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Community Events and Their Practical Benefits

Presenters: Courtney Smith, MA, CCC-A, Danielle Hayden

Thank you so much, Anna. I really appreciate you and Audiology Online for having Unitron today on your platform. I really am excited to present this topic to everybody today. My name is Courtney Smith and I am the senior manager of audiology and education at Unitron. I just started that position just about a week ago, so it's very exciting.

And previously I was the regional trainer of the west region here at Unitron. I've been with Unitron since July of 2022, and before that I practiced in the clinic for 18 years here in Las Vegas where I live. So I have a lot of clinical experience in my back pocket and I have some great passion for this particular topic. Recently in my role as trainer, I've had the benefits of being involved in community events that we've presented here at Unitron. So there's so many ways that you can set your practice apart using community events, and I'm so excited to present some of those things to all of you today.

Just a disclosure here at the beginning of the course. These are the risks and benefits associated with today's course. And you can go ahead and read these as you wish. They'll also be in the handout after the class.

Today we have a few learning outcomes and objectives that we are going to stay focused on throughout the course. After this course, you all will be able to summarize the benefits of hosting a community event for hearing health care providers and the consumers that you serve in your community. After this course, you'll also be able to identify the steps that are involved in planning, conducting, executing a community event for the population you serve. And also after this course, you will be able to discuss the importance of evaluating the results to continue driving that success with patient hearing aid fittings and clinic graduation growth.

So, and once again, we are going to use the Q and A today for interactivity, but I would like to throw it out to all of you to type into the chat. Have you ever hosted a community event in your practice?

Just a quick show of hands. Or type yes or no if you have ever hosted an event. And I'll lean on Danielle, my colleague, my trainer colleague today to help me out. We have two yeses coming through so far. Wonderful.

And my next question to all of you is, who has. Who conducts community events routinely in their practice? Like, I'm talking like three or more a year. How many of you regularly put on these events? Go ahead and type into the Q and A.

We have a. No, so not routinely. Okay. All right. Well, you know, it's something that it's it's not always something that jumps out at you like, hey, this is something I should get involved in.

You know, sometimes it's, you're like, oh, it's going to be a lot of work. There's a lot that has to go into it. I've been very fortunate to be a part of some successful events this year. So I want to share with you some best practices and some ways that you can execute that will ensure the success and help you go into an event with a solid strategy in mind.

So, first of all, what is a community event or community seminar? It's a really effective way of attracting new patients into your practice. It allows you to strengthen your relationships with current patients and new patients that you want to invite. It really appeals to people because it offers a chance for interaction. They can examine the products you're offering firsthand.

Also gives patients a time where they can test drive you as the provider and your services, which is incredibly valuable as we know people in today's market are looking for something a little bit different and a little bit more personal. That's something at Unitron that we're highly focused on, is the patient experience. And so hosting an event like this really sets you apart and gives you and your practice a chance to be, you know, highlight, you know, you and all the training you have and those personalized services you offer. And why would you consider doing this? Like, what's the point?

So we definitely want sales out of this event, right? Like, that's always something that we're focused on. We want to bring in people, we want to highlight the products we offer and the features and the benefits that they offer to patients. We would love to get new patients in by hosting an event. It's always nice to get new faces in the office.

Strengthening your relationships is always a focus when you're considering planning something like this. We also would like for you to understand your base and who's coming in, who has a need, what kind of needs are out there in your community? We also want to raise the profile of your practice in the community by hosting an event. You can get the word out. You can use social media on LinkedIn.

You can get the word out by letting people know that you're here. You help people and come on in and see what, what I can do for you. Finally, as I mentioned, it's a great chance for people to just get to know you better as a person. Hosting an event and inviting people to come in and listen to you speak or listen to you deliver some tips and tricks about hearing aids really just gives them a chance to hear from you and experience your professionalism firsthand and so there are some steps that we take. So at Unitron, my involvement in these events as a trainer has been to attend the event and assist with explaining the technology that we have at Unitron to patients attending.

