

20 WAYS to Get New Patients to Choose You

By William Esteb

PerfectPatients
New Patient Website Service

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Welcome!

Chances are you became a chiropractor so you could help people. And while it's called a practice, it's actually a small business. In it, you face one of the most vexing challenges facing all small businesses: getting customers.

Granted, we call them patients, but the principles are largely the same.

The burden of new patient acquisition wasn't part of the curriculum at chiropractic college. Your education was in the health sciences!

What follows is an exploration of one of the most rudimentary marketing principles: ***differentiating your practice***. In other words, how to meaningfully distinguish your practice from others in your area. These days, that starts with your online reputation and identity on Google—because that's where the new patients are.

So, put on your marketing hat for just a moment and let's explore how to separate yourself from other chiropractors in your drawing area and get more new patients to choose you.



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1

What Computer Is on Your Desktop?

No marketing book would be complete without at least one example demonstrating the marketing prowess of Apple. That's because the Apple brand has been given considerable thought and for many years now, their execution has been consistently flawless.

Consider these words from Steve Jobs back in 1997, soon after his return to Apple, and the presentation he made to his team when introducing the "Crazy Ones" marketing campaign:

“Our customers want to know who is Apple and what is it that we stand for. Where do we fit in this world? What we're about isn't making boxes for people to get their jobs done. Although we do that well. We do that better than almost anybody, in some cases.

“But Apple is about something more than that. Apple at the core, its core value is that we believe that people with passion can change the world for the better. That's what we believe. And that those people who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world are the ones that actually do.”



Watch the entire talk [here](#).

That manifesto turned around a struggling company that was on the ropes and up against the Goliath of Microsoft. And a key part of that transformation was identifying the customers who Apple wanted to attract: those who were the crazies, the misfits and those willing to think differently.

While chiropractic is different from the prevailing medical model, I'm not proposing that you copy Apple. Instead, your mission is to determine what it is that separates you from your competitors in a patient-relevant way. (More about patient relevancy in a moment.)



*This is the drum that Simon Sinek has been beating since publishing **Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action.***

If you haven't read it yet, you absolutely must. By doing so, you will be convinced of the fact that these days, when feature for feature is easily matched by most providers, customers (patients) want to know why you're in practice (business). Is it about the money? The insurance coverage? The glory of saving patients from pain?

Or something else?

It's that something else that we need to discover about you and your practice!



2

Your USP: Unique Selling Proposition


Avoid becoming a commodity at all cost.

As in, an adjustment is an adjustment is an adjustment. Once there is little or nothing separating you from others offering a similar service, it all becomes about price, with the lowest price often taking the lion's share of the business.



Let's say you need to buy tons of copper (a commodity) for the manufacturing of your gizmo. Copper is copper, right? Right.

So, do you want to buy your copper at \$5500 per ton or \$5400 per ton.

*When you provide a commodity, it's a race to the bottom—
the lowest price and the lowest profit.* 

Even the developer of chiropractic, B. J. Palmer, observed that you want to give the adjustment “with the extra special something.”

Don't panic. You have one. You probably just can't see it or recognize it.

This special something becomes what marketers refer to as your Unique Selling Proposition, or USP for short. In other words, what is it that makes you different, better or more advantageous to the buyer (patient)?

Neglect this essential component and you'll be drawn into a race to the bottom where everyone loses.

 *Your mission is to stand out. Zig when everyone else is zagging. For many chiropractors, this is where it might feel a little scary.*

3

Are You a Beige Chiropractor?

Instead of standing out, many chiropractors retreat to beige.

This is shorthand for fitting in, being obscure and avoiding standing out or being noticed. ☆

Beige is the color of file cabinets, desktops, office walls and the like. Beige is where you go when the threat of judgment or criticism becomes too great. It's making sure you're not the most expensive or the least expensive chiropractor in town. It's keeping your head down, biting your tongue, avoiding making waves and generally swimming with the current.



Whatever the reason, retreating into the background and going beige wreak havoc on attempts to grow your practice and attract your unique “tribe” of ideal patients. Ultimately, this is about your relationship with risk. Turns out, going beige is far riskier than standing for something.

