

# Marketing Do's and Don'ts "The Banana Lessons"

By Tracy L. Drumm

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To me, the banana is a perfect fruit. In addition to being rich in Vitamin C, B6 and potassium, it is convenient for the breakfast on-the-go or quick afternoon snack. What do bananas have to do with marketing?

Like many of you, I am a solutions-oriented person. If there is a problem, I seek to fix it as quickly as possible. After working alongside physicians for nearly a decade, I strive to be efficient in all areas of my life. Even when it comes to eating. As I frequently travel from one meeting to the next, I often grab a banana for the road and toss it into my bag.

After throwing away what must have been my hundredth banana due to fatal bruising, I sought the help of Google to end my banana woes. What did I find on my quest for an easy, quick and inexpensive solution? Appearing at the top of my online search was a protective, plastic banana-shaped case ensured to protect the fruit from being crushed, bruised, or damaged. Bright yellow, shiny, and under \$10, this was sure to be the turnkey answer I was seeking.

My package arrived around one week later and I opened it with great anticipation. I grabbed the partially bruised banana from my purse and attempted to use my new "template" answer. I quickly learned the shortcomings of my purchase, as my banana was nearly twice the size of the case. To date, I have tried nearly 20 bananas and not a single one has ever fit into the so-called "banana-shaped" case.



The lesson Mother Nature and this \$10 experiment taught me was invaluable and particularly relevant for promotion within the aesthetic world: Marketing, like bananas, can't rely on a "one-size fits all" solution.

There is not a single master plan that can ensure total success for every practice. A promotion or idea that warrants a substantial return in one market, might fail miserably in a neighboring community. Every idea, marketing tool, or promotional effort has to be the right fit for you, your staff, and -- most important -- for your patients.

Efforts should all align with your brand, reflecting the needs of your individual market. In life, cookie-cutter answers alone seldom provide optimal results. Fortunately, like Mother Nature, marketing does offer universal guidelines to help you thrive.

**DON'T** continue marketing efforts just because you did them last year. The definition of insanity is repeating the same action over and over expecting different results.

**DO** evaluate last year's patient referral sources, even if it is performed manually with a spreadsheet. Practices are often surprised when they quantify where patients are or are not coming from.

**DON'T** look desperate by over discounting your services. You may have a difficult time getting patients to pay full price again.

**DO** offer value ads with your treatments and ensure your promotions remain consistent with your brand. If, for example, you are trying to create a high-end image, advertising discount coupons in the local paper will contradict these efforts.

**DON'T** fish before you farm. Rather than fishing for new patients; invest in, cultivate, and grow relationships with your current ones. It can be six to seven times more expensive to gain a new patient than it is to retain one.

**DO** track your retention rate. Find out how many patients are returning for repeat filler appointments. Invest time into auditing your database and identify patients who may have been enticed elsewhere through an attractive offer. Expend your marketing dollars and resources trying to reach this qualified group before attempting to reach a new population.

**DON'T** expect one promotion or effort to double your database. Marketing won't get you busy overnight any more than a night cream will provide you facelift-like results.

**DO** think of each marketing effort as an investment towards gaining a new patient. Developing a plan consisting of multiple efforts taking place simultaneously or sequentially is the most effective way to penetrate a new market and keep your current patients coming back.

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