



INSIDE THE PRACTICE

Jay Geier

Marketing: Make no mistake!

AFTER 25 YEARS of training and coaching thousands of clients, I have found that very few dentists actually enjoy performing the marketing functions of their practices. Even fewer are good at it. The majority lack an interest and understanding of marketing. Therefore, they underestimate its importance to long-term business success.

When done right, marketing is one of the most lucrative functions in any practice. The right marketing investments are virtually guaranteed to bring you a good return in the form of more new patients and referrals. Your practice may grow initially through word-of-mouth advertising, but if you're not generating new business through marketing, your practice will eventually plateau.

Patient attrition is inevitable. A continuous infusion of new patients and increased referrals not only replaces patients and bumps production and collections in the current year, but those new patients also accelerate compounded growth over the long term. New patients truly are the life force that will have you outpacing your competition and continuing to grow—even when other practices are not.

So who do you put in charge of such an important responsibility as marketing? You'll need someone who is more passionate about marketing your services than about delivering them. Chances are that's not you. If you find yourself questioning whether you should be your own marketing guru, ask yourself, "Would I apply for a marketing position at another practice?" The answer would almost certainly be no because marketing is neither your passion nor your area of expertise. But that doesn't mean you don't like talking about what you do and selling potential patients on the quality of your services. You may also enjoy the creative aspects of executing campaigns. But you don't have the complete skill set or the time to market your practice effectively, so why sabotage your marketing efforts by putting yourself in charge of them?

Whether you hire an experienced pro or assign an existing employee to lead your marketing campaign, investing in the right training will help ensure you achieve the desired results. Even if you've proven to be fairly good at marketing, you may be woefully unskilled as a trainer. After all, there's a great deal to know about marketing.

It bears repeating: the right marketing investments are virtually guaranteed to deliver positive, repeating returns. **DE**

JAY GEIER is the founder of the Scheduling Institute and creator of the world-renowned five-star telephone training program that has revolutionized the way dentists attract new patients to their practices. To learn more, visit schedulinginstitute.com/DE.

Top 6 mistakes doctors make with marketing teams

Once you have a marketing team in place, avoid these common pitfalls:

You put them at the front desk.

Your marketing team is responsible for generating more calls, but your front desk staff is responsible for gaining new patients by scheduling appointments. Keep the two jobs separate so accountability remains clear.

You use them to back up other positions.

Don't set your marketing team up for failure by making a part-time commitment to marketing while expecting your team to deliver results commensurate with full-time focus and effort.

You don't offer appropriate incentives.

When done right, incentives inspire and motivate people to perform to new heights. Your marketing people will want to be held accountable for big goals if they can earn big rewards for achieving them.

You treat them as personal assistants.

Simply because your marketers aren't assigned to back up another position or sit at the front desk doesn't mean they're available to assist you with everything under the sun.

You don't give them sufficient budget or resources.

If you give your marketers little to work with, there's no point in having them. Effective campaigns require an adequate investment, as does the team itself, according to your expectations. One person cannot do the work of five.

You don't use tracking systems.

It's not surprising that caring doctors tend to base decisions more on feelings than on facts. But when it comes to judging whether you're achieving the targeted return from each campaign and the people running it, you need tracking mechanisms so you can make fact-based decisions.