There are some key issues at work here that need to be jettisoned if you're to enjoy the success you deserve:

1. The Fear of Showing Up Authentic

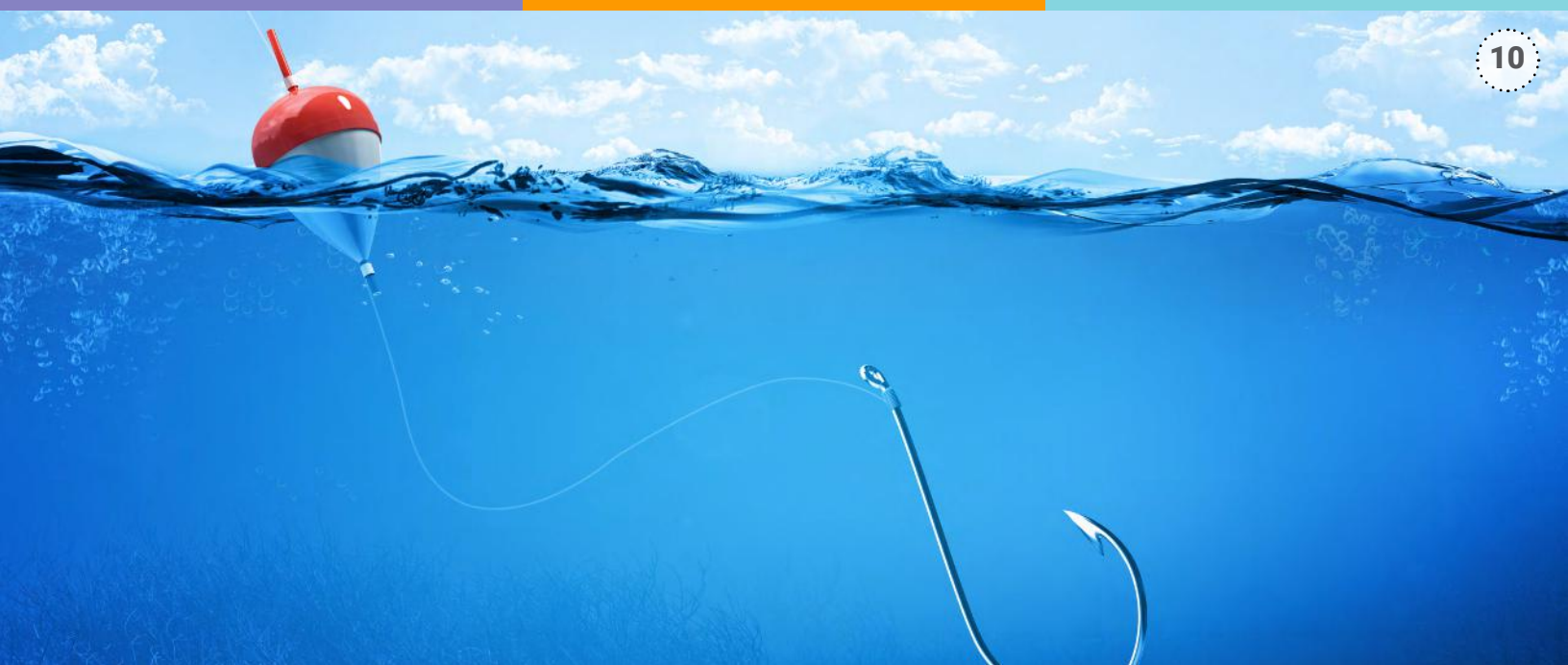
A common wrongheaded belief is that there is an optimal way of presenting oneself that will produce the maximum number of new patients. This objectifies patients (a patient is a patient) in the same way that showing up in some generic, chameleon-like fashion objectifies the practitioner—as if all chiropractors were the same!

★ *At its core, this belief is based on the all too common lie that “if I showed up as myself, no one would like me.”*

This reminds me of my 10-year high school reunion. The posing, posturing and fake success reminded me that many were still worried about what their classmates from a decade earlier thought of them.

Remember, all things being equal, people prefer to do business with people like themselves. The only way prospective new patients can express their preference is for you to have the courage to be yourself, warts and all.





2. There Aren't Enough New Patients

Another wrongheaded notion is that there is a scarcity of new patients. This is tempting to believe if your experience has been that you don't get many.

This scarcity mentality is often built upon the belief that the pool of prospective new patients represents a zero sum game. ★

In other words, if a new chiropractor sets up a practice down the street, any new patient she gets is a new patient you won't.

