MARKETING IN PRACTICE

A PRIVATE PRACTITIONER GROUP WORKBOOK

WORKING TOWARDS BUILDING A BETTER BUSINESS WITH YOU

PRIVATE PRACTITIONERS ASSOCIATION

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Welcome to the PPA Marketing in practice workbook. This workbook is an additional resource to the Marketing section within the PPa Manual which seeks to take you from understanding the basic principals of marketing to strategically placing your business within the market to achieve profits and ongoing success.

Hint: For those that have for many years thought of marketing as creating flyers and placing advertisements, think again. Marketing is about designing and positioning products to ensure maximum profits are achieved. No matter how much marketing you do, you won’t sell Phar Lap as a racehorse with great potential!
Chairman’s Introduction

Service design

Analysis of my business and my market

The first component of strategic marketing is designing the service. There are two angles from which you must analyse your business before you can start to understand what it is that you are marketing:

Internally focused analysis:

An internally focused analysis is aimed at determining what core competencies (things your business is good at), services and products you currently possess that you can sell to the market. This type of analysis is great if what you have is desired by the marketplace however it’s entirely useless if you find that your core competencies are either not wanted in the market or that they’re the same as all of your competitor’s core competencies.

Externally focused analysis

An externally focused analysis is aimed at determining what gaps there are in the market that you can fill by building core competencies, services and products to suit the gap. Such an analysis is fabulous if it shows a gap that you can fill however, if you find some fantastic opportunities for which you don’t have the skills, they are of no immediate use. You can however start to build skills in the areas required in the market place either through experimentation, education or direct employment of skills.

Ultimately, the aim of the two aspects of analysis is to match the needs of the market with the skills of your organisation.
So, how do you start to achieve this type of process? There are a number of tools that assist in understanding both the external and internal influences on your business and how it should be positioned.
The SWOT

The Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis is an essential tool used to highlight the match between your internal organisation and the external market but it is not the holy grail of marketing. What is important to gain from a SWOT is the relationship between the attributes of your practice and the attributes of the market. The following diagram indicates the purpose of the SWOT.

The reason for undertaking a SWOT analysis is to find areas where our strengths match our opportunities and where our threats may impact significantly on our weaknesses.

Let’s say there has recently been a new practice set up by a practitioner with access to large amounts of funding who is intent on targeting your clients, if one of your weaknesses is poor cashflow, you need to fix this problem. At the same time, if one of your strengths is a long term interest in musculoskeletal physiotherapy and there is an opportunity in the marketplace for these skills, get your titled membership and advertise this to your target market.

Tool: Use the provided SWOT Tool to help you build a picture of your business

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Key Success Factors

In any industry, there are some primary factors that determine the success or failure of a business. Things like access to suitably qualified staff, membership of an association, a good relationship with referrers or a friendly receptionist may be considered Key Success Factors.

Tool: Use the provided KSF Tool to help you decide what the Key Success Factors are for your business.

Porters Five Forces

The Porters 5 Forces model has been widely used as a tool to assist organisations in understanding the position of their business within the impacting forces of industry. Use the five forces tool to assist you in understanding the forces on the business and how they may be affecting your profits.

Tool: Use the provided P5F Tool to help you understand the forces affecting your business.

Competitor Analysis

In order to understand the best way to compete in the market place, it’s necessary to understand your competition. No football team takes to the field without having studied its opposition - how they play, their strengths and weaknesses, their track record and past strategies. If they always play down one side of the field, you need to know so that you can play down the other. Business is no different in that you get up every morning and go into a new game, your competition is playing to win and you need to know how they’re going to play.

Tool: Use the provided CA Tool to get an understanding of what your competitors are doing and how to beat them.

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My core Service

My core service is physiotherapy, isn’t it? Technically yes, but people come to you to feel better. The task of making a person feel better is far more complicated than the application of physiotherapy alone. You need to start to think about factors such as:

- Trust in you as a clinician
- Confidence in your abilities
- The practice environment
- Distractions from getting better
- Outcomes and expectation management
- Perception management
- Post treatment factors

Each of these factors is as much about service delivery as the provision of treatment itself. Issues such as the following may significantly impact on how your clients perceive the experience of feeling better.

- Can I take my children (and not have them constantly whingeing at me)?
- How do I know if the physiotherapist is a good one?
- I don’t like getting changed in that room because I’m not sure if people can see me!
- I don’t like the receptionist, he’s rude.
- I find it hard to get my wheelchair in there.
- There’s no point because ……
- I can never find a parking spot.
- They are never open when I’m not at work.

Whilst many of these can’t be solved by the physiotherapist, it is important to understand why people come to you and why they may not. If you can solve some of them, you may improve your business.
Positioning

Have you ever stopped to think about why the Hilton is perceived differently to flag inns, or the commodore is different to a 3 series BMW. These products don’t accidentally get perceived in this way, and the process is certainly not left to chance.

The producers design their products and services with a very specific position in mind. They look at their existing range of services, they then look at their competitors’ range of services and they try to determine where the gaps are or what image they want people to think of when they look at their services.

You need to have a clear position for your practice. Are you the Hilton of practices or are you the flag inn? Do you cater for families or are you more an executive provider? Are you a McDonalds or do your burgers taste better?

