

TOP 10 WAYS TO DESTROY YOUR PRACTICE (continued from page 1)

or even a radio station rep. There isn't enough room in this whole newsletter to completely discuss proper budget allocation. In general though, you start with internal projects, a solid website, and targeted external mail projects. As the practice grows, more room will be in your budget. You then expand into the print media and ultimately mass media (radio, TV, billboards, etc). It is almost never a good idea to "jump around" or allocate a large percentage of your budget in a mass media if you aren't already successfully generating new patients from the prerequisite mediums.

#5: THE NICHE TRAP...

Many of you are feeling this right now. If you spent your promotion dollars between 2000 and 2006 trying to get the market to recognize you as the "cosmetic" dentist or the "sedation" dentist, and that was the focus of all of your promotions - we can almost guarantee that you feel a bit "trapped" right now. We would like to ask you another question. Have your own patients asked you if you would be willing to see them, a family member, or a friend for "regular" dentistry? If you or someone on your team has indeed been asked that question recently - you have niche trapped yourself. It's ok. You can get out of it. It is just a matter of shifting perception as you move forward with your external promotion. For now though, it is likely going to hurt a bit.

#4: BEING A WILLING PASSENGER ON THE TITANIC...

Specifically, what we're talking about here are the Yellow Pages. Over the past 20 years, the Yellow Pages have been a really nice, safe, place for a dentist to put their promotion dollar. After all, it seemed like a level playing field back in the day that dentists were given "permission" to start promoting their services. Then, as years passed, dentists in the same market would "jockey" for position toward the front of the "dentist" section. As dentists "jockeyed," the ad reps took full advantage and charged higher prices. While this was going on, the Internet became more than a fad and pulled countless millions from the paper Yellow Pages to online "searches." The result was high advertising prices with declining results. We would like to share with you, our firm's "golden rule" when it comes to judging the viability of promoting your practice within your local Yellow Pages. If you can be in the 6th position or better (in ALL directories) for less than 30% of your annual marketing budget - you can consider the Yellow Pages for your ad dollar. We didn't say to put your dollars there, we just said you can "consider" the Yellow Pages in your area to be viable. If most of you reading this article do the math, you will find that most of you should re-allocate those promotion dollars to something that will work much better.

#3: UNDER-ESTIMATING (OR NOT UNDERSTANDING) THE POWER OF THE INTERNET...

Search engines are changing what they bring up on the screen when a "surfer" (consumer) is looking for a dentist. However, over 50% of the dentists in the U.S., still don't have a website for their dental practice. Less than 10% actually promote their website properly through alternate mediums, and less than 5% do ANYTHING to improve their search engine positioning. To us, this is a gross underestimation of the value of this emerging medium. We don't necessarily think that dentists as a whole underestimate the potential of the Internet to bring new patients. We believe it is

more of not understanding how everything works and what you have to do to be competitive on the Internet. Dominating the Internet in your market area is simply a matter of "allocating" (see #6) the appropriate budget resources toward that medium every year. You'll get there! You can't "instantly" dominate any market area anyway - it takes time. So, allocate a small fraction of your annual marketing budget to it on a continual basis.

#2: NOT ADJUSTING YOUR EXPECTATIONS WITH THE REALITY OF YOUR MARKETPLACE...

This should probably be number one - we will call it a tie. The supply/demand ratio of your specific market area is what should set your expectations. If you are in a market area where there is 1 dentist for every 3,000 human beings, you are going to do very well and you will gain new patient momentum quickly with properly done promotion. If you are in a market where there is 1 dentist for every 600 human beings you are still going to do well - but it is going to take you a LOT longer to gain the momentum you are looking for. This is the sheer power of supply and demand. Yes, there are many tricks and strategies you can use to offset a poor supply/demand marketplace. But, your expectations in a 1:600 market should be much lower than if you are in a 1:3000 market. Why do we bring this up? Because the tighter the market, the more frustrated the dentists are. Dentists will throw money at "this idea" or "that idea," trying valiantly to find the "holy grail." In competitive markets, the only holy grail is time, consistency, proper deployment progression, proper volumes, and proper designs. These are the only "holy grails" that exist in tough dental markets.

DRUM ROLL, PLEASE...

#1: CONFUSING WHAT "YOU, YOUR SPOUSE, OR YOUR TEAM LIKE" WITH "WHAT WILL WORK"...

This probably kills more promotion of dental practices than any other aspect. Doing it properly requires balance. The balance is between 100% custom design and "cookie cutter" design. By definition, a 100% custom design is, well, 100% untested! You, therefore, become the guinea pig to see if it's going to work. A "cookie cutter" design doesn't work well either. Different dentists have different marketable attributes. Different areas of the country require different strategies. Different competition levels require different strategies. What you want is tested design principles with personalized designs. We can tell you how expensive it is to "test." We have been testing our own work (using our own money) for 20 years! We joke with our audiences in our seminars all the time. We probably have the world's largest library of designs that statistically didn't work, in the world! The bottom line here is that almost everything necessary to be successful is counter intuitive to what a dentist, their spouse, and the staff, think - or "like."

