

Moneyball and the art of finding more patients.
By Scott Waddell

It has been close to 100 years since John Wanamaker famously said “**Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is I don’t know which half**”. 1 Incredibly, for most businesses this statement rings true today and the only major difference between today and 100 years ago is there are more places to spend money on advertising and promotion.

The science of monitoring marketing results is not unlike the theme of the Oakland A’s in the movie Moneyball who put together a plan to compete against big budget teams without big budget players and win thorough scouting based on statistics and fine tuning.

In this article we will highlight some ideas of tactics that you could leverage to measure your marketing ROI.

The most advanced companies in the world are obsessive about measuring everything to try and make sure more of their marketing opportunities are accounted for.

For example, a few years ago, I was a part of implementing some of the most advanced “trackable” marketing programs for major brands like TD Financial Group and HSBC Financial.

We undertook innovative programs such as:

- Direct mail programs that over doubled traditional response rates by inviting qualified prospects to a personalized web address (e.g. come to www.program.com/stevesmith).
- Email based marketing programs with offers that changed dynamically based on a customer’s “evolving profile” from their click patterns. Similar to what you see on Amazon today, offers change not just based on what you buy but what you look at.

I frequently hear physical therapy clinic owners ask questions like:

- Should I continue spending money on yellow pages when people are moving to the web?
- My website is ranking well but should I be advertising online with products like Google ads?
- How much business am I really getting from my website, brochures, emails etc.?

As a Physical Therapy practice owner or manager, what are you doing to implement marketing that is based on continuous improvement?

The good news is that since John Wanamaker pondered over 50% of his marketing budgets being wasted, we don't just have more places to spend money today, we also have some ways to test and measure results.

Here are some things that you can do to bring accountability to your marketing programs.

Implement multi-channel Call Tracking

Technology exists today to enable your clinic to assign a unique phone number to any of your marketing channels – your sign outside, yellow pages, brochures, website, online advertising, etc.

With call tracking, you will be able to determine exactly how many calls come from various sources and know how many calls are “new” vs “repeat” callers.

This data can be incredibly valuable in determining what channels to build on and what channels to increase expenditure on and which channels to reduce expenditure on.

I am currently monitoring some website call tracking for a few Physical Therapy clinics and a sample of the recent 30 days shows that out of 5315 visits to the clinic web sites (in total) 319 phone calls were generated from the site (or 6%) of total visitors.

With call tracking your clinic could have definitive data on how many inquiries come to your office from any of your advertising & marketing programs and allow you to make strategic decisions on budget optimization.

While we are discussing call tracking, it is equally important that your phone number is displayed prominently on every page of your website and on all of your marketing materials.

I frequently see PT websites that don't even have a phone number on the main header of every page. Make sure your phone number is clear on everything you do.

Whether you are putting an ad in yellow pages, creating a brochure or building a new website, you cannot make your phone number prominent enough. People are easily distracted and if they even “think” about contacting you, it should be really easy for them to find your phone number and call right then. If you enable call tracking you will not only be aware of your results, you will also be able to measure how changes to your creative affect your ROI.

Create bold inquiry forms on your website

There is a difference between having a “contact us” page on your website and an appointment inquiry form that is designed to engage the visitor right on your home page.

I am currently monitoring a pilot program with a few clinics that is presenting 50% of the visitors with the existing clinic sites that have no appointment request forms on the home page vs new pages that have very bold form designs to try and engage more potential patients, and we have found that between 0.7% and 2.3% of visitors are sending inquiries to the clinics.

The clinics in the test group have seen between a low of 3 and high of 10 inquiries over a 2-month time frame through this test program. This represents an average of 1.2% of website visitors completing appointment inquiry forms.

You can contact your web developer to test different “calls to action” on your home page and measure results using “A/B Testing” which will give you a real measure of success between different approaches.