There's some important steps you want to take when you get your trainer and maybe your regional sales manager and maybe marketing at your manufacturer involved. We want to know what's the timing, how soon do you want to get something on the calendar? We encourage providers to start planning something. Eight to 12 weeks is a good lead time for us as the manufacturer side partnering with you to help with an event. We want to know what's the purpose.

So like, what's in it for you? What are your goals? What, what are some things that are important to you? And when you look back, what do you want to, what do you want to look back and say happened

at this event and what were the positives that came out of it? We also want to know who you want there and how will you teach the community about you?

Will you provide education, will you showcase technology and will you talk about your maybe partnerships with other local businesses? So all of these things are things you want to think about as you plan a community event. And having a framework like this in place as you start conversations with your regional sales manager and your trainer really helps hit the ground running when you are planning a community event. These are some things on the screen that you can think about and I would like to speak to these just in, in my own personal experiences. You want to consider your typical traffic, your advertising budget and your theme for this event.

You also make want to consider special promotions, any little prizes or giveaways people do love and they are memorable. So something you want to think about. Additionally, refreshments, you know, do you want to bring people in for food? Do you want to. Will you need extra space?

Will you need equipment for this? You also want to have an agenda, you want to have an itinerary. So everything, maybe a checklist, everything you're planning for that day is down in a document, a shared document with other members of the office that will be helping out. And you can also lean on us because I'll tell you more about this in a moment, but we have a nice strong community event checklist that we can share with you as well. Finally, budget is always something to keep in mind.

As we all know, we want to get the best return on investment when we're Planning an event. So we want to think about how much do we want to spend, spend and what are we expecting in return as far as sales and as far as relationship growth.

So be sure when you're thinking about this, once again, it's a, it's nice to have a strong 8 to 10 to 12 week lead time. We really want time to plan. We want people to have time to get this on their calendar

and some things like advertising and marketing. Excuse me. And if you're working with a caterer, direct mail, you want at least three weeks lead time for like the post, the post office.

Excuse me, pardon me. I've been a little bit sick this week, so I'm still getting through it. Back to the timeline. We want to kind of work back from our schedule. So we want to know what's the deadline for each component of this event and how will we break it down.

And we want to work backwards from there. We'll need time to work with marketing for an ad or the layout and that submission. And we have a really strong marketing department here at Unitron. We are here with full capacity to support you and help you in getting something up and running a little more on advertising and promoting your community event. It's critical that this is effective and strategic to get at the audience that you want to work with and the people that you want to get get there.

So typically with our in collaboration with marketing, we use direct mail, we use email, social media and print. Email is very easy and cost effective. And you can use email to kind of farm your database of patients that you already have worked with in the past. And you should have a nice list of tested, not sold, leads that you can draw from. Direct mail does take some time, as I mentioned, you want to acquire a mailing list, perhaps strategically use some zip codes locally to produce a direct mail marketing piece.

Once again, our marketing department here at Unitron is very strong at helping you get all of this set up. Social media is easy. It's great. I know that many practitioners use social media to drive leads into their office. Spreading the word about your community seminar is easy to do with posts either on Facebook, Instagram, geotagging those posts with your practice location just to strategically get the population invited that you want to be there.

Before we get into location, I do just want to pause for any questions that anybody might have. If you have any questions about anything I've discussed or just a comment, feel free to put it into the chat. We have Danielle moderating our chat today, so we'll take a Pause for that.

Nothing coming through yet.

Thank you, Danielle.

Oh, we have one. It says, are hearing screenings okay? Are hearing screenings okay? That is a great question. I have personally done hearing screenings.

Not in my work with Unitron, but at a previous practice that I worked at and we had a great turnout for screenings. I would just say that you really want to consider location if you're going to offer screenings and have a system in place so that you can. When I, when I did it, I had a sign up sheet where people could sign up for a five minute time slot to get their hearing screen. And it was kind of a pass or fail type situation. We didn't go over results.

