

SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL DRIP CAMPAIGNS TO KEEP PATIENTS ENGAGED

Wendy Lewis
offers effective
strategies for
turning leads
into loyal
patients

DRIP CAMPAIGNS ARE ONE OF THOSE 'OLDIES BUT GOODIES' in the realm of digital marketing strategies that sometimes gets overlooked. The secret sauce to effective campaigns is getting the right messages to the right customers through the right vehicle with the right look and feel, and at the right time.

On a personal note, drip campaigns bring out the amateur psychologist in me. I enjoy the challenge of taking a deep dive into people's predispositions and figuring out what makes them tick.

The architecture of a drip campaign

Drip marketing is all about anticipating consumer behaviour patterns. To be effective, you need to understand the patients you are most eager to reach in a deeper way than just by standard demographics. You will have to get into their heads a little, such as what they are most likely to respond

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to, what turns them off, the best taglines to get their attention, and ideal intervals to reach out.

What is unique about drip campaigns is that they can be structured to anticipate and follow the user's actions through automated workflows. For example, if someone just subscribed to your newsletter, you may start a sequence by sending a welcome email. Then, after a few days to a week, you could deliver the most popular content on your blog to keep them engaged.

If you wait to re-engage in two weeks or more, it may be too long depending on your primary target. Most people are bombarded with information coming at them from every direction, so they have limited attention spans. They may forget why they subscribed to your content in the first place and ignore it, or worse, opt-out.

Think of the first email you send to a new subscriber as a valuable one-time opportunity. If you blow it with the wrong messaging or graphics or come across as too much of a hard sell, there may not be a second chance to engage with that subscriber. If you lose them, they may move on and forget about you.

Regulations for direct mail campaigns

Although there may be opportunities in the future to re-engage with those who opted out in a different way, it is imperative to respect subscribers' wishes to avoid being flagged to the platform you use for your eblasts.

The U.S. Congress passed the CAN-SPAM Act to address the problem of unwanted commercial electronic mail messages. The CAN-SPAM Act requires the Federal Communications Commission to issue rules with regard to commercial email and some text messages sent to wireless devices such as cell phones—not email in general!

CAN-SPAM covers all commercial messages, which the law defines as 'any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service,' including email that promotes content on commercial websites. The law makes no exception for business-to-business email. That means all emails—for example, a message to former customers announcing a new product line—must comply with the law².

Similar regulations apply to many countries, including the UK, Canada, Australia, and Germany. There is also an EU Directive on Privacy that applies to all members of the EU that states that you must have prior explicit consent before sending any commercial email, an opt-out or unsubscribe option must be easy and clear for recipients of commercial messages, and you must be in compliance with each country's additional rules³.

If you are unfamiliar with the specific regulations in your country, please consult with the local agency that may be charged with this task or with an attorney to be sure that you are in compliance before you launch an email or text drip campaign.

WHAT'S THE IDEAL FREQUENCY?

- More is not more
- Aim for selective eblasts that are educational and interesting
- Make sure every eblast adds value for the recipients
 - If you have the bandwidth, informative monthly eblasts are a good cadence
- Some practices opt for longer eblasts every other month or quarterly, with shorter messages in between as needed
- Selective short eblasts with a single message may be helpful for timely info
- Avoid bombarding patients with white noise—they get enough of that already!

Marketing automation

When they are well thought out and flawlessly activated, email drip campaigns can drive repeat treatments, increase client retention, and stimulate more skincare sales and packages. By carefully automating the process, you can make sure that the goals for your practice or medspa will align with your customers' behaviour patterns.

According to Ran Berkman, President of Webtools, a global digital marketing agency, 'More of our practices and medspa clients are interested in drip campaigns. This tactic can create marketing automations that deliver results with the right planning.'

He continues, 'We often use tools like Klaviyo to set up a combination of text and email messages that are being sent based on a logic we develop. For example, when a potential patient who has been to their website, left their contact information, and inquired about a specific procedure but has not booked an appointment, we will add them to a drip campaign. These campaigns typically include videos, before and after photos, relevant webinars, and special promotions to maximise the return on their investment that was already spent on obtaining those leads. This strategy has been very effective to keep those customers interested in what our clients offer.'

