

Prepare Your Medical Practice for the Holiday Season



The holiday season is upon us and there are a few things you should coordinate to prepare your medical practice holiday schedule and ensure you end the year on a high note.

This time of year tends to be busy, and your team and patients may be celebrating Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas or even a memorable New Year's Eve. It's important to be prepared in advance so that you remember to celebrate the practice's achievements over the year, mark important milestones, and get you and your team ready for a well-deserved break. Get started now so those last few weeks aren't any more overwhelming than they need to be!

Here are some tips to keep in mind to ensure that the end of the year doesn't sneak up on you:

Create a Holiday Policy for Your Practice

There's no quicker way to put a damper over the holiday season than a lack of planning and communication. If you make space to think ahead and put a holiday policy in place for the practice ahead of time, you can boost morale and end the year on a high, rather than with simmering feelings of frustration and resentment among your team.

The holiday policy should cover:

- Which holidays the practice will close for – This should be based on the makeup of your client base, your preferences and those of your employees. There should also be an explanation for why those holidays have been chosen and if accommodation can be made for employees whose religious or cultural holidays are not observed.
- Any changes to holiday pay policies – This includes the pay employees will receive if they work on a holiday like double time and time off on another day.
- What happens when holidays fall on a non-workday – Will the practice close the day before or after, or will holidays not be observed if they fall on a weekend?
- Whether the practice will close early before a holiday – Many practices choose to close at midday the day before so that staff can enjoy an afternoon off.
- How additional leave requests will be handled – Employees may want to take off additional days around observed holidays, so it's essential to address how leave requests will be addressed and how many staff can be off at any one time.

This policy can be used as a guide year-round, so plan to review the policy at the beginning of each year and send out a calendar of the holiday dates to your staff.

Decide on (and communicate!) Your Opening Hours

As December rolls around, your team may want to take leave to spend time with their families. Meet with your employees to coordinate who is taking leave and when, and schedule accordingly. Then, decide on your office hours for the period, factoring in your staff's availability.

When you have a clear idea of your holiday hours, you need to let your patients know. Communicating holiday hours to your patients should be a top priority of the season! Inform them in advance of holiday hours and provide a protocol for medical emergencies.

Share the Love with Your Community

The end of the year is a great time to give back to your community, as well as showing appreciation for your staff and patients. It's an opportunity to dive headfirst into the spirit of giving, spread some much-needed holiday cheer and market your practice at the same time.

This could be a volunteer outing for your team at a non-profit organization in the area, a toy or food drive that you host at the practice or even free educational sessions for the community. As a skilled health professional, you can share your expertise either via a webinar or through an interview with your local radio station and, at the same time, spread awareness about your medical practice.

Plan a Celebration

With the practicalities out of the way, it's time to put some fun back into the festive season. A celebration helps to end the year on a high, so don't forget to plan your team's end-of-year function. It's a fantastic opportunity to highlight the individuals who make up your team and thank them for their contributions. It's been a long year, and you've accomplished so much, it's important to mark these achievements with a celebration.

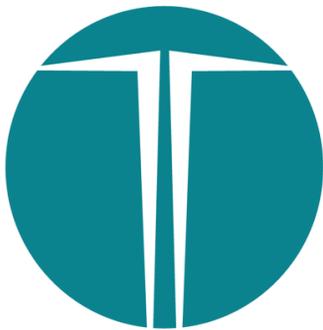
Bring Some Holiday Cheer to the Practice

Don't forget to bring the holiday season to your practice and really get creative. Getting into the holiday spirit doesn't need to cost a lot of money, and your whole team can get involved in the fun.

Some office celebration ideas include:

- Add decorations to the reception area, waiting room and even your exam rooms. Get the whole team involved with arranging the displays.
- Prepare a small gift for your clients – something to make them smile. This might mean a healthy snack, a decoration they can use in their own celebrations, or a seedling to give away as a thank-you for their support.

Finally enjoy the time with loved ones and reflect on the past year and look forward to a successful year ahead!



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