



Creative Networking Opportunities

When building a referral network, it pays to think outside of the box.

Mar 2022 By Cheryl Whitman

Networking is an effective marketing tool for medical aesthetic professionals because it creates personal "face-to-face" human bonds that lead to trusting relationships and, therefore, long-term business growth. Creating a referral network is an excellent means of building your reputation, enhancing your brand, growing your database, increasing both product and service sales and becoming a force in niche markets. Best of all, it can be done on any budget.

Traditionally, networking has involved meeting people at Chamber of Commerce events, civic clubs, social events and professional societies. But, as practices gain insight into their target patient base and face increasing competition, they are finding new, creative methods to build their referral networks. Following are some potential networking partnership opportunities you may not have considered that can bring new patients and new exposure to your practice or medspa.

REFERRAL OPPORTUNITIES

Art Galleries can be excellent networking partners, as they typically serve a high-end clientele with an eye for aesthetics. Ask the gallery to display artwork at your practice. You can promote the gallery by offering the work for sale and displaying gallery brochures for upcoming exhibits and/or local artists. It may help brighten up your practice décor as a side benefit!

In return, the gallery promotes your practice by displaying your marketing collateral or allowing you to use their mailing list for an email blast or print promotional card. In addition, you can offer joint promotions or hold joint events. For example, an art gallery would be an excellent venue for a "lunch and learn" seminar on beauty, preventive care and wellness or a holiday event for VIP patients.

Luxury Car Dealerships cater to a wealthy clientele. Promote the dealership at your practice by displaying their brochures. Go further and ask the dealership to hand out gift certificates or discount coupons for your practice with each car sale or test drive. You can reciprocate by handing out free oil change, car wash or similar coupons for them at your practice. You may also find opportunities to run joint promos or host joint charity events in the community.

Upscale Restaurants are another place you can advertise your practice. Hold educational seminars there as well as charitable events benefiting the community. Joint promotions are always great. These might include offering restaurant discounts with your high-end treatment package bundles, while the restaurant offers discount coupons or gift certificates for your services to their clients on special occasions.

Law Practices, especially those specializing in divorce, can be great networking partners. Legal proceedings are stressful. Provide the attorney with gift certificates or discount coupons for services at your practice or medspa to give to their clients. Perhaps focus on stress reduction treatments. Another option is to offer services providing a more youthful appearance for those looking to create their revenge body. Hold joint charitable events benefiting the community. Promote the legal practice in return. Perhaps hold a joint educational event focusing on your patient's futures, which offers a variety of wellness topics and information on prenuptial agreements, family trusts, wills, etc.

Boutique Hotels that do not have their own spa can provide wonderful joint promotional possibilities.

For example:

Sponsor a "Beauty Getaway Weekend" with discounts on the hotel stay and your services. Expand it to include a "Couples Weekend" offering.

Offer discount cards advertising your services that are placed in rooms or given to guests during check-in.

Offer the hotel staff gift certificates to your practice or medspa.

For procedures with downtime, offer a package that includes a hotel stay for procedure recovery. This helps your patient keep their procedure confidential.

Dentists are excellent partners. A dentist's office would happily promote a new smile and a younger look to accompany it. For example, their veneers or whitening services accompanied by a discount coupon for your services such as injectables or chemical peels.

Ob-Gyn Practices may be an excellent place to promote vaginal rejuvenation, O-Shots or treatments that help new mothers recover from their pregnancies, such as skin care services or Mommy Makeovers. Offer joint educational seminars on health and wellness held at each other's practices.

Spas and Fitness Centers are a logical partner for joint referrals. Offer joint educational events at each other's locations focusing on themes such as a new, healthier and younger-looking body. Advertise your services at each other's facilities and consider joint promotional advertising and events.

MAKING THE CONNECTION

Before you begin reaching out to potential networking partners, identify the businesses in your area that serve the type of clients you want to reach. Define your ideal patient in terms of age, income level and desire for products and services you offer.

Once you have your list of potential referral partners, prepare to introduce your practice's specialties and niche markets. Create customized collateral materials promoting your practice and its unique offerings and attributes. Practice your 30-second "elevator speech" so it sounds natural rather than rehearsed. Then, reach out to set up an appointment for a meeting with the target business manager or owner.

When you call to schedule the meeting, be upfront about its purpose and the amount of time you're requesting. Be sure to stress that you want to talk about mutually beneficial marketing opportunities.

Arrive at the meeting a few minutes early. Be professional and courteous. Present your ideas for jointly promoting your practice and your target partner's business. Remember, your proposal must be a win-win to be appealing to the potential partner.

Building a referral network is essential to having a healthy and profitable practice. Get creative, have fun and don't be afraid think outside the box.