Staying connected

Theda Kontis, MD, F.A.C.S., President of the American Academy of Facial, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, uses email marketing to keep in touch with her current patients. 'We also use this method to keep them informed about our practice and when we are looking for patients to be clinical trial subjects,' she says. Their platform of choice is Weave.

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'We use Weave for appointment confirmation, patient communication, and for patients to send photos with clinical concerns, especially if they can't make it into the office to be checked, as in post-op patients with concerns, those with possible reactions to a procedure, or who have questions about whether something is a normal consequence after surgery, for example. We also use this platform for nurses to communicate directly with patients,' she explains. 'It's fast and patients love using it.'

'Text messaging has had high patient satisfaction in our practice. It is very convenient for patients, and they can receive quick replies. My only concern at the outset was the patients may try to use this method in an emergency and we do not monitor it 24/7. However, this has not been a problem to date.'



WENDY LEWIS is President of Wendy Lewis & Co Ltd, Global Aesthetics Consultancy, a marketing communications group in New York. An award-winning writer, her textbook, *Aesthetic Clinic Marketing in the Digital Age*. (CRC Press) will have a second edition in 2022. She is a frequent presenter at virtual and live conferences worldwide.

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re-engage
right time
eblasts
welcome email
tailored promotions
drip
marketing
right look
right feel
right customers
consumer behaviour patterns
text messaging
automated workflows

▷ 'Adding Weave has been an excellent decision for our practice. They installed a new phone system, and their software integrated well with our EMR, Nextech. On the Weave app, I can access my schedule as well as demographics for all patients in the practice. I can also call or text patients from my phone using Caller ID that only shows the office phone number.'

Educate first, promote second

With all marketing campaigns, the more personalised the messaging and graphics are, the higher the engagement is likely to be. Targeted drip campaigns can generate customer engagement by providing an easy and consistent flow of communication from your practice.

Bonnie Marting, A.R.N.P., of Anushka Spa in West Palm Beach, FL, has seen an uptick in their medical aesthetic clients from their eblast campaigns. 'We have been very successful with drip campaigns to introduce special offers

to our clients year-round. We keep the copy short and sincere, and make sure that it provides some value to the recipients. We like to start with content that is educational, timely and interesting so we are teaching them something before we present specials, new treatments and product highlights.'

She continues, 'How-to videos and before and after photos of real patients have been great additions to increase our open rates because they serve as examples of what we offer. In my experience, patients relate best to images of others who resemble them in terms of age, skin type, and the conditions they are concerned about. This strategy has been working well for us to avoid clients dropping off. They are hungry for information and curious about what is the latest and greatest. Through this tailored programme, clients have come to expect that they will learn something of interest from each Anushka Spa email that turns up on their phones,' she adds.

Sending emails at consistent intervals can be an effective strategy to keep your brand top of mind. These are also a vehicle to gently remind current patients to

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refer your practice to their friends and family who may be looking for the aesthetic services you offer. It makes more potential customers aware of your practice and, thus, increases your reach.

There may be some patients who are interested in coming in for a treatment or service but need more information and nurturing to take the plunge. A targeted campaign may trigger a potential customer to spend ▷

INS & OUTS OF TEXT MESSAGING TO AVOID GETTING BLOCKED

- Nail the subject line to catch the reader's attention for them to want to read more
- Every word and image counts—you're competing with a steady stream of messages in consumer's inboxes
- To get more eyes on your content, keep it short, sweet, and upbeat—like a teaser
- Whenever possible, starting with the person's name is a plus
- Remember to include contact information to get a response
- Don't bombard your list despite them having

- opted in; start at a reasonable interval and keep the messages relevant to specific recipients
- Start with monthly messaging to bi-weekly; weekly may be risky and cause opt-outs
- Auto-correct is NOT your friend; double check to avoid sending weirdly distorted texts
- It's hard to convey emotions and humour via texts, so avoid phrasing that could be misinterpreted
- Never use all caps—it may come across like

- YOU'RE MAD OR SCREAMING!**
- Succinct messages are easier to read, understand, and reply to
 - Avoid emojis and abbreviations that may be conveyed as unprofessional or not serious
 - You can add GIFs, hyperlinks, images, or PDFs to text messages, depending on the intended audience
 - Ideally your list should be segmented so you are sending the right messages to the right people at the right time—make it your #1 goal