This would be laughable if it weren't for the destructive jealousy and painful isolation that this produces within the chiropractic profession.

Relax knowing that there are more than enough new patients to fill every chiropractic practice to overflowing.

The barrier is often as simple as an unwillingness to tell the truth about chiropractic care to strangers or, at its root, a fear of strangers or a fear of rejection that impoverishes many practitioners—even if you're in the habit of raising the dead with your clinical prowess.

3. Ignorance of the Law of Repulsion

While the focus is usually on the *Law of Attraction*, many forget its equally true corollary: the *Law of Repulsion*, which simply states that you can't attract without simultaneously repelling.

Chiropractors who overlook this principle attempt to become "shape shifters," trying to please everyone regardless of want, need or expectation, even if that means self-sacrifice, modifying office procedures, cutting fees, not adjusting the cervical spine or other compromises.

If you're going to have disciples, you will automatically have detractors. Attempting to avoid the latter is a surefire recipe for beige. You cannot have a crest without the trough. If you hope to attract your tribe, you must repel those who don't belong.



4. The Cost of Being a Chameleon

Want to know why you're exhausted at the end of the day? It's not the physical exertion from moving spinal bones 5 mm. It's the emotional exhaustion of trying to be all things to all patients.

Meet the chameleon. How do you recognize this species of chiropractor? It's the long, wetted index finger used to determine the direction of the wind. As in,

- "Does the patient still love me?"
- "Are they still on board with my recommendations?"
- "Are they experiencing sufficient symptomatic relief to continue care?"
- "Do they still trust me?"

It's not a happy place. Or very profitable. Or enough to prompt referrals. In fact, the patient is driving. You're in the passenger's seat. Reacting. It's a common plight among chiropractors unwilling to differentiate themselves from others in their community.

4

The Zero Sum Game

A quick confession.

For many years after selling my old company and starting Patient Media, I thought that my success was directly related to the failure of my former company. Them or us. Choose!

Not true.

It took 10 years to realize that my mission was to attract my own unique tribe that had an affinity for me and my vision of chiropractic care and patient communications. It wasn't until I fully embraced this simple idea that Patient Media finally took off. (Thank you if you were part of that!)

*My point? Similarly, your job is to attract your tribe. How do you do that? **By planting your flag.** Not an actual flag but a clear declaration of what you stand for.*



When Christopher Columbus came to the new world, he planted the Spanish flag in Puerto Rico or wherever it was that he landed.

When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he planted the U.S. flag.

It's what you do when you claim your territory.

Have you claimed yours?

You do that by taking a stand for something. ★

What do you stand for?

This is personal. Just like your patient relationships. It is what draws certain patients to your practice—but is off-putting to others. Remember, to be attractive, you must risk being repulsive!

Quick example. White lab coats. Some patients find comfort in such a costume. Others are repelled by it. Same coat. Different reactions. Which is correct? Answer: the choice that authentically reflects you and your philosophy. There are more than enough patients in both camps to fill your practice.

Choose.



5

The First Right Answer

If you've already identified your distinguishing characteristic(s), congratulations! But you may have overlooked a key characteristic of an effective differentiator. And that is, is it relevant or important to your customer?

I mention this because some chiropractors are inclined to consider differentiators that have little or no meaning to patients. Here are a couple of the more common non-relevant differentiators:



Technique

I grant you that there is a tiny fraction of the public that has been trained by a previous chiropractor to seek out only those chiropractors who use the Activator Method®, NUCCA, Atlas Orthogonal, the Palmer Package or some other particular adjusting technique.

Yet, to the vast majority of new patients, this is hardly a relevant differentiator. In fact, most new patients won't know the subtle distinctions related to various adjusting techniques. Unless you're after the few prospective new patients so inclined, I'd suggest you go beyond this technicality.

The same is true of techniques that deliver curve restoration or posture improvement. These can have great clinical value but rarely motivate prospective new patients to begin care.



Services

This is the second most common refuge for those who are unwilling to go deeper into what patients actually want. If the results from Google searches performed by prospective new patients are any indication, your cold laser, decompression, massage, nutritional support and rehab services aren't moving the dial.

In other words, very few prospective new patients are choosing a practitioner based on these adjunctive services.

Oh, they may come to appreciate the breadth of your services, but that's rarely what prompts a new patient to choose you over another chiropractor.



