

Relationships Are Your Greatest Asset

How Connection Built My Career—And Can Transform Your Podiatry Practice

The Secret to Practice Growth: Harnessing the Power of Relationships in Podiatry



About Me:

- ▶ 16+ years ago I attended my 1st Top Practices Summit (and haven't missed one since)
- Top Practices Community
 - Entrepreneurs, doctors, marketers, staff, partners: all here to help each other
- Topic choices for this session
 - Relationship system
 - Catch me on track 3;)
- Relationships: Make or break a practice

My Marketing Journey

- Key mentors who shaped my approach:
 - Dr. Peter Wishnie
 - Tom Foster
 - Rem Jackson
- "Marketing Guide Award" from Foster Consulting, Inc
- Consulted with over 100 podiatry practices nationwide
- Blending a tactical marketer with a relationship strategist



The Relationship Advantage: By The Numbers

- ▶ Practices with strong relationship marketing see 43% higher retention rates
- ▶ Relationship-focused practices generate 67% more referrals
- Cost of acquiring a new patient through advertising: \$150-300
- Cost of acquiring a patient through relationship channels: \$15-50



The Relationship Principle That Built My Career



My success in podiatry marketing wasn't just about skill—it was about building and leveraging the right relationships.



A Universal Truth: Whether it's career growth, patient trust, team success, or marketing impact, strong relationships create opportunities, efficiency, and sustainability.



The Podiatry Parallel: The most successful practices don't just focus on treatment—they master relationship-building across all areas.

The Four Core Relationships That Drive a Thriving Podiatry Practice

Success in podiatry isn't just about clinical expertise—it's about mastering relationships in four key areas:







Patient Relationships: Trust & Loyalty Before, During, and After Care

First Impressions Matter: Patients
decide to trust you before they even
step in the office (Google reviews,
website, social media).





Beyond the Treatment Room:

Consistent patient communication drives retention, word-of-mouth referrals, and positive reviews.

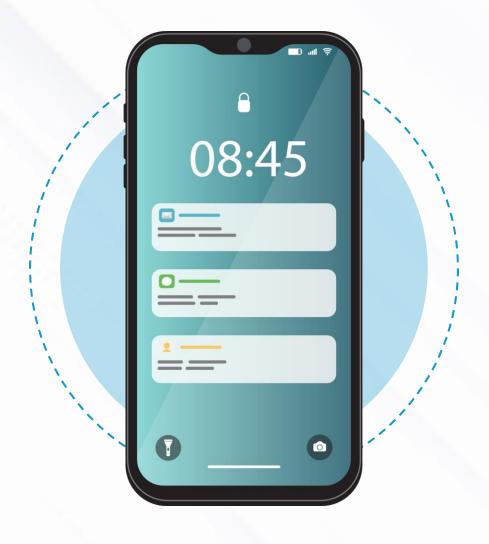




Patient Relationships: The Truth About Patient Decisions

- 94% of healthcare decisions are based on patient experience, not clinical factors
- Patients can't effectively judge your clinical expertise
- They default to judging how you make them feel





The "Wow" Moment Strategy



Identifying opportunities for unexpected positive experiences.



Low-cost, high-impact relationship builders



Examples from successful practices:

- Recovery gift baskets
- Handwritten milestone cards
- Provider cellphone
- Post-surgical care videos
- Post-treatment celebration rituals

Patient Relationship Quick Wins

- Implement 24-hour post-appointment followup calls
- Create pre-appointment welcome videos
- Develop treatment milestone recognition program
- Establish "Patient of the Month" spotlight



Referral & Professional Relationships: The Overlooked Growth Strategy



Physician & Community Partnerships: The key to steady, high-quality referrals is building real, ongoing connections.

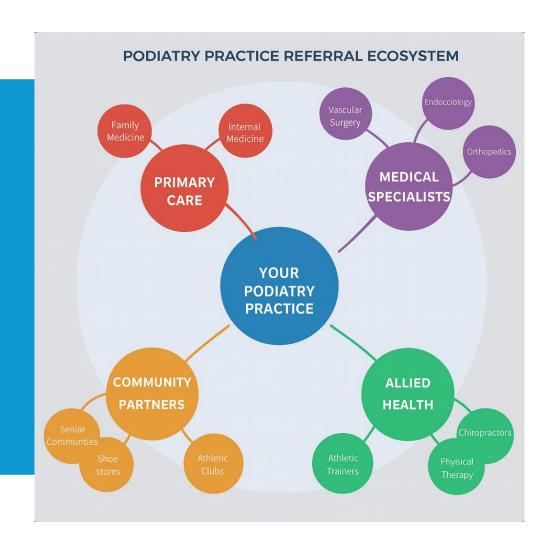
How to Stand Out: The small, high-impact habits that keep you top-of-mind with referring doctors.





Referral Relationships: The Hidden Growth Engine

- Average podiatry practice: 35% of new patients from referrals
- Quality comparison: Referred patients vs. advertising-driven patients
- Lifetime value differential: 2.4x higher for referred patients



The Referral Ecosystem Mapping



Primary care physicians:

Your main referral source.



