

By Tom Nelson, MBA

RETAIL STRATEGIES

Build Ongoing Relationships with Existing Clients



EXISTING CLIENTS ARE THE BACKBONE OF YOUR PRACTICE. No doubt your file room is filled with records of patients that you know intimately, many of them for years. You likely have developed many strong relationships and shared personal details of the most important events of your patients' lives. In fact, by helping them to hear the details they might have otherwise missed, you have helped many of them to participate in these events more fully. That is a powerful connection.

But how well do you know all of your patients? When you look at your files can you be sure that all still are your patients? What percent have moved? What percent have started seeing someone else? What are you doing to maintain contact with your patients and to see them on a regular basis?

As patients move from being new to long-term users of amplification, they realize that they need to develop a long-term relationship with you, similar to the relationship that they might have with their primary care physician.

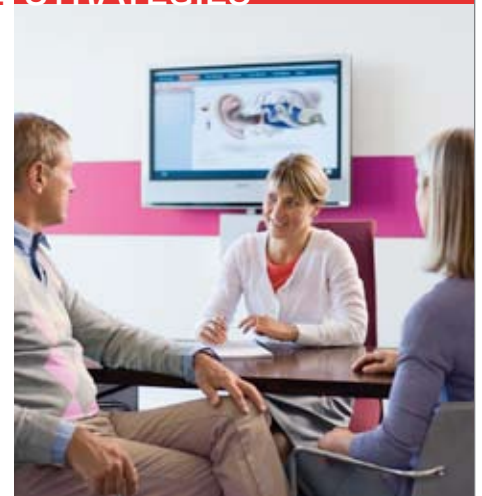
Initially, as new users, patients are looking for a transformation from a confusing world, where sounds are muffled or distorted, to a world of better hearing. As existing users, they recognize they are on a life-long journey with their hearing loss and their hearing instruments. They may have experienced the highs of good technology and fittings as well as the lows of hearing instruments that may not have lived up to their expectations. They know that their hearing is changing over time and they are aware that hearing instrument technology continues to evolve. The ongoing advances in processing technology enable you to provide updated hearing instruments that do more to help your patients.

Existing patients can benefit from more technical discussions than can new users. Typically, existing users already understand the technical features of their hearing devices. They know how the various features help them in different situations and the differences between feature sets. For both new and existing clients, however, a customized listening experience remains a powerful tool to demonstrate how new or enhanced

features can improve their unique listening experience.

Existing patients are eager to learn about the latest developments in hearing care and hearing instrument technology. They want to know that you offer the latest products with the most up-to-date innovative designs. This reassures them that you are staying on top of the latest advances and prevents them from seeking an alternative provider when they feel it is time to investigate a new hearing solution.

You can address concerns existing patients might have by continuing to reach out to them with information about the latest advances in the field and updates on hearing care and technology. Many existing users may be concerned about continued changes in their hearing loss and worriedly asking themselves, "Will it get worse?" Take the opportunity to explain that a routine evaluation may be able to quickly identify a



problem before it becomes worse. Remind them that their hearing instruments can be adjusted and cleaned to ensure that they are performing at their best. If you are not communicating with your patients on an ongoing basis, these opportunities to connect and strengthen your relationship with them may be lost.

If you are reluctant to start an ongoing communications campaign to existing users,



Retail Strategies, offering ideas for selling hearing aids, also is featured on the *ADVANCE* website, where readers can find an online archive at www.advanceweb.com/HearingRetailStrategies.

especially to users that are newly fit with an instrument, you can set the expectation up front. Let patients know that it is part of your practice and commitment to them to send news and information that might be of value to them. This is a great way to collect email addresses and confirm mailing addresses. Let patients know that they should expect to hear from you, be invited to educational seminars or asked to come in for follow-up adjustments and cleanings. It is with this type of ongoing communication that you can help to ensure that your patients return to you for all their hearing care needs. **hpm**

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