

# NO BULLSHIT *Marketing*



17 CONTRARIAN WAYS  
TO INCREASE REFERRALS FOR  
HEALTHCARE SERVICES

DAVE MASTOVICH

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## **WHY SYSTEMATIC REFERRAL SOURCE MARKETING IS YOUR UNTAPPED ADVANTAGE**

Success in healthcare springs from exceptional patient care. But there's another dimension nearly as crucial—referral source marketing.

In the interconnected world of healthcare, professionals rely on each others' expertise to guide patient care. It's not about business transactions. It's about ensuring that patients, members, and residents receive the best possible care by connecting with the right specialists and services.

The healthcare landscape is a network of trust where professionals lean on one another to extend the continuum of care. It's a realm where the quality of patient care and the growth of healthcare services are intrinsically linked.

Whether you're a physical therapist aiming to broaden your client base, a durable medical equipment provider seeking more physician referrals, the leader of a multi-physician group striving to boost patient volume, or a senior living executive working to attract more residents, this book is for you. It's also for any healthcare professional seeking

the tools and strategies necessary to drive substantial, sustainable growth.

It's not enough to simply increase referrals sporadically when you notice a dip in volume. The real breakthrough comes from systematic referral source marketing, which is about reaching, connecting, and engaging with current and prospective referral sources—something that's not yet common practice. This insight dawned on me early in my career while I worked for multiple media companies as a teenager. Now, I'm ready to pass on the practical strategies and tactics I've learned along the way to drive growth for your healthcare organization.

## **HOW RADIO LED TO A HEALTHCARE MARKETING DISCOVERY**

This rebirth story takes two radio stations from the out-house to the penthouse. And it led me to an important discovery for healthcare services.

It's the early '90s and the place is Johnstown, Pennsylvania, ninety miles east of Pittsburgh. This is one of the top one hundred radio markets in America, yet two stations I worked at as a teenager had gone bankrupt, and the owners needed someone to lead a turnaround. Days after graduating college, full of confidence and not completely understanding what the situation would require, I said, "I'll take this on."

The two stations—an AM station that tried to be everything to everybody and an FM station that tried to be

## Why Systematic Referral Source Marketing Is Your Untapped Advantage

everything to everybody—were ranked at the bottom of fourteen stations in the market. Armed with the knack of engaging diverse party crowds from time as a DJ and with my marketing professor's lessons on market segmentation, I championed a new strategy. We sharply defined the target audience for each station to transform them from jack-of-all-trades to masters of their respective niches. This pivot was key to cultivating a dedicated listener base and propelling the stations from rock bottom to market leaders.

The AM station went to twenty-four-hour news, sports, and talk. It wasn't for everybody, but one group was intensely interested in this station.

The FM station was a bigger challenge. At first, we made it a hit station, all hits, but this was still too broad. Then we zeroed in on making it a country station, WMTN, the Mountain. The market adopted it, and the station was successful, becoming number one.

The AM station was number three in the market, so we had two of the top three stations.

Understanding that this could be applied to other industries, my attention turned to healthcare services. If leveraging market segmentation and telling a story that mattered to the target markets could boost two radio stations, it could do the same for healthcare services.

## **CROSS-POLLINATING FROM RADIO TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES**

Many great ideas in business are not new ideas. They are just ideas borrowed from somewhere else.

After leaving the radio stations and beginning to work in healthcare, an opportunity arose to build an occupational health program to reach local company leaders and their employees. This program attempted to prevent workplace injuries and strived to get injured people healthy and back to regular living as quickly as possible. It was important to apply what I learned from one industry to another.

When we built that occupational healthcare program, we had to talk to businesses and learn how to get them to sign up for the service. We found that clients would refer us to others once we built a strong relationship and proved value. It made sense to apply the same approach for other healthcare services when those providers needed more patients. I realized that referral source marketing was a key component of a strategic, comprehensive growth marketing plan for healthcare providers.

Changes in healthcare reimbursement at that time meant that the old way of doing business—relying primarily on treating as many patients in the hospital as possible to generate revenue—would no longer be financially viable. My next turnaround challenge required us to focus more of our efforts on our offerings outside of the hospital through services like home health, outpatient physical therapy, same-day surgery, and hospice care.



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Our strategy involved examining who was currently referring patients to the outpatient service providers, who could have been referring more, and who wasn't referring at all but should have been. Then, we tailored outreach marketing to referral sources, which led to growth in patient volumes for each of these healthcare service areas.

We also developed many primary care centers throughout the region and needed to recruit physicians and grow their practices. Again, the secret in each of those instances was referral source marketing.