Getting Your Medical Practice to Stand Out from the Crowd

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Making an impact on your patients — and your fellow medical practice employees — means bringing out the best in yourself. Sally Hogshead describes how.

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Even if your medical practice offers the same services as one in your community, even if it charges more, and even if it is less convenient to get to, you can still be a top choice for patients. What can set you apart from the competition is how you engage patients and the impression they have about you and your practice.

Speaker and author Sally Hogshead, developer of the "Fascination Advantage" self-assessment tool, gave attendees of the Medical Group Management Association's Annual Conference this advice in her keynote address on Wednesday, Oct. 9.

"In medicine, it is more crucial than ever to use advantages to increase communication with patients, physicians, and others," said Hogshead, who stressed making a visit to your practice unique, thus adding value, thus adding a greater relationship with patients.

With a background in public relations, Hogshead pointed out several brands we pay more for — or pay more attention to — simply because of the brand and the importance we've placed on that logo or name. The same can be done with your practice by getting patients to link your name to quality, but you'll be able to back it up.

"Deliver more than would be expected," she said. "Patients can get a prescription anywhere, but they can't get that experience everywhere."

To create a better experience, she stressed her "fascination advantage," getting the world to see who you are versus how you see the world. "Fascination is an intense, emotional focus," said Hogshead.

But in a world where the average attention span is now nine seconds, according to a recent BBC study, making that impression on patients must be immediate and impactful.

"In order to have loyal patients ... more engaged [patients], you need to understand how to fascinate," she said, introducing her seven ways, or triggers, we can use to fascinate: passion, trust, mystique, prestige, power, alarm, and rebellion. Hogshead has developed an assessment for individuals to decide what two they rely on most, giving them an archetype.

For example, if your primary trigger is power, where you lead with command, and your secondary trigger is prestige, where you earn respect with higher standards, your archetype, according to Hogshead, is "the maestro." This means you are ambitious, admired, and focused.

So in healthcare, as in any industry, there are different triggers and archetypes and she recommended a blend of personalities rather than making sure everyone in your practice is like you. "You don't want to replicate yourself," she advised.
So your practice should have some who are passionate, some who are detailed-oriented, etc., but the key is getting the right archetypes in the right positions. Now the triggers and archetypes also have insight into patient communication as well and can help determine how those at your practice, especially physicians, interact. She used the example of a physician getting a patient on a treatment plan. A physician whose primary trigger is "power" will proactively lead patients to the medication. A physician whose primary trigger is alarm will identify problems or what happens if the patient doesn't take the medication. And the passionate physician will get to an emotional level with the patient and what can happen to the people around them. No matter the trigger or the approach, Hogshead said it is critical to bring out the best in you — no matter your role — to bring out the best in your patients.

"You don't sort of care," she said. "The world is not changed by those who sort of care. You passionately care, sometimes irrationally care, about what's best for patients. It is a harder and harder environment today … confronted with technology, new rules, and more to be successful, so you can't sort of care."

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