

# PHYSICIANS PRACTICE<sup>®</sup>

When **Less**  
is **More**

The benefits of streamlining  
for busy practices





# When Less is More

## The benefits of streamlining for busy practices

By Neil Baum, M.D.

This blog was motivated by the book “Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less” by

Leidy Klotz, a professor of architecture at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. His book shares that we can enhance what we do by subtracting rather than adding tasks and activities. I am like most physicians, as we are creatures of habit. We keep collecting and adding more to our practice. Still, we need to discard or subtract outdated methods no longer applicable to providing patient care. It took a long time to convert paper charts into electronic medical records. We add new

and improved ideas but don't prune the outdated ones. Unfortunately, we are wired to add before taking away. The book provides examples of how subtraction can benefit the practice of medicine.

Two examples of subtraction described in the book are Strider Bikes and H-blocks.

Strider Bikes were created by removing or subtracting the pedals of bikes that are used to train toddlers to ride two-wheel bikes. With a Strider Bike, the child learns balance and can go directly to a pedal bike without the necessity of transitioning to training wheels. Strider Bikes have been used by more than 3 million toddlers.



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office for follow-up? I discovered it was good medicine to instruct patients to change their dressing, safely remove a catheter and take their medications. This eliminated what was considered the standard post-op visit, thus making more time for new patients and spending more

can be removed from the office to allow more space for patient care.

**7.** Cross-training employees to perform multiple roles improves flexibility and coverage during staffing shortages and eliminates the need to hire temporary help.

**8.** You can eliminate the need for data entry and typing by having a scribe in the examination room. You can take this to the next level and even subtract the need for a scribe by using some of the newer voice-to-text software programs.

**9.** Prior authorization is an addition to our abundance of paperwork that can be subtracted by using artificial intelligence to write the insurance company for permission to complete prior authorizations.

**10.** If you want to get lean and mean, consider becoming a concierge doctor. This will eliminate paperwork and the need to interact with insurance companies and improve your cash flow. If you want to spend more time with patients, then consider becoming a concierge doctor.

### Bottom line

Every practice has “excess fat” that can be subtracted. Subtracting results in a more efficient practice, increased production and improved morale. It may decrease the epidemic burnout rate of physicians.

If you have any suggestions for subtracting in your practice, please let me hear from you at [doctorwhiz@gmail.com](mailto:doctorwhiz@gmail.com).

**Neil Baum** is a physician in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the author of “*The Business of Building and Managing a Healthcare Practice*,” published by Springer in 2023.

## “Subtracting the center of the block or creating an H-block did not impair its strength.”

Solid cinder blocks used in construction are heavy, require more material, are difficult to transport and require more musculoskeletal exertion to use. Subtracting the center of the block or creating an H-block did not impair its strength. The H-block was not as heavy, made better insulation, was easier to transport, was less expensive and decreased back pain from workers lifting the heavier solid blocks.

### 10 subtraction examples in health care

- 1.** I have written articles and papers and used the classic book “The Elements of Style” by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White for help with grammar and punctuation. The authors point out that one of the tenets of good writing is keeping only the necessary words and subtracting words that do not help transmit the message. Now I use Grammarly, which helps remove excessive verbiage.
- 2.** Do we need to see every patient who undergoes surgery in the

time with existing patients.

**3.** The COVID-19 pandemic made it possible to care for patients without the necessity of them coming to our brick-and-mortar offices. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services facilitated this transition to [virtual health care](#) by agreeing to compensate physicians for in-office visits. As a result, we learned that we could provide good care without physically having a patient in the office. Thus, we subtracted the office visits and became more efficient and productive.

**4.** [Outsourcing billing](#): Consider subtracting noncore functions such as billing, which can accomplish tasks more cost-effectively.

**5.** By providing online scheduling, you can reduce the responsibility of the receptionist or scheduler. Gen Xers and millennials prefer this method of requesting an appointment.

**6.** Unused or outdated equipment: Old or obsolete medical equipment that is no longer used or has been replaced by newer models

# Prescribing resilience: Attracting cybersecurity talent to health care

Medical practices can employ these strategies to attract, retain and develop cybersecurity talent, ensuring ongoing protection against cyberthreats.

