

# Expert Insight: Give Patients a Memorable and Useful Waiting Room Experience

HNN video streaming lends a highly professional touch to your practice. It even provides the ability for patients to meet your staff and learn about your practice before actually seeing you.

First impressions mean a lot. In fact, according to MarkeTrak VIII,<sup>1</sup> the attributes of a hearing care office are among the 11 most important “best practice” factors for consumers recommending a hearing care professional and the repurchase of hearing aids.

In this respect, few places are more important than your waiting room. It’s here that your patients first get a feel for your practice and services. And it’s *the* perfect place to make a great first impression.



Brad Dodson

Hearing News Network (HNN) is a constantly changing video stream that lends a new degree of professionalism to a practice. When people see your practice’s messages interspersed with today’s news and weather, as well as educational videos about hearing care and amplification, it imparts an instant high-quality, high-technology image.

HNN is a completely customizable patient experience engine that can be adjusted at any point to suit your marketing or branding initiatives; essentially, it is a TV show of educational and practice-specific information. The cloud-based service replaces the antiquated “DVD loop approach” with a video playlist of your choice to suit any patient demographic that you serve. It’s also delivered in real time, which means it’s organic and you can make adjustments effortlessly to cater to your patients’ needs. It evolves as your practice evolves.

The network is delivered via a wired or wireless Internet connection to a tiny computer on or next to your TV. The monthly subscription service can be catered to suit individual practice owners or scaled to accommodate controlled objective messaging across multiple locations. All you need is an HD TV and an Internet connection. Setup is said to be about as easy as a DVD player.

HR’s website recently hosted an Expert Insight featuring HNN/Clear Digital Media’s Brad Dodson, who is also the sales and marketing director of HITEC Group, Naperville, Ill. Here are some of the Q&As:

**Question:** *My marketing budget is used to drive patients to my office. Why should I convert some of my advertising dollars to this service?*

**Dodson:** The most important piece to remember is that you’ve spent a substantial amount of money (patient acquisition) getting them to your practice and therefore it becomes even more essential to maximize every moment you have with them.

Since your day is filled with consultations, fittings, and follow-up appointments, it’s hard to find time to constantly market your practice and services to the valuable prospects sitting in your waiting room.

HNN gives you an objective viewpoint, a billboard that allows you to present your advertising messages along with highly engaging and educational hearing-related content.

Engaging your patients with captivating content gives them insight into the inner workings of your practice. Direct quotes, real-life testimonials from people in the community, day-in-the-life narratives, and even brief biographies can introduce the sympathetic elements that allow patients to form a deeper connection with you, your staff, and your services.

It’s not about reducing your current patient acquisition marketing initiatives; it’s about allocating a relatively small amount of your budget to improved patient relationships and ultimately patient retention or sales.

**Question:** *Do you think the information is really going to impact my patient’s experience?*

**Dodson:** The days of static content, magazines, and brochures are behind us. Custom digital signage or place-based media is rapidly being interwoven into the communications fabric of hospitals and other healthcare facilities nationwide. It is an integral component of today’s patient experience.

According to Don Marsh,<sup>2</sup> Life Time Value (LTV) is a way of looking at how many dollars a practice can be expected to earn over the course of a customer or patient relationship. This is a sum total based not just on hearing aid sales to that customer, but also through referrals, ancillary products, extended warranties, and all the other revenue streams you can create simply by cultivating the relationship. HNN complements the theory of LTV, which is especially significant in competitive times like these. In my mind, engaging content in your waiting room becomes the voice of fact and sincerity, and will:

- Elevate the level of professionalism and branding in your practice.
- Streamline communications throughout customer visits.
- Relieve patient anxiety and address FAQs with “what to expect” messaging.
- Support your quality initiatives and patient loyalty programs. Let your audiences know where you stand on quality. Digital signage is the perfect tool in your practice to showcase your “transparency.”
- Encourage patients and others to use your other services and inspire them to refer their friends and family.
- Establish your facility as a health resource for holistic hearing care, and offer patients insight into all types of technologies.
- Support and reaffirm your efforts in patient education.
- Help patients and their families access care and understand processes, procedures, and most importantly “what to expect” when they leave your practice and begin a life of hearing better.

- Let people know they are important, their time is valued, and their healthcare concerns are legitimate.
- Recognize outstanding employees and introduce staff members.

