



This letter is part of an Informative Email Newsletter series written on behalf of a marketing client specializing in medical and dental offices. The series ran twice during the year and consisted of 12 letters regarding how offices can boost their leads.

JUMP START YOUR MARKETING IN 2016

Most ophthalmology practices do some form of marketing. However, not all ophthalmology practices do marketing well. For example, if your website is five years old or older, if the posters hanging in your waiting room are faded by the sunlight, or if your staff is still putting patients on hold for 2 minutes or longer, your marketing might be behind the times.

To grow your practice in 2016 or at least not lose any of your current market share, you or your office administrator might want to look at jump-starting your marketing efforts in 2016. In this series of blogs, we're going to look at the following:

- Internal Marketing: Phone Skills
- Internal Marketing: Maximizing Your Patient Waiting Room
- Internal Marketing: Patient Recall Methods
- Internal: Training Your Counselors for Maximum Conversion
- Web: Is Your Website Up To Date?
- Web: SEO 101 and Reporting Tools
- Web: Paid Search-The mystery behind PPC, Remarketing and Banners
- Web: Does it Make Sense to Add a Blog?
- Social Media: What is Social Media and How Can it Help Your Practice?
- Social Media: Paid Social Media Campaigns
- Social Media: Outsourcing Your Online Presence
- External: Should I spend money on TV, Radio or Newsprint?

Internal Marketing The Telephone

I believe all practices need a foundation for marketing. Internal marketing has the highest return on investment than any other type of business development efforts you could implement by far and I believe it starts with the telephone. When a new or existing patient or perhaps a referring optometrist calls your practice, how do you want the phone to be answered? "Doctor's office, please hold," or "Thank you for calling the Stubenbordt Vision Institute. This is Paul. How may I help you?" Believe it or not, your phones probably aren't as good as you might believe. To understand how your staff is answering the phone, simply mystery shop your own

practice. If you're satisfied with how they answer, great! If not, implement some changes.

Here are some critical points in developing strong phone skills:

- Answer within 3 rings
- Always use the same greeting (i.e., "Thank you for calling the Stubenbordt Vision Institute. This is Paul. How may I help you?")
- Continuously educate your staff regarding changes in ophthalmology and what your practice has to offer. Knowledge = Confidence and Confidence = better phone skills
- Make sure staff knows the entire purpose of a new patient phone call is to get them in the door, not to educate the patient over the phone
- Try to never put a patient on hold and if you absolutely have to, make sure you get their permission first. Make the hold time less than 30 seconds and provide a meaningful message

If you don't already have one, I highly suggest getting an on-hold message that patients can listen to when placed on hold. A good on-hold message will welcome patients to the practice, list the doctors at the practice, describe a list of services your practice offers such as laser cataract surgery, premium IOLs, Glaucoma Treatment, Retina, etc, discuss how patients can save time by visiting your website to complete new patient forms, and describe the location of your practice.

Create a Phone Skills Report Card

Many practices have the ability to record calls through their VOIP phone system. If you don't have a phone system that can record calls, I suggest using a company such as CallRail that can record calls for you which can then be monitored later and compared against a phone skills report card. A phone skills report card can help you identify how your customers encounter your practice as well as where improvements can be made. Elements you might want to include on your report card could include:

- Does staff answer within three rings?
- Does staff identify your practice and provide their name?
- Is the customer placed on hold?
 - If yes, is the customer asked first and does staff wait to hear the answer?
 - How long is the hold wait time?
 - Is the hold message meaningful?
 - Could it be improved?
- Is staff courteous, listening, accurate, sincere, and professional (CLASP)?
- Does staff use the customer's name when appropriate and known?
- Does the customer hang up feeling valued?

In addition to allowing you to record phone calls to improve your marketing efforts, services such as CallRail can provide a number of other helpful features. The ability to route calls to multiple phones at once, assign calls to different locations, or easily build an interactive menu might be important features for your practice.

When connected to your online marketing campaigns, these services can also feed into your existing digital marketing software to provide important tracking information. This information is key to maximizing your marketing efforts by identifying which efforts are providing the greatest returns.

With all the newer technology available to help you run your practice, it is easy to overlook the simplicity of the phone as an important marketing tool. However, paying attention to a few simple practices such as those listed above can significantly improve your conversion rate and number of referrals.