Specialists:

Endocrinologists, vascular surgeons, orthopedists



Allied health:

Physical therapists, athletic trainers, chiropractors



Community:

Shoe stores, athletic clubs, senior communities

Why Traditional Referral Marketing Fails

- The lunch-and-hope approach
- Transactional vs. relationship thinking
- Lack of consistent communication
- Failure to demonstrate unique value
- The "out of sight, out of mind" problem





The Referral Relationship Cycle

Identification:

Finding high-potential referral partners

Connection:

Establishing meaningful initial contact

- Value Creation:

 Providing benefits before expecting referrals
- Communication:

 Maintaining consistent, valuable touchpoints
- Appreciation:

 Recognizing and celebrating the partnership
- Growth:

 Expanding the relationship strategically

90-Day Referral Relationship Quick Wins

- Create "Referral Guides" for top 3 conditions
- Implement same-day referral acknowledgment system
- Develop bi-monthly email update for referring physicians
- Schedule in-person visits to top 5 referring practices

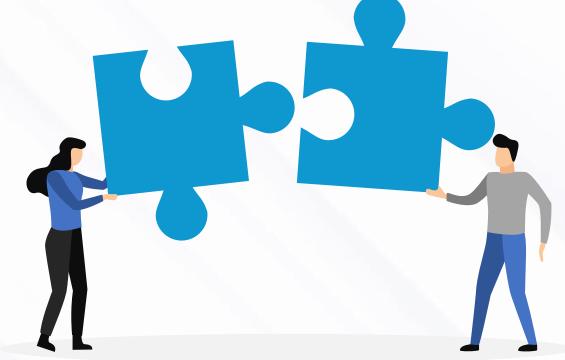


Staff & Operational Relationships: A Healthy Practice Starts from Within



Culture Drives Success:

The way you treat your staff directly impacts patient care and business efficiency.





Internal Communication Matters:

Why marketing to your team (not just to patients) improves patient experiences and productivity.



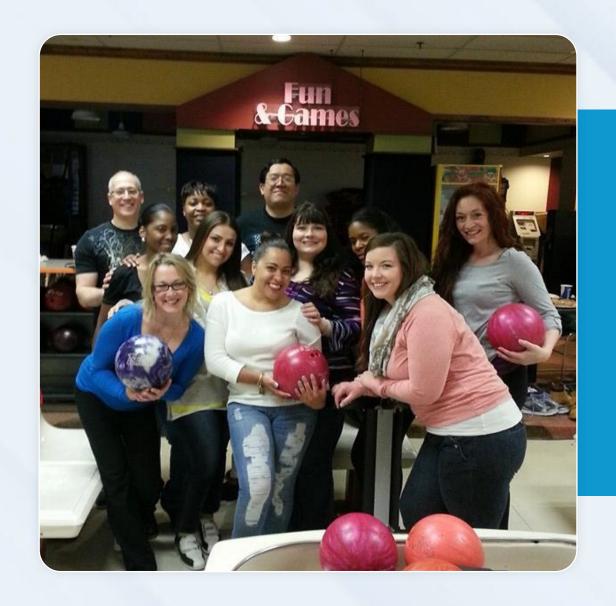


Staff Relationships: Your Internal Marketing Team

- Patient satisfaction correlates 87% with staff satisfaction
- Average podiatry staff turnover: 22% annually
- Cost of replacing a front desk staff member: \$18,000+
- The multiplier effect: How staff relationships impact patient perception

Internal Relationship Marketing Principles

- Staff members are your first marketing audience
- They need to believe before patients will believe
- Marketing is everyone's responsibility, not just the marketing person's
- Culture directly impacts marketing effectiveness





Team Relationship Audit

Mission clarity:

Does everyone understand "why we do what we do"?

Role significance:

Does each person understand their impact?

Growth pathways:

Are there clear development opportunities?

Communication:

Are channels open and psychological safety present?

Recognition:

Are contributions meaningfully acknowledged?



90-Day Staff Relationship Quick Win

- Implement "Patient Impact Stories" in team meetings
- Create role-specific training on relationship importance
- Develop peer recognition program for relationship excellence
- Establish communication channels for patient experience improvement

Online & Digital Relationships: Scaling Trust in a Digital World



Google & Social Media Are Today's Word-of-Mouth:

Why a strong online reputation is just as powerful as personal referrals.





Engagement, Not Just Promotion:

How podiatrists can build real connections with their audience through social content, reviews, and email marketing.

Digital Marketing is Just Relationship-Building at Scale







Digital Partners

Understands Your Business

A true partner takes the time to learn your goals, challenges, and industry before suggesting solutions.

Delivers Measurable Results

They track what matters—new clients, revenue growth, and efficiency—so you know the investment is paying off.

Shared Goals

A true partner aligns their success with yours, working toward growth that matters to your business.

