

Fugitive Marketing: Direct Marketing a la Richard Kimball

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PUBLIC RELATIONS
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Most marketing tries to reach the greatest number of people possible. This doesn't mean that everyone's goal is to take out a Super Bowl ad. Rather, "more bang for the buck" and "ROI" are strategic considerations. Should you place an expensive ad in the metro-wide newspaper or several pieces in the small, local paper? TV or cable? Zip-code bulk mailing? Buy billboards? Go on the radio?

It's even more complex now. Should you invest the time and money into creating and updating an engaging blog or FaceBook page? Splash into the Groupon waters? Conduct webinars? Twitter?

Some of these are probably viable strategies for your business and there are many more that have proven effective. I recommend, though, that you remember to take a page – or rather an episode – from "The Fugitive."

I am not talking about the films starring Harrison Ford but rather the 1960's television show starring David Janssen. The pilot told the story we all know of how Richard Kimball, MD, comes home to find his wife murdered and a one-armed man fleeing the scene. Convicted of the crime, he escapes, alters his appearance (he dyes his hair with shoe polish!) and goes on the lam. He is determined to find the one-armed man who butchered his wife and thus exonerate himself.

Each week we see Richard in another town on the trail of the killer. He would land some sort of menial job and a place to stay and, despite his best efforts to distance himself and keep on task, Richard would invariably become embroiled in a local drama.

My favorite part was when he had to choose to use his medical expertise to save someone, running the risk of revealing his identity and losing his freedom. By that time, though, he had won them over! He could ride off into the sunset to face another adventure next week. Who was that masked man? He was an excellent doctor and a fine human being. There is no way he murdered his wife.

I always believed that if the show had stayed on the air long enough, there wouldn't be a jury of his peers who would convict him. He would have won them ALL over! Alas, the show was only on for four seasons, not nearly enough time to touch every single person in the country.

We are engaged in what I call "fugitive marketing" every day. Every time you see a patient, meet with a colleague, send an email ... fill in the blank ... you too have an opportunity to demonstrate that you are an excellent doctor and a fine human being. This is true now, as it has always been. Unlike Richard Kimball's new friends, however, those you meet today *will* tell others what they decide about you, and not just over the back fence. They may blog, twitter or put it on Facebook. There are numerous physician-rating sites, and potential patients do go there. There's even YouTube, heaven forbid.

Today, Richard Kimball wouldn't need four seasons to make his case ... or to lose it.

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