Implement Website Live Chat on your website

A recent Forrester Research report titled “Making Proactive Chat Work” found the following insights across a wide variety of verticals.²

- *“**44%** of online consumers say that having questions answered by a live person while in the middle of an online purchase is one of the **most important features** a Web site can offer.”*
- *“**62%** reported being more likely to purchase from the site again. A further **38%** of respondents said they **had made their purchase due to the chat session itself.**”*

Offering live chat on your clinic website is one potentially valuable method of turning more visitors into patients by engaging them when they are browsing.

Website live chat provides you with the opportunity to invite website visitors to talk to your clinic while they are on your website.

I was recently involved in a pilot live chat program with some physical therapy clinics and we found the following.

- 5.6% of total web visitors engaged in a live chat conversation (representing 588 chats).
- Out of these 588 chat sessions, 387 people identified themselves as either existing or potential new patients.

- 75% of those that identified themselves (291) identified themselves as potential new patients.
- 44% of potential new patients (127) provided their contact information via live chat to receive a follow up from the clinic. The 588 chat sessions represented 5.6% of website visitors.

Live chat could be a great opportunity for your clinic to reach out to potential patients while they are browsing your site. There are numerous software solutions available online at a reasonable cost that would allow your staff to provide a live chat service on your existing website – and implementing these technologies on your site is quite simple.

The Moneyball Connection

When I watched the movie Moneyball, I walked out of the theatre thinking about business – not baseball. My take away lesson is that success is often not found in the grand slam but in a number of the “right things” that come together through optimization.

In the Moneyball of running a physical therapy practice, you are not likely to find a “home run” single tactic that will bring you overwhelming results – you will need to find the tactics that provide good return and optimize them.

To provide some context on general “response rates”, The Direct Marketing Association reported in 2012 that average response rates for direct mail ranged between 1.28% for rented lists and 3.4% for in house lists, and for postcards ranged from 1.12% for purchased lists and 4.26% for house lists (house lists are the existing companies’ database).³

Direct mail results are often quoted to be in the 1-3% range for “response rates.” Actual results vary by industry, but response does not mean “new customers”. . you then need to calculate your average inquiry to conversion rate to determine performance.

Comparatively, if you consider the key example statistics above from some physical therapy clinics, we are seeing a total “web” response rate of 12.8% of visitors engaging with the clinic when you combine multiple response methods:

- 1.2% via new patient inquiry forms when on the home page.
- 6% of website visitors phone the clinic. Adjusting prominence and color of phone numbers is a method of testing improving this result.
- 5.6% of visitors engaged in live chat. 1.2% of visitors were new potential patients that engaged in live chat and provided contact information for follow up.

The Take Aways

By measuring your base line results, you can determine where you need to try to improve and measure what is working and what is not from your baseline.

There are many small things that you can do to improve your marketing across channels, but you may or may not be hitting the mark unless you build data and analyze your existing performance.

You can't ponder spending more or less on yellow pages or online advertising unless you know exactly how many calls you are getting and what % are first time callers.

On your website, you should not just be focused on "ranking" or "advertising" to build traffic, you should be focused on how to generate more patient inquiries from the visitors you get. If you can double, triple, or even greater improve your inquiry rates then you will get even more ROI on your Search Engine Optimization (**SEO**) and paid web advertising programs.

References:

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Wanamaker
2. <http://www.forrester.com/Making+Proactive+Chat+Work/fulltext/-/E-RES57054>
3. <http://www.dmnews.com/dma-direct-mail-response-rates-beat-digital/article/245780/>

About Scott Waddell

Scott Waddell is the president of PatientSites.com (A Metamor Group Company). In recent years, Scott has been working with PT clinic owners around the world to help maximize the performance of their online presence.

Since 1998, Scott has led the strategy and development of online "customer engagement" solutions for leading brands such as Microsoft, TD Financial Group, HSBC, McDonalds, Bell, Sprint and numerous other companies. These customer engagement initiatives are designed to create a unique and valuable customer experience online that leads to increased financial performance.

Scott has also created a number of web products, some which were purchased by other organizations.

Scott can be reached at 866 565 4746x282