Whilst this may seem unnecessary, it will be critical to building an image to ensure that you differentiate your practice from both your local competitors and the corporate practices that may operate on a cost leadership model. If you don’t build the image that you are different from these types of practices, potential patients will compare your practice to theirs on the only visible difference – Price.

Tool: Use the Market Positioning Tool to begin building your practice profile.

Hint: Consistency

Have you ever wondered why people go back to McDonalds for a Big Mac time after time? Consistency! The food at McDonald is the same no matter when or where you go. You know exactly what your money will get you every time you go there. You know that you will wait for a certain amount of time for a very consistent product. People by nature tend to be risk averse, they like to know what they will get for their money. Therefore, if you have different staff or different prices every week, people don’t know what to expect and therefore they won’t come to you. So whatever you decide as your service profile, be consistent about it.
Why do I need to provide biscuits?

Well, you don’t but you need to offer those things that are necessary to appeal to the whole of person approach to treatment. If tea and biscuits will make a person feel more relaxed and ultimately they walk away from your practice feeling better about seeing you, they’re more likely to return or recommend your services to someone else. If it takes a glass of wine to make them feel better and you can get a better fee as a result – then it’s worth considering!

The following embodies a service approach to your practice. Consider the examples of what can be done to make people feel better when they come into and leave your practice:

- As I walk in, if the receptionist can address me by name I feel important….and they should be able to as I have an appointment.
- If they’re on the phone when I arrive, I would expect that they put the call on hold to let me know that they won’t be a moment. If they receive a call whilst addressing me I would expect them to take the call but to put the caller on hold while they finish with me. If they met the needs of the caller and left me waiting at that point I would not be amused.
- They need to be warm, have a great smile, and be as helpful as they can. If they can point out to me the “key” areas of the practice (e.g. waiting room, toilet etc.) that could save me some embarrassment during my visit.
- I arrive expecting to wait about 5-10 minutes. If I have to wait longer than that, I would expect them to let me know (obtaining this info from the physio if necessary). My time needs to be treated valued as theirs is.
- If I’m offered tea/coffee (or even shown where I can get my own) that would go a long way to bringing me back. Especially if there is a “surprise” on the saucer (extra nice biscuits / a mint / chocolates / cheese & crackers)
- They need to make a concerted effort to ensure that the magazines are current, tidy and intact.
- The waiting room also needs to be safe – toys should be in an area where I won’t fall over them because bending for me could be difficult.
- Any extra touches (E.g. flowers, gently music, cushions etc.) in the waiting room would indicate to me that a) the practice has thought about my comfort level and b) they’ll make a financial investment in me.
- When I’m leaving I’d appreciate them asking me if I need to make a follow up appointment because I often forget this in the process of paying my bill.
- Help with the door, stairs etc. would be appreciated if I look like I need assistance…..
- Some polite conversation at this stage would be nice…..like how did I find out about them, was I feeling some relief from my treatment, would I be happy to recommend someone I care about to them for treatment…..I know how valuable their time is and how many demands they face each day…..if they just gives me a couple of moments I feel of greater importance to the practice.
People for Sale

It may come as no great surprise that physiotherapy is a service that relies on people for its delivery. In essence, people are the product. It’s important that these people understand their role in the overall product that’s being delivered to patients as well as in the marketing of the practice.

It’s critical to understand the relationship between the people that you have employed and the service that you are delivering. There is no point having highly paid staff delivering exceptional service to patients that place no value this service and are not prepared to pay for the service. Alternatively, employing people with fewer clinical and interpersonal skills and trying to deliver high quality services to demanding groups of private patients is not likely to work either. It is necessary to align the attributes of your employees with the overall service that you’re trying to deliver, only then will you be able to justify a different fee to the practice down the road.

Once you have the right people, you need to enlighten them about the position and image that you want the practice to occupy in the minds of consumers. This is often done through the use of a vision and mission statement that can be reinforced by the actions and words provided by the practice principal (in a leadership role).

Physical Evidence

Have you ever noticed that in air travel most airlines fly similar aircraft, each of which is worth millions of dollars. The airlines employ hundreds of people to do safety checks and to ensure that the plane will arrive at its chosen destination. So what is the most common complaint you hear about airlines? The food is terrible!

This example highlights the fact that people are often tactile in nature. They like things that they can touch and feel. In marketing this is called physical evidence. Physical evidence is about having something tangible that relates to the service that you received. Whether it is a key ring, a pen or a workbook, people will attach significant value to it (particularly if it reminds them of a positive experience).

Hint: One option may be to use the results from outcome measures to provide an occasional graph showing patients improvement. Such graphs can be very influential marketing tools to both patients and referrers.

Given the importance placed on such things, it may be worthwhile using the opportunity to further market your practice. Give your patients something that reminds them of the service you delivered and that they can show friends or relatives.
**Who is my target market?**

About the 80/20 rule, did you know that 80% of statistics are made up by people at the time they are reported!

One of the biggest mistakes people make in marketing is surveying their existing clients and then delivering more of what this group of clients want. This is a great concept if your existing clients are reflective of the clients that you want. If on the other hand, 70% of your work is on behalf of compensable bodies and your target market is private patients, how will surveying your insured patients help?

You need to understand the needs of the people that aren’t coming to you but first you need to decide who that group are. In marketing, this is often defined in:

- Geographic's – Suburbs etc.
- Demographics – Age, sex, lifecycle, income, occupation etc.
- Psychographics – Socioeconomic groups, status, values and attitudes etc.