Principles

"I practice true chiropractic, not the symptomatic treatment of aches and pains that other chiropractors in our community do. Step up to true chiropractic." Congratulations, you've just put an invisible cap on the number of people you'll be helping.

While I would applaud your principled approach to chiropractic, most patients are uninterested. The debate between allopathic medicine and vitalistic health care is rarely relevant to a new patient. Yes, stand for something, but make sure it's actually something meaningful to your ideal patient.

Thankfully, there are many other possibilities, some of which hold great promise in helping you rise above your competitors. The key is to stand for something while creating a patient experience remarkable enough to prompt referrals.

6

Consider These Differentiators

A quick warning before exploring some ideas that may be more relevant to patients. You may be thinking,

“What’s the ‘right’ differentiator? After all, my objective is to help as many people as possible.”

It doesn’t work that way. That’s acting. Posing. It’s inauthentic and difficult to maintain.

Instead, you’re looking for what feels naturally right. It’s probably that thing that has made you attractive to new patients already. It probably captures your preferences and articulates some aspect of what you currently find emotionally rewarding in day-to-day practice.

And this isn’t about simply claiming to be better than your peers. First, claiming superiority is generally frowned upon by your licensing board or professional advertising guidelines. Plus, substantiating superiority is usually difficult or impossible. Remember, when delivering a service such as chiropractic, the customer determines if you’re exceptional or not—regardless of your claims.

So, in no particular order, here are 20 ideas that might help you differentiate your practice:

1

30 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

If you've been at this for a couple of decades or longer, your experience can be reassuring to a prospective new patient. Similarly, if you employ an associate doctor or two, you can legitimately make the claim that "two heads are better than one." Another approach related to experience would be to indicate how many patients you've served (it works for McDonald's) or how many adjustments you've successfully delivered (without an incident).

2

AVAILABILITY

By the time most new patients seek professional help, there is a sense of urgency. You might consider extended Monday hours. Same day appointments. Or being open seven days a week. If you're in a dense metropolitan location, you might consider evening hours.

3

YOUR PERSONALITY

In many ways, you're the product. How you show up can be a major aspect of your attractability. That might be your sense of humor (laughter is the best medicine), your Socratic style of interaction or your easygoing nature. You might ask your once-a-monthers what is about you or your practice that keeps them coming back month after month.

4

WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN

Rushed through most medical encounters, patients often remark about how they feel listened to when consulting a chiropractor. You may take the way you orchestrate your initial new patient consultation for granted, but the respect that patients feel when they are given free rein to describe their situation (without interruption) is often mentioned in focus groups settings.

5

SPECIAL EXPERTISE

Perhaps you have some special training or certification in athletic injuries, pediatrics or ergonomics. This can give you a special edge and “sing the song” of respective groups. “She really gets me and what I’m about,” a patient might gush. The key is to have the additional training in something that patients actually want and value. Your weekend training on vibration therapy, backpack safety and shoe orthotics may not rise to the necessary significance.

6

FELLOW SUFFERER

If it was a particular admitting complaint that got you into a chiropractic practice way back when, you may be able to establish a special rapport with car accident victims, headache sufferers and the like. Even better if you originally tried medical solutions without success and resorted to chiropractic under duress and had success. Granted, you may not want a steady stream of a particular type of patient, but that’s unlikely. This is about creating rapport and connecting with someone who may be suspicious or at least apprehensive.

7

PRICING

While your pricing strategy can be a dangerous differentiator, it can speak directly to many, many prospective new patients for whom the cost of care is a major issue. This can go beyond being the cheapest (not recommended), the “competitively priced” or the most expensive chiropractor in your community (someone is). Consider the insurance companies you work with. Your family plans. Even your claim “...never to turn away a patient because of their inability to pay our published fees.” When other differentiators fail to strike a chord, pricing is always a fallback position.

8

PERSONAL INJURY SPECIALIST

Maybe you love having lunch with personal injury attorneys and are thrilled at the opportunity to make depositions and want to become (or are) a sought-after expert in acceleration/deceleration injuries. If this is a strength of yours, identifying yourself as talented in this area may help you carve out a lucrative niche.