We didn't, you know, give them anything to take home. It was like, yes, you passed the screening or no, you didn't. And so here's where you can make an appointment to come in and see me for a more comprehensive evaluation. I do like offering screenings and I think it's great. I think if you have the right spot for it, it has to be quiet, has to be the right location.

But if it, if it is and it's appropriate, I say go for it. Great question. Anything else?

That's all the questions we've gotten so far. All right, thanks, Danielle. So when considering where you know you want to consider, are you going to host an all day event, maybe a half day, and the time range when people can show up, or will there be allotted time for people to show up? Will there be food

served and what time will that happen? What does that space look like?

The space that we used in California that I worked with a provider recently. She did kind of an Italian restaurant that had a room that had a V available where I was able to give a presentation about hearing loss and hearing aids and looking at your audiogram. And the provider and I work together to talk in front of the room and kind of go around the room and talk to prospective patients and get to know them a little bit better. So think about that room that you want, that, that place you want to host and where it will draw a nice crowd. Your clinic is sometimes a great place having some kind of open house format where you invite people in.

Maybe it's a two year anniversary of your practice, maybe it's a ten year anniversary, maybe it's your birthday. There's a lot of reasons to host an open house. Doesn't necessarily have to be about hearing aids. A restaurant, like I said, or I have done successful events at community centers in the past. That's actually where I did that Screening event that I just referred to.

Yeah, get creative. It's always nice when people have the ability to show up to something, something unique, something a little bit different, and really sets you apart from what everybody else is doing.

When you're thinking about your community event, you do want to think about logistics a little bit. Will you have to rent any equipment, such as a speaker or a screen or any type of podium, tables, chairs? Think also about what you will talk about as a trainer. One of my jobs in assisting with these events, as I mentioned, was to provide some talking points to the provider. I would usually partner with the provider presenting the event to deliver the content to the patients that are there.

I always wanted to highlight the provider as the expert. Those people are there to see you. I'm kind of an accessory. I'm a partner, I'm a support person. But I am there to highlight you as the provider and make sure everyone in the room knows that you are the local subject matter expert on hearing aids.

So I'm happy to provide always content that can be delivered to the patients. But it always has been a partnership, at least the strong events that I've attended. You want to think about how comfortable your patients are. Any questions that people might ask? I always think, what are the toughest questions that someone might ask me and how can I be prepared to answer those, whatever they might be?

Also any, you know, troubleshooting things that you might have to talk about, you know, what about price? Like, will you talk about price? Will you talk about brands? Will you talk about insurance? You know, you kind of want to have a list of these things that will probably come up if you're presenting on hearing aids to a big group.

So make sure you plan for all those things in advance, and so that way when they happen, you're ready to go.

So once you have established that you are going to have an event in your office, we have a nice checklist that you can use that helps you set this whole thing up. I love a checklist because I love checking off things that I have completed. And so this community seminar checklist is part of a kit that we have at Unitron. I'll talk a little bit more about that in just a moment. But you can see, you know, piece by piece, how this puzzle comes together and every step that needs to be checked off to make sure that everything is successful so you don't have to think of everything.

We have helped you think of it. So lean on us, lean on Unitron. We are good at this.

So I'll now ask for you to type into the chat or to the Q and A. I'm sorry, who are some people that you feel might benefit from coming to a community event?

Go ahead and type into the Q and A. And Danielle will let me know if anybody chimes in.

Nothing yet, but we do have another question if you want to take that now or a little bit later. Yeah, absolutely, go ahead. So the question that came through was how can you demo products without thresholds?

That's a great question. The event that I, I, I did in California in the fall, we did do demos on, on people that were there. And this provider invited existing patients to come in to experience Vivante. And what she did is she had people come in that she had recently done an audio on, like say in the last year. And she invited those people to come in, come to the restaurant.

