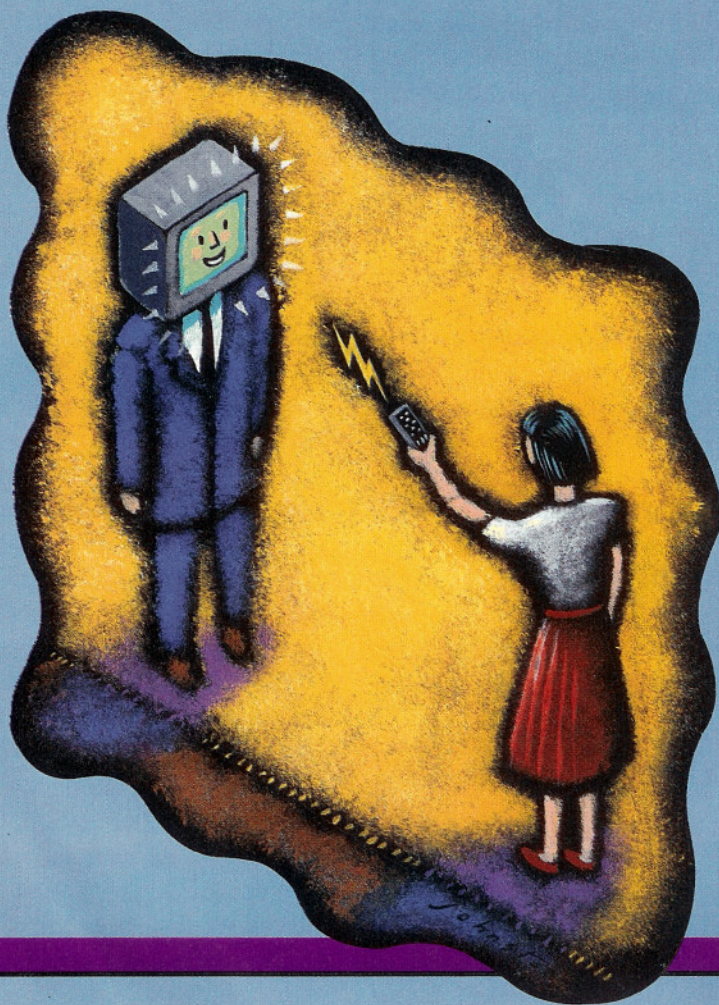


Effectively Marketing Refractive Surgery



A Pontiac salesperson with a slow nonconfrontational behavioral style was showing a new vehicle to a couple. The salesperson realized that both the husband and wife had behavioral styles that needed proof and data to confirm their buying decision and time to think it through. The couple let it be known that their desire was to buy a Ford and merely wanted some information on a comparable Pontiac model. The salesperson did not push or hurry them in any way but instead offered them the variety of information they requested. Knowing that they were going to the Ford dealership up the street, the Pontiac salesperson recommended them to a Ford salesperson who had an aggressive, quick-closing behavioral style.

Why? The Pontiac salesperson was hoping the “quick-closing” behavior of the Ford salesperson would appear “pushy” to the couple and they would return to buy the Pontiac. The Ford salesperson was pushy and tried to close the sale immediately. After a few days of gathering more information, the couple came back and bought the Pontiac.

You may feel as though the couple were manipulated. But, whether or not we like it, people buy from people they like! The couple liked the laid-back, slow-paced Pontiac salesperson, not the fast-paced, quick-closing Ford salesperson. *The salesperson was more important than the brand of vehicle.*

Patient Behavior and Attitude

Current refractive surgery marketing strategies are, at best, 25% effective. Three quarters of the potential customer market is not responding, and may not respond,

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until the reasons for this shortfall are addressed. Focusing on the patients' want and needs is crucial to breaking the 25% barrier.

A cosmetic laser surgery practice developed four radio scripts to appeal to the four behavioral styles of prospective patients. Because each behavioral style has specific "needs" associated with it, the copy addressed each group as follows:

- One script focused on *results*.
- One script focused on *the experience*.
- One script focused on *trust*.
- One script focused on *proof*.

The four scripts were played in rotation. The practice saw a significant increase in procedures as a result.

The Group Approach

Everyone has needs, emotions, and behaviors. People exhibit behaviors when satisfying their needs and emotions. These behaviors, needs, and emotions of the prospective refractive surgery population can be categorized into four main groups.