Whilst it isn’t necessary to define your target market in those groups, it is necessary to define the attributes of the people you are going to target as a market.

**Example**

Within 5km of my practice (put a map on the wall with pins in it to help visualise the target area).

- Mature people 40+
- Higher disposable income
- Children have left home or are highly independent
- Professionals

**Tool:** Use the Target Market Tool to build a client profile and to assist in targeting your communications
How do I get to my target?

Referrals

One of the things that you may have noticed about the provision of physiotherapy is that a significant number of clients are delivered through referral. Why is this? It is because many of the general public have the misunderstanding that if you want to go to a specialist, you need to go to the GP and they will send you. Physiotherapists are then viewed by the public as specialists who bring credibility and prestige. It also gives medical practitioners significant control over the market. This means if you are on the right side of them, much work will flow your way.

Direct targeting

Remember that your target client may not know the benefits of physiotherapy and the local doctor may not be interested in selling them on the idea. It is therefore important that you promote your practice directly. If you’re after older clients, sponsor the local bowls club or advertise at the local pharmacist. You need to understand what your target client reads, where they congregate (hey maybe even the local church), what they buy etc. Once you have collected this information, you are ready to start designing a service and competing for them.

Hint: Some physiotherapists are finding that some medical practitioners are treating them unfairly. The way to deal with this is to begin marketing around them. Let people know that you can accept patients for assessment without referral and that you will treat them and refer them to a medical practitioner if this is required. Whilst this is not the kind of relationship you want to build with your local medico, in some cases it may highlight that if they won’t work with you that you will run a successful practice around them.

Summary

At this point, you should have an understanding of your market and your product. This makes up a significant part of the analysis of marketing. You should be able to identify what your core competencies (as a business) are and who you believe your target client is. It is at this stage necessary to find out who your competitors are to ensure that you establish your business in areas that allow you to compete strongly. It should be highlighted that it is acceptable to come back and review your information in light of what your competitors are doing.


Competition

**Competitor analysis**

In order to understand where you fit in the market, it’s necessary to understand your competition. For many people, this will create an image in their minds eye of the physiotherapist down the road or across the street. Whilst they are competitors, so are a number of other services. Basically, any substitute for our service is a competitor.

- Doctors (we’ll talk about this in a moment)
- Chiropractors (victims of our own poor marketing here)
- Massage therapists
- Difflam and other anti-inflammatory gels
- Other physiotherapists

Let’s look at a sample suburban market:

Local area description:

The area is significantly sub-urban with some light industrial areas. There’s a central retail area with a medium size shopping centre. Our practice is within a small cluster of medical services including a GP clinic, dentist and psychiatrist. In the local area there are the following competitors:

- A large corporate practice – It’s clean (almost sterile), efficient, not unfriendly but not friendly either, 4 physiotherapists and it is situated in the local shopping centre.
- A chiropractor
- 4 GP Clinics
- A gym that offers massage therapy
- 1 other physiotherapist that offers sports physiotherapy.

We need to understand as much as possible their target markets and referral sources.

**Tool:** Use the Competitor Analysis tool to make an assessment of your competitors
Competitive Strategy

One of the most fundamental aspects of designing competitive strategy is to understand that in a war where two equally powerful combatants charge each other directly, everyone loses. Thus, in the war of business, it is important to understand that a direct attack against your competitors is not a particularly intelligent method of competition unless you are so significantly stronger that you will defeat them easily. This means that if you plan on competing with someone directly, you need to be well prepared for a battle. Alternatively, you could approach them about a joint venture to compete locally against another competitor.

Using the analysis

It’s one thing to sit down and evaluate your market, your competitors, your strengths and weaknesses and your key success factors but how do you then decide what to do. Marketing is a lot like physiotherapy in that if someone has a sore neck, you need to collect a range of information and then come to a decision on what the likely cause of the pain is. You then deliver a treatment that may include manipulation, the application of heat and a range of exercises. You collect information that then guides you as to the actions that need to be taken.

If you have completed the marketing analysis, you’ve collected information that you need to analyse so that you can take appropriate action. In the same way that there is no yes or no answer in physiotherapy, there is no black and white in marketing. You need to look at all of the information you’ve collected and design a service that allows you to compete in your market place. (By now there is a strong chance that you know more about your business than your competitors know about theirs).

You may want to use a white board or scrap paper to draw out what the market looks like, who are the players and who sits in what markets. Draw circles around them, connect them with lines or dotted lines, and draw arrows of where they are headed.
The following is a simple example that may be used to highlight size, focus and direction.

What is important is not what the diagram looks like, it’s that you are able to visualise the market, where the players are headed and your place within it.
**How do I compete?**

There are some strategists who would argue that there are only two sources for sustainable competitive advantage.

1. **Best cost competition**
2. **Differentiation**

They argue that to sit in the middle prevents an organisation from doing either well and confuses consumers. So you can’t do both.

**Best cost competition**

As the name suggests this is about reducing costs through production efficiencies and quality management, centralised accounts and administration staff, buying power etc. Usually the products produced by best cost producers are consistent and lack personalisation but they are cheap to buy. This may be an effective and successful strategy for a large corporate group of physiotherapists to operate on. As a private practitioner, you may recognise some organisations that work on this type of model.

