

Increase Bariatric Surgical Volume: Avoid the 5 Mistakes

Stop Losing Patients to Your Competitors

Increasing numbers of prospective bariatric surgery patients are searching online for information about weight loss surgery and for the surgeons who perform these procedures. With the Internet making this information (and sometimes misinformation) readily available, even the most established practice finds itself competing for these patients. Yet, most practices make the same five mistakes that send their prospective patients to their competitors.

Read more to learn about these common five mistakes that cause patients to book with your competitors. Then, call the Internet marketing experts at Ceatus to discover what you can do about it!

Current Market Conditions for Weight Loss Surgery

- According to surveys, bariatric surgery procedure volume has increased 29% from 2005 to 2009, with gastric bypass being the leading procedure.
- Insurance coverage is on the rise for bariatric surgery procedures, including gastric sleeve surgery.
- Complementary health benefits of weight loss surgery are increasing the demand - studies show surgery can help cure obesity related diseases, such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

MISTAKE #1

The Staff

Booking consultations and surgery is ultimately a sales job. The person in your practice who is performing this function is perhaps the most important deciding factor as to whether a patient books with you or with your competition.

Most practices suffer from inaction of personnel management. The surgeons are very busy seeing patients and performing surgery, and little thought is given to hiring the right personnel, creating the proper work environment and installing an incentive plan. Many times the “surgery coordinators” and front office staff are not sales-minded. Some have been promoted or transferred from clinical or clerical positions and have no sales training, experience or in many cases, interest.

Certain techniques must be applied during the hiring and training process of these key employees to ensure that you are achieving the results you desire. The people who interact with patients are the face of your practice. If these staff members do not make prospective patients feel welcome and present your practice in the best possible light, patients will not book surgery with you.

Patients go to your competitors because they have better sales-minded people on staff.

MISTAKE #2

Visibility on Google

Word-of-mouth continues to be the most important tool for generating new patients. However, now prospective patients use the Internet to perform research on you before scheduling a consultation. Of course, while a patient is learning about you online, they also learn about your competitors. If your competitors have better visibility on Google than you do, patients often choose them. Why? Because top visibility is associated with quality. If you consider the last time you looked for a restaurant online and could not easily find it, your first thought was, *"How Good Could This Restaurant Be?"* In reality, the quality of the food at the restaurant has little to do with Google rankings, just like the quality of the services you provide have little to do with Google rankings. But that is not a consumer's perception.

Patients go to your competitors because they are perceived as being higher quality surgeons due to their superior visibility on Google.

MISTAKE #3

Website Does Not Reflect Your Practice

When consumers are searching online, they inevitably end up on your website. If your website does not provide a positive, caring and professional image for your practice you will lose this prospective patient to your competitor. Just as in the case of Google Visibility, the quality of your surgery has nothing to do with the quality of your website, but consumers will continue to make this association. A successful website must include very specific components to effectively captivate prospective patients. It is critical to remember that your practice website often provides the first impression of your practice.

Patients go to your competitors if their websites provide a more compelling first impression than your website.

MISTAKE #4

Initial Contact with the Patient

Practices spend tens, and in some cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on marketing, and then totally collapse after a lead is generated. Prospective patients who call in are often placed on hold, transferred from person to person or find themselves talking to an answering machine – and in some of the more egregious cases the calls simply don't get answered! After all the effort and money you spent to encourage prospective patients to contact your practice, making them feel unwelcome is bad for business. And this is not where it ends. In many cases, the person answering the phone is not asking the patient to book a consultation. They simply answer a few questions, with the main goal being to get the caller off of the phone as quickly as possible.

Patients go to your competition because the person answering the phone at your competitor's office is friendly, welcoming, and knowledgeable; and they asked them to book an appointment.

MISTAKE #5

Converting the Surgical Consultation

When a prospective patient arrives for their consultation, do you expect to perform the examination, recommend a surgery and then have the patient just say “OK I am ready to go?” Probably not. Practices that do not have a closing process in the office during the consultation and a follow-up process after the consultation are simply generating demand for the procedure, but providing the patient with no firm solution to satisfy it – effectively sending the patient to your competition. Research shows patients may require several months, or longer, to make a surgical decision. And many patients visit more than one practice when choosing a surgeon.

Patients go to your competitors because your competitors have a better closing process in the office and better follow up after the consultation.

**You can increase your bariatric surgical volume.
Schedule an appointment with Ceatus to learn how to overcome these
and other detrimental practices. Call 858.454.5505 today.**