Two of these, Groups 1 and 2, comprise individuals who currently are more likely to have refractive surgery (about 25% of the potential patient population). Groups 3 and 4 (the other 75% of the potential refractive surgery market) are currently

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not electing to choose the procedure. The question is, Why are Groups 3 and 4 reluctant to choose such surgery to meet their refractive needs?

Group 1

The people in Group 1 are looking for results. The basic emotion of this group is impatience. Group 1 individuals don't want to have their time wasted with a lot of facts and figures. They tend to react positively to new solutions to problems and make quick decisions. These individuals represent 18% of the general population. When marketing to this group, it's important to emphasize the ophthalmologist's skill and experience and the positive, effortless, and fast results. No details—just results.

Group 2

Members in Group 2 are also buying refractive surgery. They represent an additional 28% of the population. These individuals are friendly, optimistic, and have a high trust level. They prefer to socialize rather than listen to details. This group likes to try new and innovative products and services. As with Group 1, do not emphasize facts and data when discussing refractive surgery with Group 2. Focus on the pleasure they will experience with the result. Also emphasize how others will approve of their appearance without glasses and how much younger they will look and feel.

Group 3

Group 3, comprising 40% of the population, is the largest segment. Members in this group are not yet ready to buy refractive surgery because they tend to buy traditional products and services. Refractive surgery has not yet passed the threshold of being a traditional product or service in their minds. Group 3 individuals require trust to make favorable buying decisions.

Group 4

At 14% of the population, Group 4 is the most difficult to reach. The emotion of this group is fear of adverse consequences; therefore, they need assurance through proof, facts, and data. They tend to only buy

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proven products. These individuals need to have their questions answered satisfactorily and must feel sure that postoperative outcomes will be good.

Secondary Characteristics

If you did the math, you may be asking, "If Groups 1 and 2 together represent 46% of the population, why are we only reaching 25% of the potential market?" Because humans are complex and too complicated to fit into any single behavioral group. Each person has secondary behavioral characteristics that relate to his or her primary behavioral characteristic. The combination of dominant behavioral characteristics affects a person's buying style.

In other words, enough people in Groups 1 and 2 have additional secondary behavioral characteristics similar to the main characteristics in Groups 3 and 4. This increases the size of the nonbuying refractive surgery population to 75%. Most people have behavioral characteris-

tics that are combinations of two or more groups.

Marketing to the Groups

To reach refractive surgery's potential market, it's necessary to appeal to all four groups. For example, you might design a radio marketing campaign or a series of print advertisements for each of the four groups of potential fee-for-service prospects. Four advertisements might be created and run in rotation. Each version should emphasize the qualities that appeal to the emotions and needs of a different behavioral style.

Marketing to Group 1 must emphasize speed, comfort, affordability, benefits, experience, expertise, recovery, return to normal activities, and great results. It must be delivered at the fast pace this group requires. Since this group tends to make decisions quickly, it's important not to oversell your services.

Group 2 requires an emphasis on the overall beneficial experience. The approach must be friendly, highly social, optimistic, and short on details. It might take the form of an "upbeat" conversation between two friends. It must also be delivered at the lively pace this group requires.

Trust is a priority in Group 3. This segment tends to respond to relationships built on trust. The advertising copy should emphasize why they can trust the physician and believe in an expected beneficial outcome. The message should be delivered at a slower, steadier pace than to the other three groups. Refractive surgery marketing must be built around the theme of trusting the surgeon and the proven outcome. Words like *safe*, *proven*, and *effective* appeal to this behavioral style.

Proven results are the focus in Group 4 marketing. *Efficient*, *affordable*, *safe*, and *proven* are words that tend to appeal to this segment. They would respond to such advertising copy as, "Renowned expert, leading

authority, performed with great accuracy and/or tested and proven reliable." Words or phrases that tend to create tension in Group 4 include *new*, *revolutionary*, and *cutting edge*.

The Bottom Line

Marketing fee-for-service refractive surgery requires practitioners to understand and accept the following statements:

1. People tend to buy from people who have behavioral styles similar to their own.
2. People tend to sell to people who have a behavioral style similar to their own.
3. People who are aware of their own behavioral style and learn to "blend" with their customer's style are able to increase their marketing results. People buy from people they like. Your challenge is to make them like you. æ

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