**Differentiation**

This is where the rest of us need to focus our strategic marketing efforts. This is about ensuring that we make our services different from the large, process driven groups and the rest of our competitors. The service needs to be clearly identifiable as physiotherapy but sufficiently different to ensure that it isn’t possible to directly compare the two services.

“A firm differentiates itself from its competitors if it can be unique at something that is valuable to buyers”.

**How do you differentiate physiotherapy services?**

Differentiation can be something as simple as having Nintendo’s lined up for kids to play with (thus a highly family friendly practice), to clearly defined expertise and quality points.

The APA has within it the following titled memberships that are highly marketable to consumers for a premium
- Quality Endorsed Practices
- Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy
- Sports Physiotherapy

Upon receiving recognition from these areas, practices should be strongly communicating these skills to organisations and individuals that may require expert knowledge.

**Tool: Differentiation Poster**
The myth of price competition

One of the fundamental myths about doing business is that people buy things because they’re cheaper. This is most definitely not the case.

Basically, the closer a product or service gets to being standard and the greater the level of competition, the easier it is for people to directly compare price. As a result, price will be a key factor in peoples purchasing decision. An example of this is salt or wheat. It’s very difficult to show a difference between the salt and wheat of one producer over another. Additionally, there are many producers of these products which mean that competition keeps prices low.

This is where marketing comes in. Today, you can buy a range of modified salts that have a heart tick, you see salt packaged and branded differently and they’re all differently priced. This suggests that even with a product like salt, differentiation between products can be made in order to make it more difficult to directly compare one product to another on price alone. Higher pricing of products that appear to be better quality or that better suit the needs of consumer’s results in greater profits for producers.

Note: One of the things that health funds and purchasers know is that if they control the purchasing, they can to a point dictate price. Imagine where physiotherapists would be if the only purchasers of their services were insurers or government agencies (such as Medicare).
How much should I charge?

This is a question that is prominent in the private practice of physiotherapy. The reality is that for private patients, you can charge whatever you like. The key to the question is deciding how much your patients will pay. So what are the steps to ensuring you get the best price for your services?

Make sure your services can’t be easily compared to your competitors.

Consider the example:

Bart – Hey dude, why do these oranges have stickers on em
Marge – Because they’re better quality than the others
Bart – Can we get the ones with stickers?
Marge – No, they’re more expensive and Lisa needs new shoes
Bart – OK (as he removes the stickers and puts them in the bag)

The moral of this story is that you can’t always compare oranges and oranges. The aim from a marketing perspective is to make sure that it is very difficult for a patient or referrer to compare on price only. Then you can set a price that more closely reflects your services rather than the services of the cheaper practice down the road.

Ensure your price reflects your value add

You need to remember that your practice is individual. It does things that other practices don’t and therefore comparing directly on price is not sensible. Be prepared to write down those things that you offer that your competitors don’t, then be prepared to sell them to your clients at a price that reflects your value add.

If you can’t think of anything to write down, chances are that you are trying to compete on price and your costs (and price) had better be lower than your competitors. If your costs aren’t lower and you can’t think of any value added services, you had better start creating some because your competitors are doing better than you are.
Don’t get sucked into price competition

It’s easy to slip back into the “if our price was better, more patients would come” mentality. The more difficult path is to keep coming up with more innovative value added services that keep the patients (or referrers) coming back. If your clientele is dwindling, add greater value first, reduce price last.

Additionally, there may be short term reasons for increased pressure on prices (a locum who doesn’t know you is referring services based purely on price etc.). A better way to approach this is with promotional pricing so that you have the option of returning to your normal price once the pressure is off.

Understand the impact of price on your business

For many businesses, prices can move substantially before it starts to significantly affect the number of people prepared to buy the service. Often, things like service, relationships, location, parking and atmosphere make far more difference to how many people will buy the service. In many cases, a cheap price will in fact offer the impression of cheap services and thus detract from the perceived quality. Imagine the impact of the statement:

Well of course our competitor is half the price; you get what you pay for!
Own the customer

One tool in the strategic manager’s tool kit is the notion of what are called switching costs. The more services that you offer that tie the patient to you, the less likely it is that the patient will go somewhere else. This also applies for referrers who may benefit significantly from additional services. Imagine providing a report format on every patient that gave doctors all the information they needed to continue treatment. Imagine that it was so good that they would refer patients just to get the report. Then can you imagine that doctor ever referring to someone else?

Anti-competitive behaviour

Note: It is not illegal to not compete directly with your competitor. If they offer Sports physiotherapy, you can choose to not offer sports therapy. There is one small point however – You cannot under any circumstances collude with your competitor to set prices or to not compete with each other. This is illegal under the trade practices act.

What defines collusion?

- Agreeing with a competitor not to compete (even over a quiet beer at home).
- Agreeing with a competitor to set a minimum price.
- Something that “has the purpose, or has or is likely to have the effect, of substantially lessening competition” (Trade practices act 1974)
TELL ME HOW TO WORK IT OUT!!

Whilst it would be nice to think that we can charge what we like, the reality is that there is a relationship between price and the cost to produce services (except for perfume where there appears to be little relationship). Determining the cost of your service is important because if you sell your services at a price that’s below cost, you’ll lose money.