By David Lee

Navigating the digital age in health care is like walking a tightrope. Although advancements in technology significantly improve patient care and streamline operations, they also open the door to sophisticated cyberthreats. The need for robust cybersecurity measures has never been more critical, yet the sector grapples with a severe shortage of qualified cybersecurity professionals. This article explores strategies medical practices can employ to attract, retain and develop cybersecurity talent, ensuring ongoing protection against cyberthreats. Additionally, we delve into the pivotal role of employee training and awareness in mitigating these risks.

## The current landscape of cybersecurity in health care

The health care sector is a prime target for cybercriminals due to the vast amounts of sensitive patient data it holds. Recent years have seen a troubling increase in cyberattacks on medical practices, with breaches causing significant financial and reputational damage. From ransomware attacks that cripple entire hospital networks to data breaches exposing millions of patient records, the sophistication and frequency of these threats are escalating.



## The talent shortage crisis

Despite the pressing need for robust cybersecurity measures, the health care sector faces a dire shortage of qualified cybersecurity professionals. This talent gap hampers the ability to protect sensitive patient data effectively. According to industry reports, the demand for cybersecurity experts far outstrips supply, particularly within the health care industry. This shortage not only compromises data security but also puts patient safety at risk.

## Strategies for attracting and retaining cybersecurity talent

### Competitive compensation packages

One of the foremost strategies to attract cybersecurity talent is offering competitive compensation packages. Given the high demand for these professionals across various industries, health care organizations must ensure their salary offerings are on par with or exceed industry standards. Additionally,

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comprehensive benefits packages that include health insurance, retirement plans and bonuses can make a significant difference in attracting top-tier talent.

### Professional development opportunities

Continuous learning and professional growth are crucial for retaining cybersecurity talent. Providing opportunities for further education, certifications and training can help professionals stay ahead of emerging threats and technologies. Health care organizations should invest in development programs that encourage skill enhancement and career progression.

### Flexible work arrangements

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of flexible work arrangements. Offering remote work options and flexible schedules can be a compelling incentive for cybersecurity professionals. This flexibility not only enhances job satisfaction but also broadens the talent pool by removing geographical constraints.

### The role of employee training and awareness

#### Creating a culture of security

Although hiring qualified cybersecurity professionals is essential, creating a culture of security within the organization is equally important. Employee training and awareness programs are critical components of this culture. All staff members, from administrative personnel to clinical practitioners, should be educated about common cyberthreats, safe online practices and the importance of data protection.

#### Regular training sessions

Implementing regular training sessions can keep employees updated on the latest cybersecurity trends

and best practices. These sessions should cover topics such as phishing attacks, password management and secure handling of patient data. Simulated cyberattack exercises can also help employees recognize and respond to potential threats effectively.

#### Upskilling existing staff

Given the talent shortage, upskilling existing health care staff to handle cybersecurity responsibilities can be an effective strategy. Programs that offer cross-training in cybersecurity for information technology staff or other related roles can help build a well-rounded defense team. Encouraging certifications such as Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) or Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH) can enhance the organization's cybersecurity posture.

The shortage of qualified cybersecurity professionals in the health care sector is a pressing issue that demands immediate attention. By offering competitive compensation, professional development opportunities and flexible work arrangements, medical practices can attract and retain top talent. Additionally, fostering a culture of security through employee training and awareness is crucial in mitigating cybersecurity risks. Through strategic initiatives and continuous learning, health care organizations can build a resilient defense against cyberthreats, ensuring the protection of sensitive patient data and maintaining trust in their services. In an era where cyberthreats are constantly evolving, the health care sector must remain vigilant and proactive in its cybersecurity efforts. By prioritizing talent acquisition and development alongside

comprehensive training programs, medical practices can safeguard their operations and continue delivering high-quality patient care.

