



The essentials of setting up, building and running your practice.

Episode 4:

Choose your practice focus

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Hi, welcome to the fourth episode of Practice DNA, the Podcast that focuses on helping you set up and build your own practice. I am Matthew Holmes and I am your host. Welcome back, hopefully we haven't put you off after the last episode. In that episode we talked about the eight reasons why you wouldn't want to start your own practice. Now assuming you have listened to that and you have decided that yes I still want to go ahead. What we need to now start looking at is how are you going to set up this practice, how are you going to focus it. You have got to choose your area and look at the particular type of practice that you want to be developing. Now, you might want think that ok I need to start doing things like choosing premises and running off getting letterhead developed etc. In actual fact if you take a little bit of time now to do a little bit of forward planning you can save yourself quite a few headaches later on.

So what I would like you to do is I would really like you to consider starting to look at whether or not you want to set up a targeted practice versus a non-targeted practice. That is do you really want to focus on a specific area of practice or a specific niche or should it be more of a general style of practice. Now your niches may well be natural treatments of fertility disorders, things like headaches, sports injuries in marathon runners etc and the more specific the niche that you have the easier it is going to be if you were to identify your target base and therefore it is potentially going to be easier to reach that patient base. Now, this means that your advertising and your marketing could be much more focused than it otherwise would be and correspondingly that tends to make it much cost effective. The downside of that is that you are going to potentially limit your patient base or patient numbers that you are going to get into the clinic.

If you focus on one specific area of practice then your practice name and your practice marketing should reflect this. So, I live in Melbourne. If I was to look at running a fertility clinic I would perhaps look at calling it something like Melbourne Natural Fertility Clinic or if I was doing headaches I might say the Melbourne Headache Centre or something like that. The advantage of this is that it very clearly tells your patients what you are about and what the clinic is about. However, this isn't suitable obviously if you are having more general practice or if your practice is going to focus on several small niches. You may want to focus on several niches if the target niche that you have is too small to sustain the practice and so you may decide to spread your focus or you may decide that I am going to get bored just looking at one particular niche or one particular area so you can direct yourself into several different areas just to give yourself that variety.

When you are naming the practice though, however, when you are dealing with several niches it can be a little bit problematic, you have got to decide whether or not you are going to have several different trading names, such as if I was doing both fertility and headaches, I might have the Melbourne Fertility Centre but I may also have the Melbourne Headache Centre. Now this becomes quite difficult when you start doing things like answering phones and so on, you are

going to have multiple lines per practice if that is possible but really if it is just you starting out or if you have got one receptionist that is not going to be a feasible option.

You may well decide that you are going to have a more general practice name and then tailor your marketing message to suit the particular target area or target niche that you are going after. Logistically this is much easier to achieve in your practice.

However if you want to run a sort of more general style of practice that deals with a multitude of disorders your trading name should obviously reflect this. Originally before I begun focusing on balance disorders and headache in my practice, my practice was called Back in Action Chiropractic Wellness Centre, which just from that title you can kind of guess that it is going to be a very general practice, and that is what it was. However if you are still going for general topic practice you really need to look at how can I target some specific areas and work out what are my ideal patients because you can still use the advantages of niche marketing even though you may have a general sort of style of practice.

So if I was going to have a practice which treated families including paediatric cases then I would start to look at what sort of publications do they read, particularly local publications. Advertising in local publications is going to be much more cost effective, it is going to make a lot more sense to do that as well, there is really no point in advertising in national magazines apart from the fact the cost would be very prohibitive and the actual chances of somebody being in within your catchment area are close to zero, so do you want to really be looking at the local publications.

You also might want to look at who your particular case ideal target would be talking to so in this case with the paediatric you might look at are they talking at maternal and child health nurses, for people who are in Victoria. I know in the UK they have the same thing, health visitors and other professionals that deal with this particular demographic that you are going to be dealing with. So you might want to look at actually networking with these other professionals, getting in contact with them, introducing yourself, explaining what it is, how you go about treating these particular conditions. Try and go fairly prepared with a bit of research and so on as well if you can and that will help them take you a little more seriously.

You might also want to look at where your particular demography is going to meet, so things like play groups, kindergartens, coffee shops, play centres, all these type of places if you are dealing with the families and paediatric type of base. So you could contact the type of places where they meet and see if you can advertise in them, whether it would be just leaving some fliers or business cards or whether you can do something like putting posters on the wall. You may even be able to do some joint ventures where you could help set up some screening booths, if it was somewhere like a play centre, they may be willing to hire you a little bit of space for a while and you could do some free screening etc. And so on and so forth like that and so this is how you can sit down and you can actually work out how you are going to go about targeting your particular niche.

You want to repeat this process for as many or as few groups as you want to be part of your practice and so once you do this you then have a method for reaching your target audience.

One thing you shouldn't do is you shouldn't just try to reach everybody. That is really not very conducive to cost effective marketing basically. Non-specific brand based advertising works well if you are something like Coca Cola or you have millions of dollars to spend on advertising but it really does not work very well at all for small businesses with small marketing budgets. You need to be very targeted and you need to also measure your results. I will be talking about measuring results in an upcoming podcast as well.

Once you have sort of decided what type of practice you want, whether that will be focused or general you have an idea then about what targets you can use and how you are likely to get hold of those targets etc, you can then sort of start to make some other decisions on that basis. So you can start saying where should I have my clinic? If it is a general practice you could locate it just about anywhere but you may perhaps look at somewhere like a GP surgery. Though you have then to weigh up whether or not a GP surgery is the best place if you have a fairly alternative health point of view which you may end up clashing with those practitioners and that could cause some difficulty within your practice and so if that was your perspective you may want to look at seeing if you can rent some space in an existing alternative health practice or even get your own premises. If it was a general type premises, you might want to look at somewhere like a very high traffic area, like in a main shopping strip or in a shopping centre. You are going to pay a lot more in rent for those types of places but you are going to get more sort of passing traffic which for a general practice could be very important. However if you have the type of practice, say for example something like sports practice, you may want to look at things like seeing if you can get some consulting rooms inside a local gym or inside a local sports club. The rent for places like that is likely to be much less than say on the high street or main road and you are also likely to get very good access to your target base.

So if you have got that type of information it can make life quite a lot easier for you. You can also look up what style of branding you would use. So if you were going to go after sports people, you can design a logo specifically that is going to appeal to those. It is going to be much easier for your designer to come up with colour schemes and so on if you are very clear about the sort of group that you are trying to reach as part of your overall approach.

Hopefully from this we have highlighted that it really does pay to take some time to just sort of sit down and work out what exactly are you going to do first of all? What type of practice would you like to have? It can make it much easier to then target your marketing, you can choose your business name much more effectively, you can choose your practice location, you can design the stationary, all sorts of other stuff much more easily once you actually have this sort of target market I suppose.

So take a bit of time doing that. What we are going to do is, I am going to do for those people who have subscribed to the podcast, I am going to put up a little marketing template whereby you can outline particular groups that you think would be good or particular problems that you would like to be treating and then you can work it out how can go back getting those. You can set up some goals, set up some approaches to actually go ahead and do that. So we will be sending that out to all the people who have subscribed to our podcast. So head on over to practicedna.com, there is a little email sign up box there and you will get advanced notification

of any upcoming episodes, you will also get access to transcripts for all these podcast and like we said we will give little extra bonuses such as this one where we are going to extra marketing template to help you started.

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