In order to determine our price we need to do some calculation. We’ve included in the tool kit the file [MIP Tool - Fee Calculation.xls]. This tool may be used to assist in the pricing of your products.

This tool allows you to enter information about the costs of running your practice and to produce a list of prices by employee as well as an aggregate based on factors such as cost, the number of weeks worked and the number of patients seen per week.

The reason that the tool separates prices for employees is because you may want to charge a different fee for each physiotherapist or group of physiotherapists. This will indicate to the market that as an experienced practice principal or expert, you are worth more than the average physiotherapist.

Hint: Remember, setting prices is a strong part of setting client perceptions around the level of quality of service. If Mercedes Benz cars were cheap, the market would perceive them as lesser in quality. This creates a problem for those that need to attract new clients in a price sensitive area of the market. Therefore, set a price that reflects the quality of the service and then do a sales promotion where you offer lower prices for a short period of time.

Tool: Fee Calculation Tool
Where should I sell it?

Where you sell your services is as much a marketing decision as any other. Many people would argue that you need to be in the best position in town. If you own a highly generic price focused practice that draws its clients based on geographical proximity, that assumption may be correct. If you are a highly trained expert physiotherapist, you may not want to be in a shopping centre. If you can draw on a wider base of clients due to your expertise, other factors may become more important. Issues like:

Perceived access to medical specialists – It may be more important to be located near a large teaching hospital (even though they never refer to you) as this gives people the perception that you are somehow part of this cutting edge learning community.

Working out of hospitals

Inner city – The perception that you are in a major city centre means that people will often face parking and transport difficulties however you may be able to charge a higher fee.

Tool: Use the Practice Location Tool to decide what attributes your business needs

Working from home

If you are starting out in private practice, setting up at home may be a good start. This might give you the opportunity to start part time whilst working for someone else.

Hint: If you plan on starting in private practice whilst working for someone else, you are advised not to mention your new venture to clients of your employer. You may find that they will take legal action against you for it.

Key factors that may need to be considered when setting up a practice at home are:

Will the council allow me to run a business from home?

Most councils have regulations that restrict what you can do at a home based practice. This can include restrictions on signage, parking, hours of operation, the size of the practice, the number of employees etc. It is vital that you check with your local council before you set up your practice so that you don’t have problems later on.

What are the taxation issues?

Running a business from home can have some tax benefits but it may also create a capital gains tax problem if you later sell your home. You need to check with your accountant to ensure you are aware of all of the issues.

- Can I configure the business area separately from the home area (no-one really wants to live at work).
- You need to be able to separate work from family life or you may end up needing to decide between them.
Going Mobile

Another trend these days is to provide services to the time poor by attending to them at home or in the office at a premium. Whilst this may result in fewer overall clients, it may also result in more time for clients willing to pay for your expertise. This option may be suitable for you but you need to consider the benefits, pitfalls and physical limitations of providing mobile services.

Whilst position is important, a good position isn’t necessarily a high traffic shopping strip or part of a large medical centre. A good location is one that meets your marketing goals.

Within a commercial practice

This option offers you the greatest flexibility in deciding where the practice should be located however it also has some pitfalls. You need to locate a building that suits your needs in an area that will be perceived well by your clients. You may also need to consider:

- Council requirements
- Leases and rental costs
- Access for disabled patients
- Proximity to a referral base
- The level of competition in the area
Communications

Deciding how to communicate the message that your services are available is the last part of designing a marketing strategy. All communications should be aimed at your target market in order to maximise the return on investment. Some communications will be more costly than others but will have a greater success rate. Additionally, you will need to experiment with several forms of communication before deciding on which you will use on an ongoing basis.

Hint: Marketing communications is an investment in customer acquisition. Like all investments, you need to consider the return in terms of the average customer spend over the life of their association with your business.

Why do I need to brand my practice?

All of the work you’ve done so far has been about separating yourself in the marketplace so that you can justify a higher fee. All of your competitors are going to want a piece of that higher fee and they may begin to try and copy your particular style of practice. What you need to do is make clear in the markets mind that you are different from your competitors and ensure that they remember you. Branding is about creating a strong image in people’s mind that they associate with your practice. This way, they’re less likely to get confused when it comes to deciding where to go for physiotherapy.

Doctor – I’m going to send you to a physiotherapist.
Patient – I like the one that has the round red and blue logo, I don’t remember their name.
Doctor- Oh, that’s Fred’s practice. Are you sure you aren’t just going for the Tim Tam’s that they give you with your coffee 😊.
Patient – I do like Tim Tam’s!

Not only does this separate your practice in the minds of consumers from other physiotherapists, it also separates it from substitute providers like massage therapists and chiropractors.

Branding may include:

- Logos
- The name of your practice
- Any other image or words that you want to have the patient associate with your practice.
- An example at the moment it the term “Yeah Yeah” that is strongly associated with advanced hair. This is a perfect example of strong intangible branding.

Tool: Branding Kit
Brand design

Creative design of a branded image is a complex art. Many people will tell you that your branding should closely reflect the philosophy of your practice but at the same time it needs to be simple enough that it doesn’t confuse consumers.

It doesn’t really matter who designs your branding or what it looks like as long as people identify with it. The worst thing that any design can face is that no-one notices it.