Builds for the Long Term

They're not chasing short-term wins; they're helping you create sustainable growth and stability.



The Online Relationship Spectrum

Website:

Your digital front door and relationship foundation



Reviews:

Public relationship testimonials

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Social Media:

Ongoing conversation and connection



Email:

Personal, direct relationship nurturing



Content:

Education-based relationship building



Video:

Build trust and expertise

Website as Relationship Tool

- Beyond information to connection
- Showing personality through imagery and content
- Building trust through transparency
- Creating emotional connection through patient stories
- Using video to humanize the practice





Reviews as Digital Trust Builders

- Reviews are proxy relationships for prospective patients
- 94% of patients use reviews to evaluate providers
- Response quality matters more than review rating
- Every review is a relationship opportunity
- The psychology of social proof in healthcare decisions



Content as Relationship Building

- Educational content demonstrates expertise
- Problem-solving content builds value
- Behind-the-scenes content creates connection
- Patient stories content establishes credibility
- Each piece of content should strengthen relationship in at least one way

The 80/20 Rule of Engagement

- 80% value, education, relationship-building
- 20% promotion and direct marketing
- Content categories that build relationships:
 - Educational (condition explanations, treatment options)
 - Inspirational (patient success stories, outcomes)
 - Personal (team spotlights, practice culture)
 - Community (local involvement, events)



Email as a Relationship Channel

- Average podiatry practice: Uses email for appointments only
- Relationship-focused practice: Nurtures between visits
- Cash Pay Service Upsell
- Patient journey email sequences:
 - New patient welcome sequence
 - Treatment preparation sequence
 - Recovery support sequence
 - Preventive care sequence



Email Relationship Example: Plantar Fasciitis Journey





90-Day Online Relationship Quick Wins

- Implement review response protocol (24-hour max)
- Create 4-week "Meet Our Team" social media series
- Develop patient education email sequence for top condition
- Add video welcome message to website



Lessons From My Own Career:
Relationship Marketing in
Action



My Career Relationship Milestones

- First job at Dr. Wishnie's practice: Hired through relationship
- Meeting Rem Jackson: Conference connection that changed my career
- Foster opportunity: Came through industry relationships
- "Marketer of the Century" recognition: Result of relationship-building with clients
- Every significant opportunity traced back to a relationship

Career Lesson #1:

Relationships Scale Your Impact

- Limited by what you can do personally
- Unlimited by what your relationships can accomplish
- My early career mistake: Trying to do everything myself
- The breakthrough: Building systems for relationship leverage



Career Lesson #2:

Consistency Trumps Intensity

- Small, consistent relationship
 investments > occasional grand gestures
- The compound effect of regular touchpoints
- Consistent relationship focus creates exponential growth
- Application to patient and referral source relationships

Career Lesson #3:

Relationship ROI Is Measurable

- Common myth: Relationship marketing isn't trackable
- Reality: It's among the most measurable marketing approaches
- Key metrics I've used to demonstrate relationship ROI:
 - Referral source productivity
 - Patient retention and lifetime value
 - Team productivity and retention
 - Cost per acquisition comparison

Career Lesson #4:

Give First, Receive Later

- The counterintuitive approach that accelerated my career
- Providing value before asking for anything created opportunities
- The practice application: Creating value for patients, referrers, and community before expecting business

Career Lesson #5:

Relationships Create Resilience

- Relationship-rich practices weathered the pandemic
- Economic downturns impact transactionbased practices more severely
- My observation: Practices with strong relationships recovered 3x faster
- Relationships as practice insurance against market disruption
- Building relationship reserves before you need them



The Future of Podiatry Marketing & Operations:

Where Relationships Matter Most

Al & Automation: Threat or Opportunity?

- Al tools for patient communication and marketing
- Automation for routine relationship touchpoints
- The key distinction: Technology should enhance relationships, not replace them
- Future practices will blend high-tech systems with hightouch relationships
- The human advantage that technology can't replicate





The Patient Experience Revolution

- Healthcare consumers now compare you to Amazon and Apple
- The expectation of personalized, ongoing relationship
- Shift from episodic treatment to continuous wellness partnership
- The practices that will thrive are building these systems now
- How to stay ahead of this fundamental shift



Clinical technology will continue to commoditize

Marketing tactics will become increasingly accessible

The sustainable differentiator: Relationship excellence

Building systems now that others can't easily replicate

Creating a relationship-centered practice culture as market protection

Where Podiatrists Need to Focus Next

30/60/90 Day Plan:

Create a progressive implementation timeline



Establish KPIs for relationship improvement

Compassion

Relationship Audit:

Evaluate your four relationship areas

Prioritization:

Focus on highest-impact, lowest-effort changes first



Relationships Are Your

Competitive Advantage

"Every major breakthrough in my career—and every thriving practice I've seen—was built on strong relationships."







"Marketing is not about tactics, tools, or technology."

"It's about creating meaningful connections."

"It's about building trust that lasts."

"It's about relationships that heal."

"And that's something every podiatrist can master."