



AVOIDING THE MONEY PIT OF TRADITIONAL MARKETING

How to attract more patients for less.

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Do you pay for traditional marketing in the hopes of attracting patients to your practice? If you do, you are paying a hefty price for being boring. I'm here to share a better (and cheaper) way to achieve the same goal.

Most ophthalmology practices invest time, money, and energy in efforts to make their brand better. Practices should spend less and focus instead on making their brand different. Here's the mistake that keeps most ophthalmologists in the messy middle: Practices focus on *what* they do rather than *how* they do what they do. The latter strategy better aligns with the patient decision-making journey.

In ophthalmology, there is a strong urge to replicate what other practices do in terms of marketing, but building a successful practice sometimes means going against this instinct. The logical, full-service approach is to offer the same or better features than competitors. This is commonly referred to as *best practices*.

A better approach is to become a specialist in the specialty (for more on this topic, see "Reimagining, Rethinking, and Reinventing Refractive Surgery," pg 44). Instead of copying the best practices of your competitors, you focus on how you can differentiate your practice from theirs. This is called *next practices*. The practices that become specialists in the specialty can outpace other ophthalmology practices by gaining a larger share of geographic market areas and potentially greater patient mind share and earning power. These practices also often have fewer competitors and attract more suitable patients.

Brand positioning is not common sense for most ophthalmologists. Logic suggests that a practice can improve its revenue stream by being all things to all patients, but it's the wrong decision. The best growth strategy—in both a good and bad economy—is to decide what not to do. With patient-centric branding, better is not better. Different is better. ■