Consistency of image

The purpose of branding is to ensure that people recognise you as being different from the rest of the competitors in your field. Therefore it is important to display the image every possible occasion. This should include:

- Signage
- Letterheads
- Business cards
- Fax covers
- Emails
- Reports
- Envelopes
- Note pads
- Notices in the practice
- On the inside of the door so it is the last thing they see when they leave.
- Equipment that you use
- Internal documents

Branding should be placed where patients can see it, not just whilst they’re waiting but also when they are being treated.

Hint: Colour makes an impact so try and ensure your branding is in colour wherever it is practical.
I don’t like hard selling

It may well seem that Marketing is about using methods that seem to be very pushy. Things like ensuring consumers can’t compare on price and placing branding within treatment areas all seems a little excessive. The reality is that the purpose is not to mislead the customer into thinking they’ll get something that they won’t, or to brainwash them (give the patients more credit than that). The intention of these types of activities is to ensure that your service remains burnt into the retina of the mind’s eye. It’s to ensure that at any point in time that they think that they may need physiotherapy, they think of you.

As an example, a young man is mowing the lawn when he gets jumped on by his children. He twists his back as he makes a desperate attempt to get away from the children. At that point, he has to choose between your services and all of those substitutes that you defined earlier that may or may not be at the front of his mind. You need to be there in his thoughts at that particular point in time. This is the point at which he will make a purchasing decision! You need his brain to be whispering “You don’t need a doctor, or a chiropractor, or a massage. You need to go and see those nice people at that place with the round red and blue logo that serve coffee and Tim tams and offer really good golfing tips”. As a practitioner, if you have achieved this, your marketing is working (and it was worth the $3 you had to pay kids).

Getting noticed

Some of your potential clientele won’t even know that you exist (and your local GP may not think to tell them). It is therefore necessary to communicate your existence and your services to the outside world. This communication needs to include some points on what separates you from your competitors and why people should come to you.

Getting noticed again, and again, and again, and again

One of the core concepts in marketing is what the professionals refer to as ‘currency and recency’. The concept is based on the notion that your marketing communications need to be seen by people several times before it starts to build recognition. Some forms of communication are more effective but usually cost more to produce (such as television advertising) and some are less effective and cost less to produce (such as newspaper advertising). The thing to remember is that you need to be constantly hitting your target market with multiple forms of communication in order to remain in the mind’s eye at the time that the purchasing decision is made.
What are the communications options?

The personal sell

As most physiotherapists know, their time is money. As a result, personal selling by the physiotherapist is a costly exercise but personal selling is also a very effective form of sales communication. If a local doctor knows you are keen to build your practice because you see him regularly and tell him, he’s more likely to remember you when he sees his patients. This may offer a very good return on investment as he may refer you many patients. On the other hand, personally visiting each of your potential patients once a month wouldn’t offer a very good return on investment. You need to be able to decide where personal selling is likely to produce good results and then you need to commit to the time and effort to sustain the personal sell.

Once you’ve decided who to target for personal sales, it is necessary to go out and see them. The key to personal selling is remembering that this process is about relationship building but it’s also about telling the person what you have to offer. There is no point arriving, saying nice words about each other and leaving without the person on the other end knowing what you provide as services. You need to:

1. Provide pamphlets, brochures, information or something that reminds the person of what you provide. A great technique is to ask if you can leave brochures on their counter. Then turn up once every so often to see if they need more brochures. Whilst you’re there, arrange to have coffee with the person you want to see.
2. Be friendly but don’t avoid the business talk. Tell the person what you are doing in the practice, how your recent patient survey went, you’ve passed another 4 years accreditation, you’ve just become a titled sports physio, you’re giving a presentation on something and would he (or his patients) like to come. You can’t afford to walk in and say “isn’t this nice, we’re relationship building, how are the kids”. You may become great friends but that doesn’t mean he’ll sell your services.
3. Keep records. Remembering their spouses name or that the person’s Daughter is doing their last year of high school, can provide exceptional mileage. Look at the information before you go and see them and consider software like Contact Tracker for managing your relationships.
4. Finally, be prepared to ask for what you want. Start small and move on from there. “Don’t forget to think of us”. “How about some referrals”? Finally, “Would you like to send me all of your sports injuries”?


**Relationship Marketing**

“IN TODAY’S COMPLEX WORLD OF relationship marketing there are three principal parties in every relationship. Firstly the company; secondly its employees and thirdly the ultimate customer for the goods or services” (Australian Banking & Finance, July 31, 2002 v11 i13 p11(1)).

Relationship marketing is primarily focused on ensuring that you build a relationship with customers and referrers that ensures that you are first and foremost in their mind when considering the choice of physiotherapists. Relationship building takes time:

“Most [professionals] tend to be all-consuming with getting the work out. Consequently, they often fall down in controlling the referral contact process needed to build an effective network. Effective personal contact, however, will be the primary factor in determining who gets the limited number of quality referrals that are handed out” The Practicing CPA, June 2002 v26 i5 pSS1(3).

