of Industry

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# Tricks

## of the

# Trade

**Chiropractic Products**  
*asks two marketing  
and public relations  
experts about the best  
tools to promote  
a DC practice*

By Julie Z. Lee

**M**arketing and public relations efforts can be more appealing to the average consumer when they are typically clothed in community-oriented information sessions, such as serving as a health expert on a television news segment. For those who turn away from hard sell advertising, this is a softer, friendlier way of communicating your services.

*Chiropractic Products* spoke with two marketing and public relations professionals for the best advice on how the experts are bringing more business to their clients by taking advantage of what can come for free—publicity. Edwin Forteau is president of Win/Win Professional Marketing and Sales Association. For the past 12 years, Forteau has been a marketing advisor/consultant to small businesses and professional practices. Katherine M. Rothman is president and CEO of KMR Communications Inc, a Manhattan public relations firm specializing in medical public relations. Clients of the firm regularly appear in media outlets, such as *USA Today*, the ABC television show “The View,” and local news programs.

**What is the biggest difference between marketing an MD practice compared to a DC one?**

**Forteau:** MDs practices are not small businesses. Most of them are affiliated with hospitals, so they do not have to market themselves at all. Most chiropractors are owner-operated small businesses. Their fate is in their own hands and effective marketing is paramount to their success.

**Rothman:** Most consumers are unaware chiropractors can provide comprehensive care and that there is a real health care necessity for chiropractors. When promoting chiropractic, the campaign must inform and broaden the public’s notion about this area of health care, who it is appropriate for, and that it has a much broader scope than “back-cracking.” Probably more than any other area of health care, chiropractors have faced negative publicity. The goal is to carve out a positive image and deflect some of the negativity.

**More and more patients are seeking alternative health care practitioners. How would you suggest chiropractors capitalize on this trend?**

**Forteau:** DCs can position themselves as “The Expert” in the alternative health care field in their market. They can also write articles, special reports, and books on alternative health care; and hold seminars.

**Rothman:** Public relations is one way to accomplish this task to a targeted audience through the use of editorial coverage in newspapers, magazines, Internet, wire service, and television. Media coverage is seen as more credible, while advertising translates as simply

self-promotion. If a chiropractor is seen on a local news segment, this gives them the ability to convey their personality, as well as demonstrate a new technique or technology they possess.

**In your experience, what is the most effective marketing tool for DCs? Why?**

**Forteau:** Everyone is looking for the one magic secret to transform his or her practice. The truth is there is no one tool that will accomplish this. DCs will experience success when they commit to a process that includes: 1) identifying and then researching their target market; 2) developing a positioning strategy that provides a reason for your market to choose you above other alternatives; 3) crafting a message that will motivate your market to action; 4) determining the most effective vehicles or tools of communication to your market; 5) writing out a step-by-step plan to achieve goals; and 6) implementing your plan with daily objectives and measuring your progress each day.

**Rothman:** Websites are a good marketing tool because many prospective patients use the Internet to find their doctors. If the website is done well, a patient can gain a sense of the practice, the doctor’s credentials, patient care philosophy, treatment provided, and the aesthetics of the office. When DCs are featured in the media, they can use this coverage to market the practice by putting these placements on their website, framed in their office, and as promotional materials. Odd as it may sound, prospective patients often are more impressed with a doctor who has appeared in *Vogue* magazine, than one with an Ivy League education.

**What advice in avoiding common mistakes do you have for chiropractors just starting out?**

**Forteau:** When I ask chiropractors to describe their ideal patient to me, they can’t. They say, “We see everyone.” This is a sign of poor targeting, which makes it impossible to develop an effective marketing strategy. Don’t try and be all things to all people. Pick a market segment that you connect with by identifying publications they read and contribute articles, becoming active in their communities, speaking at their association meetings, building relationships with influential people within your target market and gaining their endorsement, and developing direct mail campaigns. Advertising should be the last step in your marketing campaign, because the credibility that you have built by doing all the above will make it more effective.

**Rothman:** If the DC lives in a big city, do not waste money on elaborate mailings, which will yield little or no return. If one is in a rural area, where the competition is not as plentiful, these mailings may prove more fruitful. Do not use traditional advertising in outlets

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where your competition is advertising. Try finding outlets for advertising that make sense for your practice but are untapped by your competition. Do not engage inferior service providers in order to save money. You only have one chance to make a first impression.

### What advice do you have for established practitioners?

**Forteau:** Focus on patient retention and implement a formal referral process. There are four pieces to the marketing puzzle: attraction, conversion, retention, and leverage (or referrals). When starting your practice, focus on attraction. As you become more established, your focus should shift to retention and leverage.

It costs far less to retain an existing patient than it does to attract a new one. Find out what other products and/or services your existing patients want and provide them. Have free health and wellness dinner talks and ask your patients to invite guests. At a cost of as little as \$10 per person, this is a great way to thank, educate, and retain existing patients, while attracting new patients to your practice. I've seen as many as 80% of the guests become new patients.

A simple, yet effective, method for getting more referrals is to just ask. We have found using the statement, "Please don't keep me a secret" works very well for getting patient referrals.

**Rothman:** Never be complacent. One never knows when new competition will hang a shingle right in their backyard with a larger and more state-of-the-art office. If you do not have a website, find a good web designer. If your practice has not achieved its revenue goals, change your methods of advertising and promotion. Find a role model in your field and find out the tactics used to become a success.

### What beneficial trend do you see in the chiropractic profession? A detrimental trend?

**Forteau:** An emphasis on natural and alternative health care is on the rise when Baby Boomers (one of the largest consumers of medical care) are looking for alternatives to medical care.

A detrimental trend is less health insurance coverage for chiropractic care. Chiropractors need to emphasize the value of the services they offer so they can begin reducing their dependency on insurance coverage.

**Rothman:** Detrimental trends include DCs trying to cash in on elective procedures, such as Botox®. When untoward results happen to patients, it gives the chiropractic profession a bad name.

### Tell us a success story of one of your DC clients.

**Forteau:** One strategy that has consistently worked well for my DC clients has been positioning them as the resident expert for an organization that serves their target market, which involves making your services available for free to their members on a regular basis. One client became the resident expert in computers—focusing on associations of computer professionals, computer user groups, and companies who employed computer programmers. This client taught how to avoid carpal tunnel, neck and back stiffness, and other computer-related injuries. We set up monthly and quarterly clinics demonstrating proper work techniques. Also, the DC was available every other Friday for brief telephone consultations. This strategy is far more effective than the free spinal examinations our clients have done, and the financial investment is very low.

**Rothman:** Our firm was hired by the Georgia Chiropractic Association to make consumers aware of proposed State Senate Bill 50, which would eliminate chiropractic care from some insurance coverage. DCs had already taken a 30% hit over the past 2 years when the Department of Community Health imposed a \$20 copayment for state employees seeking outpatient therapies. We were successful in gaining media coverage demonstrating why this proposed bill was detrimental to those who are insured. ☐

Julie Z. Lee is a contributing writer for *Chiropractic Products*.



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