**Question:** *Shouldn't I be more focused on generating new patients?*

**Dodson:** It's about the right balance. As consumer spending habits evolve, so must your approach to new patient acquisition and retention. Complacency causes stagnation; once a business becomes stagnant in reaching and converting new customers, it takes a long time to repair the damage. For many, it's irreparable.

You should always be focused on generating new patients. This continues to be the most important use of your marketing spend; however, it's become increasingly important to make sure you maximize every interaction with the patients you're driving into your practice.

With added pressure from market consolidation, online hearing aid sales, and the introduction of PSAPs, you have to make sure your patients understand the differentiating value your practice and services offer.

According to Brian Taylor, AuD,<sup>3</sup> the average practice will see 56 patients in a typical week (23 for consultations, 10 for initial hearing aid fittings, 18 for hearing aid follow-up appointments, and 5 for other diagnostic evaluations). That is 56 interaction opportunities a week to differentiate your service. If repetition is one of the keys to learning, then you need a system capable of delivering a consistent message over and over again.

The bottom line is that digital signage is now more affordable than ever. Understanding the cost also may help to alleviate any concern that this investment will detract from your core marketing initiatives. Based on the typical number of weekly patients, the total added cost to your marketing budget for a custom digital signage platform works out to be about 40 cents per patient per day (subscription fee/work days/average daily patients).

Compared to the average patient acquisition cost of \$312-\$332 (numbers vary for every practice) per binaural sale and an estimated 80% binaural fitting rate, the HNN system is an inexpensive tool perfectly suited to chip away at the 20% of lost sales while working consistently on lifetime patient value.

**Question:** *For many patients coming into my office, they have a fair amount of apprehension. How does HNN help with this?*

**Dodson:** This is a great question and one of the key reasons HNN exists. Patient apprehension affects all facets of the patient/professional life cycle, as well as the practice's bottom line. A well-crafted playlist of video content designed to make patients feel more comfortable (when they might be nervous), educated (especially if they are new to the process), and valued (a slide can very directly tell them that their participation in their own hearing care is valued and that their feelings matter) will draw them in, inspire them to take action, and help to alleviate most of their apprehensiveness.

What has more impact, a high-gloss poster of a lifestyle setting with a user wearing a hearing aid, or a riveting video of that same hearing aid wearer communicating with their loved one properly for the first time? It's the "As Seen on TV" effect.

HNN provides hearing care practice owners with an objective billboard to interact with their patients without the patient feeling like they are being sold something. This reduces the apprehension barrier and



HNN is delivered via wired or wireless Internet to your waiting room and features a playlist of hearing-related items that you select for the benefit of your patients and prospective patients.

allows you to communicate important educational information about the products and services your clinic provides.

Let's not forget about the importance of repetition as a factor in reducing apprehension. Repetition is extremely important in client acquisition and retention in my role as a marketing professional. The "Rule of Seven" is a well-known marketing adage. It says that a prospect needs to see or hear your marketing message at least seven times before they take action and buy from you.

Digital signage is timely and relevant, and it addresses the patient when they are most receptive to hearing your message. It's a flexible medium that can change immediately or evolve organically to suit your patient demographic.

**Question:** *I don't have a lot of digital material. But is there a way I can personalize HNN or insert some of my own practice's messages into it?*

**Dodson:** We really don't need much at all! The best part about directing your own "waiting room show" is that you don't really have to do any of the work. Our team at HNN just needs you to direct! In other words, we're looking for your input to create the perfect patient journey through your practice.

Perhaps you're looking to get more out of your website development investment? When you subscribe to HNN, our Graphic Design team will work with you to incorporate your website content and develop the custom pieces that make your personal version of HNN come to life for your patients. Your staff biographies, your patient testimonials, and your practice mission statement are brought to life by our team and displayed in high definition on the TV in your waiting room.

It's important to add that, given our experience, we understand how busy you are—which is why we take care of updating a large portion of the educational playlist on a regular basis to ensure that there is no stagnation in the content and that your patients, no matter how often they frequent your practice, see new relevant material.

REFERENCES can be found at [www.hearingreview.com](http://www.hearingreview.com) or in HR's Interactive Digital Edition Archives at <http://hr.alliedmedia360.com>

CORRESPONDENCE to Brad Dodson at: [Brad.dodson@cleardigitalmedia.net](mailto:Brad.dodson@cleardigitalmedia.net)