9

LOCATION

This can be a differentiator on many levels. Perhaps you're in a rural setting and can rightfully claim that you're "...the only chiropractor in Rudolph County." But this can also relate to your ample parking or adjacency to a highly trafficked location (Costco), bus stop or metro station. You may take your location for granted, but when a prospective new patient asks Siri or Cortana to find them a chiropractor, it might sound like this: "I found three chiropractors, one is near to you."

10

"YOU'RE THE BOSS"

This might not be the correct term, but the idea is that patients are treated as adults. We honor your health goals and help you get what you want. No judgment. No scolding. And no nagging to embrace maintenance care or anything else. It's probably a strategy that would mostly appeal to those who have had chiropractic care elsewhere.

11

TIME

This differentiator relates to how much time you spend with a patient. That could mean that visits are short, focused events to "...get you in and out and on your way." Or, the reverse, where it's more of a spa experience and each patient is lavished with longer visits. Either approach has its pros and cons.

12

MD COLLABORATION

Patients rarely understand the schism between medicine and chiropractic or even the philosophy that makes each profession fundamentally different. So the fact that you work closely beside medical doctors in your community can be seen as a plus.

13

NO LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Most chiropractic patients have heard the old myth that “once you go, you have to go for the rest of your life.” In fact, it probably keeps many patients away, fearful that they’ll somehow get involved in something that they can’t extricate themselves from. A derivation of the “You’re the Boss” differentiator above, this doesn’t preclude you from having patients who embrace long-term wellness care. It’s just that when you separate yourself from competitors in this way, you appeal to the more independent type who doesn’t want to be pressured.

14

GREAT EXPLAINER

You could become famous for your ability to make the complex simple and the complicated understandable. Your practice would be a riot of color with visual metaphors, illustrations and thought-provoking questions. You become legendary for your willingness to explain everything in advance and your habit of engaging patients with your curiosity. “We explain everything in advance. No surprises—except our deep compassion and sincere interest in you and your health.”

15

ONE STOP SHOP

Countless patients have observed during the course of patient focus groups the appeal of a central location to get all of their health needs met. This is the appeal of having a multi-disciplinary facility in which a variety of experts work under one roof, refer to each other and often co-manage especially challenging cases. This builds on the “two heads are better than one” concept presented earlier by enlarging it to include massage, physical therapists, naturopaths, nutrition specialists or even medical doctors.

16

NO WAITING

As everyone has grown increasingly time conscious, seeking instant gratification and operating on “Internet time,” waiting can become a big turn off. Positioning your practice as one in which patients “... wait no longer than 10 minutes or your visit is on us” requires button-down systems, simple procedures, incredible training and the capacity to handle fluctuating patient demand.

17

STATE-OF-THE-ART

This is ideal for the new practitioner who, because of age, a lack of experience or inferiority, believes that he or she is a second-class chiropractor. Turn the recency of your graduation into an asset by making the distinction between “old school chiropractic” and the “cutting edge technology of contemporary chiropractic” that you offer. With our culture’s infatuation with the latest and greatest, this may be the ideal differentiator for those just starting out.

18

EVIDENCE-BASED

Positioning yourself as the scientific alternative may hold sway with those patients with a scientific bent. That might mean you highlight your technology, whether digital X-ray, sEMG, heart rate variability or other high-tech tools “...that help us pinpoint the underlying problem and recommend a course of care that can produce the greatest results in the shortest amount of time.”

19

BUSIEST

We’ve all heard the old adage that “everybody goes there because everybody goes there.” As in, the wisdom of crowds. There is a special form of social proof that emerges when your practice appears to be the most popular and patients deal with limited parking and willingly endure long wait times.

20

SUCCESS RATES

Imagine the hope you could create by revealing your 87% success rate with migraine headaches or your 92% success rate helping whiplash injury cases. Naturally, you’d want to avoid promising a cure and check with your attorney about any disclaimers you would need to include; however, this could be a powerful differentiator. (Perhaps you could encourage a local university class to conduct the research after getting the necessary privacy assurances.)

See how other practices have differentiated themselves by visiting the Perfect Patients gallery of [our favorite websites](#).