She pre programmed a set of Flex Trials, our demo units, for every person that RSVP'd that said they would be there based on the test results that she had on them. And so those people came in, they had the Flex trials sitting at their plate kind of as a placeholder, so to speak, like, here's where you can sit and here are the Flex Trials I'm going to have you listen to while we give the presentation today. And it was highly successful. I think that's a unique situation and you have to really strategically plan, like who you can invite who might want to demo some new technology. I always had patients that said, hey, if you ever have something new that comes out, please call me.

I always want to be a part of that. I want to listen to it, I want to check it out. So that was the case. I think it has to be the right place and the right time. Perfect.

And now circling back to this slide, some responses we got were people with communication problems, senior citizens at community condo areas, people on the Tested not sold list.

Yes, absolutely great responses. And here are some that I came up with. Tested not Sold, like you said, consumer peer, who is an advocate. This also happened at the event that I supported in California. One of this provider's patients happened to be a local physician in the area.

And this physician was able to join the event. And during this event, after we presented the latest technology, she stood up and she offered her experience with hearing aids to everybody. And it was so valuable she was able to give kind of a peer to peer experience and recommendation in support of using hearing aids. She talked about how much using hearing aids has lessened her load or her listening effort and how much it's made her life better. So that was a really cool moment.

And I would highly encourage you, if you're planning an event, have one of your best patients join you. Ask them to, usually they're thrilled to help out with something like this. Ask them to advocate for you and to talk to the prospective patients you may have attending. It's extremely valuable.

One thing to be sure to do once you've had your event and it's, it's over, what do we do next? So at Unitron, as a, as a group supporting your event, we like to meet before the event, obviously to make sure everyone's on the same page and we like to meet after. We want to know, have you achieved the objective that you set out to and we want to be able to measure this. So we like to find out how many people did you invite, how many people actually made it in, how many people came in for an evaluation and how many people purchased hearing aids. We want to find out what was the, what were the expenses to the event and what was the end result.

So there's a lot of ways that you can evaluate that through marketing. You can have a comment card at the event. We really want to track the follow up from any community event that's put on. We all want to know what, what worked, what can we do better next? And we always want to think about our next event when we're at our current event.

In every case that I've been involved in one, the provider has planned the next one. So that's pretty cool. And thinking about just little tweaks you can do along the way when your event is over to make the next one even better than the last.

So I'll encourage all of you just to consult with your Unitron representative. Unitron is really big on events and we are here to support you. We are, we have a. This, this is down pat. In the last year since our meeting last year, as a team, as a team, we decided to focus on promoting community events and focusing on supporting providers who want to execute on them.

Please reach out to your Unitron representative and we will absolutely be able to help you get one of these set up on the books.

And we also have a community seminar planning guide. If you would like me to share this with you, please go ahead and type your email in the Q and A and we will go ahead and send you one of these. It's a great toolkit, planning guide, checklist, all the things you need to consider and all the ways you need to consider evaluating the results. Once it's over. So you're ready to execute and make your community event successful?

A couple more notes on when we have a couple of theme ideas here. I don't know if you're like me, but I love a theme. Here's some theme concepts that we've come up with. Grandparents Day here for the holidays is wildly popular in November and December. Invite your Unitron patients in to experience a hearing aid upgrade.

These are just a few things that you can, that can trigger your creativity. So make sure that when you're planning something or you're thinking about planning something, think of some of these.

We've had a lot of success here at Unitron in the last few months. We would love to help you plan an event. One of my most successful events I'd like to speak to right before we conclude the course today is an upgrade event. So as you all may know, Unitron hearing aids are all upgradable and any patient that's not wearing Level 9 premium technology can upgrade their hearing instruments technology at

any time. So one event that we did in Washington this past fall was an upgrade event.