The important factors in relationship marketing are:

- Stay in contact
- Follow up immediately and regularly
- Plan to contact customers and referrers monthly
- Keep contact casual and varied to break monotony
- Personalise – It’s hard to build a relationship if your letters are addressed “Dear Patient”.
- Keep relevant information and look at it before you make contact. A question like “how’s your son’s first year at school going?” will show that you are interested in the patient or referrer.
**Public Relations**

Public Relations is (as the name suggests) about getting free exposure by being involved with the community. This may involve delivering a speech at the local football club or getting a write up in the Rotary Club newsletter for your outspoken support for such clubs. It may be a newspaper story on the corporatisation of physiotherapy or a telephone call to a radio show. There are many ways that your practice can get local publicity and the best way to achieve it is by targeting those groups that serve your target market. You have a common interest and these clubs are always looking for people that can make their newsletters seem more interesting. For example, the following is a list of club categories from the yellow pages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clubs--Angling</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clubs--Archery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Athletic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Australian Rules Football</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Backgammon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Balooning</td>
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<td>Clubs--Baseball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Basketball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Beer &amp; Wine Makers'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Bicycle</td>
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<td>Clubs--Billiards &amp; Snooker</td>
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<td>Clubs--Bird</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Bowling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Boxing</td>
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<td>Clubs--Bridge</td>
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<td>Clubs--Bushwalking</td>
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<td>Clubs--Calisthenic</td>
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<td>Clubs--Car</td>
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<td>Clubs--Caravan</td>
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<td>Clubs--Card</td>
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<td>Clubs--Caving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Chess</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Community Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Computer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Country Music</td>
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<td>Clubs--Coursing &amp; Kennel</td>
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<td>Clubs--Cricket</td>
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<td>Clubs--Croquet</td>
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<td>Clubs--Dance</td>
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<td>Clubs--Dart</td>
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<td>Clubs--Dog</td>
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<td>Clubs--Fencing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Flying &amp; Gliding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Gardening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Gem &amp; Lapidary</td>
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<td>Clubs--Golf</td>
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<td>Clubs--Gridiron</td>
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<td>Clubs--Gymnastic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Historical Re-Enactment</td>
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<td>Clubs--Hockey</td>
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<td>Clubs--Lacrosse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Life Saving &amp;/Or Surfing</td>
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<td>Clubs--Marine</td>
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<td>Clubs--Model Aeroplane</td>
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<td>Clubs--Model Engineers</td>
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<td>Clubs--Motor Boat</td>
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<td>Clubs--Motor Cycle</td>
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<td>Clubs--Motor Racing</td>
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<td>Clubs--Netball</td>
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<td>Clubs--Pet</td>
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<td>Clubs--Philatelic</td>
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<td>Clubs--Photographic</td>
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<td>Clubs--Pistol</td>
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<td>Clubs--Pony</td>
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<td>Clubs--Racing &amp; Hunt</td>
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<td>Clubs--Railway</td>
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<td>Clubs--Rowing</td>
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<td>Clubs--Rugby League</td>
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<td>Clubs--Rugby Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clubs--Science Fiction</td>
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<td>Clubs--Scuba Diving</td>
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<td>Clubs--Senior Citizens</td>
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<td>Clubs--Shooting</td>
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<td>Clubs--Ski</td>
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<td>Clubs--Soccer</td>
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<td>Clubs--Social &amp; General</td>
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<td>Clubs--Softball</td>
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<td>Clubs--Sporting--Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>Clubs--Squash</td>
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<td>Clubs--Swimming</td>
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<td>Clubs--Table Tennis</td>
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<td>Clubs--Tennis</td>
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<td>Clubs--Touch Football</td>
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<td>Clubs--Volleyball</td>
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<td>Clubs--Wargaming</td>
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<td>Clubs--Water Polo</td>
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<td>Clubs--Yacht</td>
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Reviewing this list it would be possible to remove some on the basis that they are not related to physiotherapy. On the other hand, it could be great marketing to be the nation’s imminent physiotherapist expert in war-gaming.

**Sales Promotion**

The Sales promotion is a highly effective way of getting reach into new markets. Predatory pricing (temporary low pricing aimed at attracting people in the short term) or other incentives that will get people to try the product can be highly effective. You may wish to offer a free therapeutic massage with every six treatments or a free tube of Voltaren with every treatment. Whilst it is unlikely that you will keep all of the clients that try the service, a good practice should not want to keep them all. The aim of the sales promotion is to get your target market to try the product rather than a group of people that aren’t part of your target market.

**Advertising**

Advertising is the process of placing a message in some form of mass media. This may include television, a local newspaper or a newsletter. Whilst advertising may produce good results, it requires good planning to ensure a reasonable return on investment. When selecting an advertising medium, you need to consider:

- Does this media get viewed by my target audience?
- What is the shelf life of the publication (how long does it continue to get looked at)?
- What is the circulation?
- Is the circulation audited or are the numbers produced by the publisher?
- What is the cost per view (cost divided by circulation)?

**Creative Work**

Whilst it may be attractive from a cost perspective to create your own advertisement, you must remember that this process is about a return on investment. If you create a poor quality advertisement, the cost of publishing it will be effectively wasted. Sometimes, a smaller advertisement that has been well designed will be a better investment than a large, poorly designed advertisement. Some newspapers and magazines have in house designers that can create an advertisement at minimal cost or you can locate advertising design companies in the telephone book.
What should be in the advertisement?