The Next Step

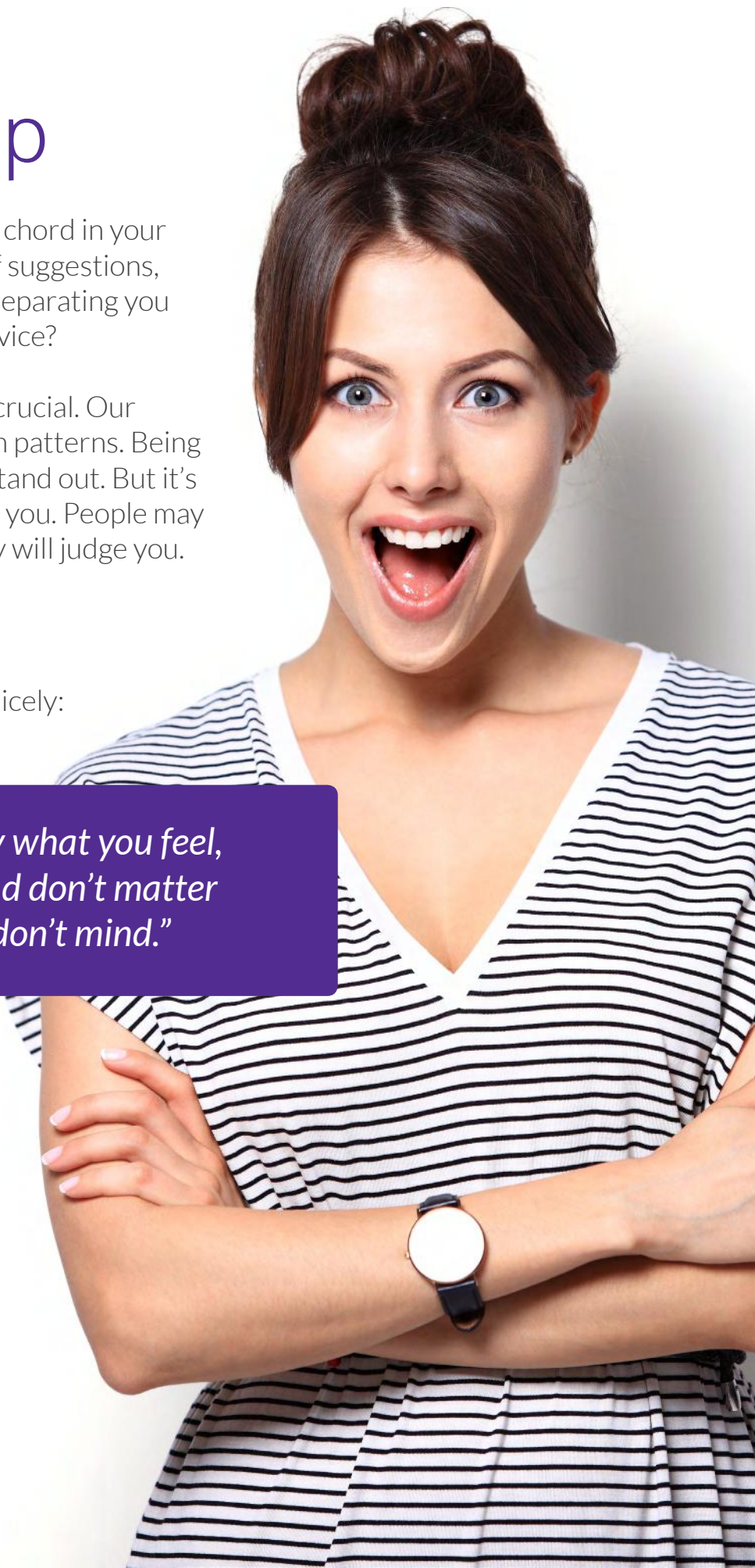
Which of these suggestions struck a chord in your heart? Which one, or combination of suggestions, holds the potential of authentically separating you from those offering a competing service?

Make no mistake. Being different is crucial. Our brains are wired to detect changes in patterns. Being different is essential if you want to stand out. But it's scary standing out. People will judge you. People may not like the stand you're taking. They will judge you.

Turns out, they already are.

Dr. Seuss summed up this problem nicely:

“ *Be who you are and say what you feel,
because those who mind don't matter
and those who matter don't mind.”*



Bill Esteb is a chiropractic advocate and new patient marketing specialist who has over three decades of experience in the profession. As the Co-Founder of Perfect Patients, Bill has been helping chiropractors generate more new patients from the Internet for over 10 years and leads a team of 50 online marketing experts who help chiropractors get and keep more new patients

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