This provider invited all of her Unitron patients in to experience a hearing aid upgrade. So she curated this list of Unitron patients that did not have level nine technology, invited them in, and we saw about 16 patients over the course of the week that I was there, and I was able to experience patients hearing an upgraded hearing aid for the first time and experiencing the effects when they went from one technology level to the other. And those patients then were able to go out into the world and hear with their upgrade and then return to the office the following week just to let the provider know how they did. It was an absolutely awesome event. I received personal emails from patients letting me know how cool it was that their hearing aid could be upgraded.

Most patients didn't even know that was possible. So a lot is possible. I know we're out of time. Thank you all for being here. I will hang on for a little bit.

If anybody has any questions, please go ahead and continue typing in the Q and A. If you have any questions or even if you want to talk offline, please reach out to me. I'm Courtney Smith and I am very happy that you all made it to the event today. Thank you so much for being here and thank you, Danielle, for moderating today. Of course, we do have one question waiting in the chat.

Okay. We asked how many people typically purchase hearing aids as a result of a community event?

Yeah, I think that's a great question. I've seen a wide range of results. We.

We like to see a strong number. I think if you have a good, strong list and you've done a good job marketing and you have the right people there in place, we would expect that everybody that shows up has the ability to purchase or is interested in purchasing. So we want to treat every single person that comes to the event like this person will purchase. The statistics vary throughout, you know, the country, geographic location, insurance, all of that stuff. But if you work closely with your team to get the right

people there, we've seen extremely strong sales.

I think at the upgrade event that I. I was at In Washington, over 60% did keep their hearing aid upgrade. So they did then come in and purchase the upgrade that they tried. So that's just one facet of it. But if you talk to your regional sales manager, they should be able to tell you in their past history what the percentage of conversion is into sales.

Perfect. And we also had just a really nice success story shared that I wanted to share with the group. So. Amazing. Yeah.

There was a community event where patients who had older aids were invited, food was provided, and they were set with demos that were already programmed for them. Halfway through the event, they were given their old hearing aids back and everyone were a little bit better acquainted to the noise. And they sold about 80% success rate from that. Oh, wow. I love that.

Yeah. So that was really exciting to hear. I love that. Thank you for sharing that. That's amazing.

I love that you had the experience of people trying something new and then people having to go back to what they had and hearing that way again. That's a huge. A huge advantage because people then get to kind of have an AB comparison right in front of them. I love that story. Thank you.

I think if there are no more questions that we are all set for today and our presentation has concluded.

Oh, yes. Go. Go right ahead. Yep. Did you happen to mention the poorest day for the event?

I'm sorry, Repeat that one more time. It just cut out for a second. It says, did you happen to mention the poorest day for the event? The poorest day? Yes.

Maybe like the worst day of the week to host an event. Okay, I'm sorry. I completely could not figure out what was being asked, like the worst day of the week to get. Have an event. I think that's where we're going.

Yeah. The ones that I've been involved in have been kind of in the middle of the week, like a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. I would generally avoid Mondays and Fridays. This is just my own personal viewpoint based upon my experiences. I don't think there's like a.

A book written on this per se, but I do think avoiding weekends where people might be out of town, especially if it's in the summer, people are taking vacations, and people are kind of doing their own thing. So I like middle of the week. I like avoiding holidays as much as possible. I do. I do enjoy just like a Tuesday or Wednesday because I think a lot of people are more available on those days and they have less to shuffle around if they want to be there.

Hey, Courtney. I just wanted to. That is a test question, and so there is one specific answer, and I don't want anyone to leave and. And be confused at all. And so what day of the week is not ideal to conduct a community event?

And the answer is Monday. Ah, that is good to know. I mean, that would have been. I would have say Monday would be number one, and my Friday would be number two if I had to pick a one and two.

But if the. If. If the statistics show that it's Monday, that's even better.

All right, those are all our questions.

Wonderful. Thank you all for the engaging presentation today. Thank you all for your participation.