**David Lee** transitioned from a software engineering background to become a harbinger of change and inclusivity in the world of technology. With over two decades of experience, he has left his mark on government agencies, Fortune 500 companies and numerous fields, specializing in identity and access management. When he speaks, people listen. He is The Identity Jedi. [www.theidentityjedi.com](http://www.theidentityjedi.com)

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# 5 do-it-yourself marketing strategies for time-pressed medical professionals

With search engines and artificial intelligence tools, it may be incredibly easy to search for “how” to do something, but it’s often the “why,” “where” and “when” that elude us when first starting a new discipline.

By **Tom Testa**

**M**edical practices are undeniably busy places. Physicians have incredibly limited time, and administrative staff often juggle multiple roles. Despite this, attracting new patients, enhancing the experience for current patients and improving brand perception are more crucial than ever. [Effective marketing](#) is essential for any business, and medical practices are no exception.

However, many medical practice owners and administrators are reluctant to manage marketing campaigns on their own due to

time constraints or lack of familiarity with promotional strategies. The familiar phrase “You don’t know what you don’t know” rings especially true here, as it’s often impossible to know where to start with marketing or public relations if you are a novice. With search engines and artificial intelligence tools, it may be incredibly easy to search for “how” to do something, but it’s often the “why,” “where” and “when” that elude us when first starting a new discipline.

That’s where do-it-yourself (DIY) medical marketing platforms come in. Rather than investing in an experienced, in-house marketing team or partnering

with an external public relations or advertising agency, a medical practice should consider leveraging a DIY platform to think like a marketer and take those crucial first steps.

## **Finding time for marketing**

The common refrain “But who has time for marketing?” is often heard. The reality is that if you can find a few minutes to check your personal social media or read up on the latest sports news, you can find the time to enhance your medical practice’s growth, financial stability and reputation. Using step-by-step blueprints from a DIY marketing tool, you and

your team can attract new patients, engage better with existing ones and elevate your practice.

### 5 practical tips to integrate marketing into your work flow

#### 1. Distribute tasks

Share marketing responsibilities among staff members to ensure that no single person is overwhelmed. This helps maintain continuous marketing efforts even during busy times. By dividing tasks such as social media updates, email newsletters and review responses, you can ensure a steady flow of marketing activities without overburdening any one team member.

#### 2. Optimize short breaks

Use a 15-minute coffee break to craft a media pitch, respond to reviews, post on social media or send out an email blast about your new referral program. Consistent small efforts can lead to significant results over time. These short, focused bursts of activity can make a big difference in maintaining an active and engaging online presence.

#### 3. Expand job roles

Incorporate search engine marketing and reputation management into the job descriptions of front desk staff. This ensures these essential marketing activities become part of daily operations. Training your administrative team in basic marketing tasks can turn routine interactions into opportunities for promoting your practice and managing its online reputation.

#### 4. Leverage patient feedback

Implement new methods to secure patient reviews and referrals. For example, provide links or QR codes on appointment cards to make it easy for patients to leave reviews. Encouraging satisfied patients to

share their positive experiences can significantly enhance your practice's online reputation and attract new patients through word-of-mouth referrals.

#### 5. Enlist help

Get family members or friends involved for a few hours on weekends. Their fresh perspective can bring new ideas to your marketing efforts. Whether it's brainstorming new content ideas or helping with social media posts, having additional hands can lighten the load and introduce creative approaches to your marketing strategy.

### Getting started with DIY marketing

The DIY approach to medical marketing is not only feasible but also highly beneficial. By leveraging the right platform, medical practices can access expert guidance and tools, enabling them to take control of their marketing, enhance their visibility, engage more effectively with patients, and ultimately drive growth and success. With a bit of planning and the right resources, even the busiest practices can make time for marketing and reap the rewards of their efforts.

Effective marketing doesn't have to be overwhelming or expensive. By adopting DIY strategies and using the talents within your team, your practice can achieve significant marketing success without straining your resources. The right tools and a proactive mindset can turn marketing from a daunting task into a manageable and rewarding part of your practice's growth strategy.

**Tom Testa** is co-founder of *Owned Reputation*, a consulting firm that delivers do-it-yourself promotional tools, resources and guidance for those who are not experts in marketing communications.

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