

# Executive **EDGE**

## **SPECIALISTS AIM MARKETING AT OTHER PROVIDERS**

Marketing is the process through which a business identifies a customer's need and tries to meet it. In healthcare, "customers" tend to be patients. But medical specialty groups have begun to aim their marketing at other providers, particularly primary care physicians (PCPs). Through it, specialists hope to demonstrate their value to the PCP and create a mutually beneficial relationship between them.

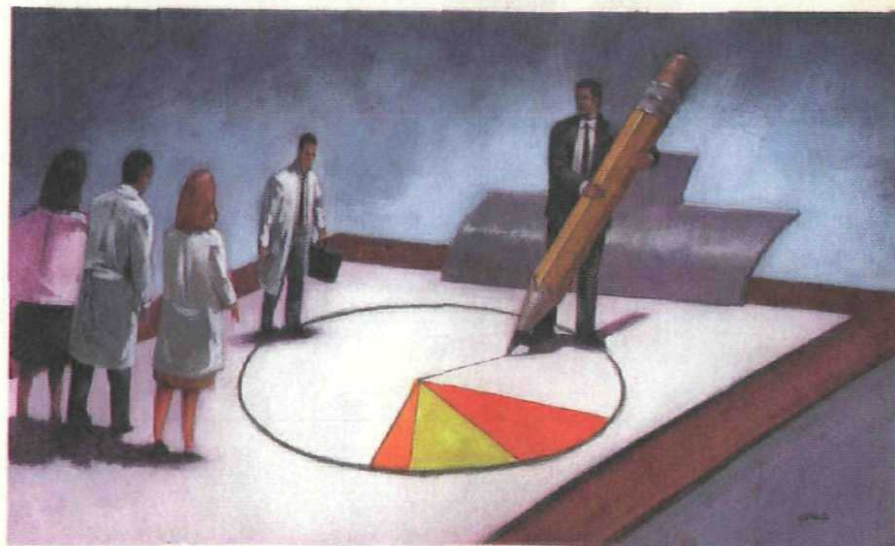
A specialty practice's marketing plan should have in it five key steps:

- Establish the foundation. The specialty practice can accomplish this best by writing a mission statement that clearly differentiates the practice's mission from those of competitors.

- Assess your marketing environment. The specialty practice should analyze the local market, including PCPs, other specialists, hospital activities, population trends, regulatory issues, and other factors, determining what PCP needs are currently unmet.

- Target your efforts. Find out how local PCPs see your services and work hard to correct any image problems.

- Develop your marketing mix. The specialty practice's marketing plan should include the "four Ps": *product*, which includes teaching the PCP how to differ-



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entiate between those cases he or she can treat and those that should be referred to a specialist; *price*, which includes clearly communicating the specialty practice's services and prices to the PCP; *place*, which includes deciding whether the specialist's office or a satellite clinic is the best site for examining patients; *promotion*, which includes reminding the PCP of the ways the specialist has met or exceeded the PCP's needs.

- Implement and evaluate. Implemen-

tation of the plan should include budgeting resources and creating a time line for the integration of the plan into the practice. Evaluation should include analyzing market share, PCP satisfaction, referral of fee-for-service patients from PCP colleagues, and financial measures of practice performance.

*From Neil W. Treister, MD, "Marketing and the Medical Specialist in the Managed Care Environment," Physician Executive, July-August 1997, pp. 14-20.*

### **SIGNS OF A BRAIN DRAIN**

"Work smarter, not harder" is a commonly heard phrase these days—canny handling of information and knowledge is key to marketplace success. But how do you know if your organization is "working smart"? David H. Smith, head of knowledge development for Unilever, cites nine signs symptomatic of a "knowledge problem."

- You repeat mistakes, instead of learning from them.
- Work gets duplicated. This is often due to a failure to share knowledge and clarify expectations.
- Customer relations are poor. Again, possibly due to poor communication.
- Good ideas are not shared internally. Fight this common problem by sharing your own knowledge, nudging employees to speak up by asking them questions, and establishing incentives for sharing and borrowing ideas.

- You have to compete on price. Educating your customers more can reduce the need to slash prices.
- It is difficult to compete with market leaders. Ask yourself, "What do they know that we don't?"
- You depend on a few key individuals. This may indicate too little teamwork and sharing of information.
- You are slow to launch new products. Examine what could be slowing you down.
- You don't know how to price for service. This ties into an important point: How well do you understand why your customers are coming to you?

Knowledge is power—a good reason to make sure it is working efficiently throughout your organization.

*From Thomas A. Stewart, "Why Dumb Things Happen to Smart Companies," Fortune, June 23, 1997, pp. 159-160.*