If you have any questions, feel free to reach Howie Horrocks at whh@newpatientsinc.com or Mark Dilatush at markd@newpatientsinc.com. Website: www.newpatientsinc.com.

If You're Thinking of Switching Practice Management Systems...

by Ralph Laurie²

PRACTICE MANAGEMENT EXTENDED TOOLS:

You might also want to consider practice management extended (PMX) tools. These products complement your software by utilizing the data already stored in your PMS to perform additional functions not handled by most PMS's. Think of PMX tools as you would "apps" for an iPhone. The apps make the iPhone more powerful by eliminating the need to spend hundreds of dollars on other devices. At a recent dental meeting, I found a device that attaches to your practice management system charting module. The device is called the Dental R.A.T. It is a "foot mouse," which allows you to run your software and go paperless with a simple and inexpensive foot operated input device. The Dental R.A.T. allows the hygienist or dentist to perio chart, run x-rays, and intra-oral cameras by themselves, saving additional staffing. Go to www.dentalrat.com for a comparison chart that shows you how you can save up to \$38,000 using this uniquely patented device.

While most PMS vendors provide electronic claims services, if you want some additional efficiency, effectiveness, and cost savings, check out ClaimX from Extradent (www.extradent.com). ClaimX not only handles all of your electronic claim submissions, but it also has a feature called "the Watchdog." It evaluates each insurance carrier and tracks the average time claims are paid by the carrier. If a particular claim isn't paid within the normal time for that payer, the practice is alerted immediately so that action can be taken. As an added bonus, the cost is about half the cost of the electronic claims services provided by the major PMS vendors.

Another valuable PMX tool is phone call tracking software. Good phone tracking systems can record incoming calls for quality assurance purposes, measure the effectiveness of your recall system and any external marketing campaigns, and some even perform outbound confirmation calls. These inexpensive systems allow you to objectively measure the results of the people and systems in your practice, and they're 100% software driven - no hardware is involved.

There are PMX products that provide an interface between your PMS and an iPhone, iPod Touch, Blackberry, or other high-end PDAs. These products interface with your appointment book, call lists, and other practice statistical information allowing you to take action from virtually anywhere. We just had two offices in the Boston area that needed to cancel all the appointments for a given day due to snow. They merely logged on to the PMX using their iPhones, pulled up the day's appointments and sent an email out to all the patients. For those patients without email, a call list was provided for easy contact.

Perhaps the most valuable type of PMX tool is the one that automates all routine patient communications; appointment confirmations, recall notices, birthday greetings, newsletters, etc.

...THINK AGAIN!, PART 2

Using email, text messages, postcards and even letters - all sent 100% automatically - these systems free up hours of staff time per week, and improve the patient experience by communicating with each patient the way they prefer to be communicated with.

PMX reporting software extracts data from your PMS, analyzes it and pushes critical information back to the practice automatically every day. There are "To Do Today" reports that highlight the patient appointments for the day. The reports give an overview as to what information needs to be collected for each patient such as email addresses, phone numbers, birthdates, HIPAA acknowledgements, updated health histories, and other vital data. Other reports are prepared and pushed to the practice for tomorrow's appointments. These reports are used to pull charts, and fill openings in the hygiene book by pointing out family members of scheduled patients who are due for recall who might want to come in together.

PMX tools complement your existing PMS without the need for you to invest huge amounts of money in software and hardware, because you use the PMS you already have. There's no need to enter into long-term contracts, or finance capital equipment.

With more than 33% of American households being affected by the current economic downturn, there is a strong possibility that many Americans will consider foregoing routine dental care. You can expect to have less revenue flowing through the practice over the next one to two years unless you are, or can become, very efficient and very effective in the way you run your practice. In order to continue to thrive under these circumstances, it will be necessary to nurture each revenue dollar and become very vigilant about what you're spending. PMX systems can help.

PMX TOOLS COMPLEMENT YOUR EXISTING PMS WITHOUT THE NEED FOR YOU TO INVEST HUGE AMOUNTS OF MONEY IN SOFTWARE & HARDWARE...



I have put together a "Blue Paper" about the economy and dentistry. (Hey, everybody's got a "whitepaper"!) It reveals some facts and figures you might find helpful in setting a PMX strategy. Email me at Ralph@justsayplz.com and I will get it out to you right away.

CROMFS WELCOMES TWO NEW EMPLOYEES!