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10 WAYS TO IMPLEMENT DRIP MARKETING STRATEGIES

1 Fill open appointment slots via automated marketing messages to promote last-minute openings on your social media channels

2 Send 'welcome' emails or texts to introduce every new subscriber to what you have to offer. Welcome emails give a personal touch to your business and let customers know what to expect from your emails

3 Offer new subscribers a one-time code they can apply to first-time services or products to incentivise them to join

4 Utilise 'onboarding' emails to share a deeper introduction to your practice or medspa, the medical team, specialty treatments, and signature packages or bundles featured

5 For subscribers who have not responded to previous campaigns, try to renew their interest by re-targeting them with a campaign to drive engagement. For example, use a subject line like 'We miss you!' or 'We want you back' or 'Where have you gone?'

6 For example, add some patient photos or a video of your practice, or

recycle snippets from a consumer-focused webinar. Most people need to see an offer several times before they make a purchasing decision

7 Introduce your most popular content from blogs, newsletters, before and after photos, or videos of a hot new treatment. Allow recipients to ask questions directly from the platform they are reading it from through a live link

8 Shopping cart abandonment, when a visitor adds a product or treatment to their shopping cart and then leaves the site without completing the purchase, lends

itself well to drip campaigns. Automate an email or text to the visitor to re-engage their interest in the items they were looking at

9 Try building your client list by targeting new visitors to your website who have not signed up and ask them to opt-in to receive news from your practice

10 Boost client engagement by making it personal. Your clients will feel that you are speaking directly to them and understand their interests so they will be more likely to read your content and then hopefully take action.

▷ more time on your website and social channels to get the additional information they may need to make the decision to move forward.

According to plastic surgeon Adam J Rubinstein, M.D, F.A.C.S. in Aventura, FL, 'Keeping in touch with your existing patient base is an often-neglected marketing strategy. They are already part of your family, so they are interested and motivated. Most of them have had services so they also tend to be loyal. There is no better group to send information about your practice because they already know you.'

He continues, 'Drip campaigns are a great way to get touch points without being perceived as overbearing. I like to send emails once or twice a month. The most effective cadence is to reach out at reasonable intervals to avoid being bothersome. We frequently use this method to share interesting news about the practice or present new technology or treatments. We also send our current patients good wishes for holidays.'

Purchasing funnel

There are countless benefits to utilising drip campaigns to increase brand awareness, engage with new patients and re-engage with previous patients. Along the way, you have the opportunity to gather data on what they are interested in, how they want to be contacted, how frequently, and in what forms. For example, Gen Y patients may prefer to use their phones for text messages and appointment scheduling, whereas more mature patients may prefer emails or speaking to a live person rather than a chatbot.

The key to successful campaigns is to make sure your

“One of the most significant benefits of a well-designed drip campaign is the potential to move patients through the purchasing funnel.”

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2. CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business. Federal Trade Commission, September 2009. Available at: <https://www.ftc.gov/business-guidance/resources/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business> [last accessed 9th November 2022]
3. Data protection in the EU. European Commission website, May 2016. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection/data-protection-eu_en [last accessed 9th November 2022]

list is constantly updated. One way to do this is for the staff member who checks each patient in to confirm their address, cell phone number, and email. If your patients are scheduling their appointments online, you may be able to implement a way to confirm this information at that time in your system.

One of the most significant benefits of a well-designed drip campaign is the potential to move patients through the purchasing funnel. Campaigns can be set up in advance to be released on a specified date and time so there is minimal staff time required.

Don't get discouraged if your campaigns are not delivering results quickly enough or you are getting too many opt-outs. Analyse what may need improvements or adjustments in terms of messages, images, format, length, frequency, and call to action. Get advice from your marketing team to make it work for your practice. You may try again after improvements have been made at a reasonable interval until you achieve more satisfactory results.

Each market and facility is unique and may need a different programme to meet its needs. Make sure you are choosing the best vehicle, format, verbiage, tone, and frequency that will deliver success for your practice. Try to avoid irritating your bread-and-butter patients with frequent emails that are neither clever nor helpful.

As Dr. Rubinstein explains, 'Don't try to sell because it is not necessary. Staying in touch with your patients is the primary goal. They will come back when they are ready.'



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