Designing an advertisement is a difficult task however, here are some hints:

- Don’t clutter the ad with everything you do. Readers are generally time poor and if you don’t catch them in a line or two, they are gone forever.
- The Ad must be eye catching to your target market. You need to tell them what you do with just enough detail to get them to contact you. No more, no less.
- Colour and contrast works, so use it if you can.
- The ad isn’t there to sell, the ad is there to get the potential patient to call or visit your practice. It’s then up to you to sell your services to them (maybe with a more detailed brochure).
- Don’t forget your phone number!
- An address always adds to the credibility of the ad, even if you are a mobile service.
- Tell the market why you are different or give them an incentive to see you. Don’t just say “Hi, I’m just another physiotherapist looking for work”.

Note: This type of communication generally returns between 0.1% and 3% of readership as enquires.
**Word of mouth**

Word of mouth is effective advertising because of the trust factor that comes into the message delivery. If an advertisement tells you to see a particular physiotherapist, you may consider it. If your Brother tells you to see a particular physiotherapist, the trust in your Brother as the message deliverer is more likely to result in you remembering the name of the physiotherapist and using them when the need arises.

In order to maximise the number of word of mouth referrals, you need to:

- Ask for them. If you have done a great job in treating someone, ask them to tell all of their friends. If you haven’t done a great job, say nothing!
- Give incentives. Run a fix a friend campaign where people get something for their efforts in selling your services.
- Thank the referrer.

**The Internet**

**Web Advertising**

The web is a tool that may be used to advertise your practice and services. The benefits of web advertising are that it is flexible, interactive, and graphical and offers significant scope to provide information. The downside is that the return on investment is difficult to determine and it can be costly to set up and keep up to date.

Key points to remember with web advertising are:

- The most effective way to get people to visit your web site is to advertise it. Make sure you include your web address on all correspondence.
- Don’t invest in it just because other people have. A web site needs to offer a return on investment just like any other form of advertising.
- People expect the site to be constantly updated. You need to be prepared to be adding information and redesigning on a regular basis.
- Bigger is better (and also more expensive).
- A basic web page is fine for many organisations but don’t expect to be flooded by calls.
Email Advertising

Email advertising is often confused with SPAM (unwanted, unsolicited advertising). It is important to separate SPAM from proper email advertising. Effective Email advertising is about communicating with your patients on a regular basis as opposed to bombarding them with advertising. It is important to remember that if you send communication that is uninteresting on a regular basis, your patients will begin to delete the emails without reading them, rendering them useless. You need to provide occasional, interesting information in a news or newsletter type form. Additionally, you need to give your patients the option of removing themselves from your email list. How do you best market using email?

- Use a list server provided by your Internet Service Provider. This will make managing the email list significantly easier. Email lists also email each person individually which is important in protecting the identity of your patients.
- Try to email in text format with a link to news items on your web site. This will prevent the need for people to download large graphical documents if they don’t want to read particular items. Additionally, some services block HTML emails as they are prone to viruses.
- If you have nothing to say, don’t send an email. If you are going to bore your patients with things they don’t want to know, they are less likely to want to come to you.
- Get Anti-Virus and firewall software. Your patients won’t use you more if you send them viruses or allow your clinical records to become available on the web.
- Respond to them. If your patients email you with a problem, it is a perfect opportunity to say to them “I can’t tell remotely, so why don’t you drop in to the practice and I’ll have a look”.

Evaluation

So you’ve completed your marketing program. You’ve analysed your strengths, assessed your competitors, chosen your target market, designed your products and finally, you’ve communicated the benefits of your services to people. Now what?

You need to know how effective your marketing program has been so that you can make future decisions about your services, market and communications. This can only be determined by evaluating your marketing efforts.

Patient surveys

Patient surveys are important in analysing your marketing efforts, particularly when they come from new patients that fit your target market. You need to have a patient survey that asks questions that determine:

- Is this a new patient
- Do they have the attributes of your target market
- How did they find you
- Did they like the service
- Were they happy to pay the fee
- What could be done to make the service better for them

If these people fit the profile of your ideal patient, take notice of them because you want more of this type of patient to come to your practice. Additionally, these are the people that you want to get word of mouth referrals from as they are likely to congregate with people of a similar profile.

Tool: Sample Patient Survey

Referrer surveys

Referrers have the ability to send you a significant number of patients so you need to find out what they want from your service. Questions to ask include:

How easy is it to refer patients (when compared to other practices?)
How do patients react to the doctor’s recommendation?
Is documentation provided satisfactory?
Are the outcome measures that are used useful to the doctor?
What information would assist the doctor in their treatment (and referral) decisions?
Why do you choose to refer to this practice?
What things may be done to improve referral to physiotherapy?

Tool: Sample referrer Survey
Market Surveys

A market survey can be a particularly useful tool if you think that you can get your target market to fill it in (incentives such as prizes or a free service may assist). You may be able to convince people to fill it in when you do presentations at local sports clubs or rotary functions in return for you doing a presentation on something interesting.

From these types of market surveys, you may find out what your service is lacking when it comes to your preferred target market.

Tool: Sample Market Survey
## Tool Kit

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool Name</th>
<th>File Name</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>MIP Tool – P5F.doc</td>
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<td>Key Success Factors Tool</td>
<td>MIP Tool – KSF.doc</td>
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<td>Competitor Analysis Tool</td>
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<td>Practice Location Tool</td>
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<td>Branding Kit</td>
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<td>Sample Marketing Plan</td>
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