



The good ‘well’ ambassador

The best marketing vehicle of your in-store health clinic is the practitioner inside it.

By Michael Rubenstein

“I didn’t know there was a clinic here, and I’m here all the time!” I hear this all too often from supermarket shoppers who—after having caught a glimpse of a nurse practitioner walking around in a white lab coat—finally realize that their favorite grocery store also features a convenient care center.

This might be understandable at stores with newly installed clinics. But unfortunately, I’m referring to supermarkets that have had such clinics for more than six months. Of course, clinic operators or store managers hearing of such customer reactions for the first time are often shocked to discover that, even after they’d orchestrated a large and costly marketing campaign, it takes a casual encounter with a nurse to alert shoppers to the presence of a clinic.

However, this also drives home an important point: Retailers and clinic operators alike have in their midst a powerful and credible marketing agent in the nurse practitioner. Indeed, in an environment that attempts to build rapport, with an emphasis on health-and-wellness initiatives, the nurse practitioner or physician’s assistant (collectively referred to as health care practitioners) can be among a grocer’s greatest resources.

But just having a health care practitioner present isn’t enough, especially if he or she uses

downtime to catch up on mystery novel reading or gab on the phone.

To best leverage their knowledge and skill, operators have to train them appropriately on how to function productively in the retail environment. Most health care practitioners pick up their work practices in a physician’s office, hospital setting, or similar nonretail environment. Because of this, they’re not typically trained in the importance of, and techniques for, engaging with shoppers in a grocery store. Yet this ability is an essential quality retailers should look for among the health care practitioners who will work in their clinics.

Convenient care clinics are meant to be destinations for acute care visits. But they can also be destinations for the latest and greatest information about health and wellness.

For example, if there’s downtime in between patients, the clinic’s health practitioner can walk up

and down the OTC aisle (wearing that white lab coat) and assist shoppers with their selections, perhaps engaging some on-the-spot consulting.

Clinic health practitioners can also play a role in the food departments, such as explaining the benefits of organic items to shoppers in the center store, or explaining how the properties in spinach

can improve eyesight and help assist with the prevention of age-related macular degeneration to customers in produce.

They can even schedule nutritional tours within select food aisles around

the store. To give them focus, such tours can be based on chronic conditions such as diabetes, high cholesterol, or high blood pressure.

In these instances, the clinic’s health care practitioner can simultaneously educate consumers and introduce them to the clinic.

So while traditional marketing may help promote an in-store clinic, there’s no substitute for a charismatic, creative, forward-thinking, and energetic health care practitioner with excellent people skills who can become a trusted adviser for your store and customers.



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