DANIELLE: Insurance Coordinator



Danielle started with CROMFS in July of 2013 and is one of the newest additions to the group. Born in Omaha Nebraska, Danielle grew up cheering on the Nebraska Cornhuskers. Although from NE she is a Denver Broncos fan so we let it slide. Once settled in Colorado, she grew up in Aurora as well as Colorado Springs but now calls Castle Rock her home. She was a competitive gymnast for eight years at the Colorado Gymnastic Institution in Aurora as well as State Champion for a few years running! After graduating from high school, she pursued her college education at Intellitec Medical Institute and graduated from the Dental Assisting Program. Her experience includes working in both general dentistry and oral surgery practices although she prefers oral surgery. She enjoys the daily interaction she has with patients as well as the various types of surgeries performed in the field. During her free time, Danielle likes to work out, do yoga and be with her family. She loves all outdoor activities especially hiking, bouldering, rock climbing and doing the Incline!

DEZI: Surgical Assistant



Dezi is originally from Salt Lake City, UT, but moved to Colorado after attending college in Ephraim, UT. We call her Dez, not to be confused with Des on the Bachelor with which we are all secretly obsessed. She is our encyclopedia of random facts always teaching us a new fact every day. Dezi is a new addition to our team and loves working as a Surgical Assistant at CROMFS. She enjoys giving patients the best care possible as well as learning from Dr. Hart and her fellow assistants. During her free time, Dezi is a master of cake baking and decorating and we love getting to be her guinea pigs on her newest flavors. She loves to camp, play volleyball and go to the dog park with her dog Bailey.

CROMFS 2ND ANNUAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARD



The 2nd Annual Scholarship Award was awarded to Amber S. of Elizabeth! She was extremely excited to receive her award and will be attending Northeastern Junior College. Thank you to all our referrals who had patients enter to win. Our third scholarship award is now open for applicants. The drawing will be held April 1st, 2014. Students must be 14 years or older and a wisdom teeth patient of CROMFS. Let your students know!

NEW OFFICE PHOTOS



TOP 10 WAYS TO DESTROY YOUR PRACTICE
(when promoting your dental practice)

by Howie Horrocks & Mark Dilatush!

We're not really sure who invented the "Top 10" format of communication. It could have been David Letterman, maybe it was ESPN - who knows. But dentists seem to like this format, so we decided to use the popularity to help readers in this issue.



#10: NO BUDGET...

This doesn't necessarily mean "no money." What it really means is that most dentists do not have a uniform amount of money that they invest in the promotion of their practice each and every month/year. You own a business. Few (if any) businesses can continue to grow without an established promotion budget. There are some areas of the country that have such a shortage of dentists that one could certainly grow a dental practice without ever spending any money on promotion. But even in an area where there is a shortage of dentists - do you want your dream practice in two years - or ten? If you are in a good market and you promote your practice properly, it can be as predictable as a Chia-Pet.

#9: NO CONSISTENCY...

We aren't being judgmental (far from it). We are just asking you to be a little introspective. Think back when things were really going good in your practice. Your schedule book is full, production is on the rise, heck, even your staff is happy because they are making their bonus - what is the last thing you are thinking about doing with some of your money? Right! Why would you? On the other hand, when things are slowing down, your staff is whining because they aren't making bonus, you have two openings in your schedule TODAY, and cash flow is getting tight - what is the last thing you have an abundance of? Right, money! Now you are trapped. Both of these scenarios are traps. One is a "happy trap," the other is a "sad trap" - but they are both traps. The solution to never being trapped again is to always have a budget and always promote your practice (and do it properly). If you do, the highs will be higher, the lows won't be as low, and you will never feel trapped again.

#8: MISUNDERSTANDING THE CONSUMER...

Dentists (and/ or the people they direct to promote their offices) tend to think WAY too much like dentists and not enough like dental consumers. A dentists' understanding of dentistry is significantly higher than the understanding of the dental consumer. Too many dentists communicate at a level much higher than the consumer. So high in fact, that the dental consumer all but dismisses the message.

#7: NOT RECOGNIZING THE VALUE OF WHAT YOU DO...

We have a saying here. "If your offer in your advertising is your best foot forward - you have no feet!" Dentists calm fearful patients every day. Dentists diagnose serious diseases every day. Dentists SAVE teeth every day. Dentists improve the self image of their patients every day. We could go on forever. The point is, the dental consumer (many of them) would rather hear those things than hear that you offer a \$69 initial exam. It's not that the \$69 initial exam price isn't important - it is. But heck, what else do you do? Are \$69 exams the ONLY thing you do? See how silly that question looks on paper? Is that the perception in your marketplace?

#6: IMPROPER BUDGET ALLOCATION...

This ties in with having a budget. Once you have a budget allocated to the promotion of your dental practice, what are you going to do with those dollars? Unfortunately, that decision is usually dictated by which ad rep happens to call the office or take you out to lunch! It might be the Yellow Page rep, the local newspaper sales rep

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