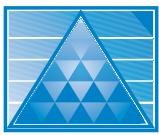


New School Marketing for 2012

In these challenging times, it is essential that every orthodontic practice focus on creating new levels of **AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT** and **COMMITMENT** with their existing patients, potential new patients and their medical/dental community! The good news is that the survey responses gathered from the Pride Institute's Practice Opportunity Assessment illustrate that orthodontists are keenly sensitive to the need for a more modern and effective marketing strategy.



BY ROSS VERA
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Pride
INSTITUTE

A whopping 80% of respondents said that Marketing was their #1 practice management priority. The bad news is that the same assessment indicates that most are not taking any action to address this primary challenge. Everyone knows the old saying, "Insanity is repeating the same behavior, but expecting different results." So these statistics prompt some perplexing questions. Why are orthodontists so hungry for marketing solutions? And consequently, if they are so hungry, why are they doing so little to actively court new medical/dental referring relationships, and directly market in the community in order to draw new patients into the practice?

Surely the industry is flooded with options! A casual glance back in time, even just a decade, reveals a market in a state of blissful abundance. We experts promoted our ability to lead your team to a state of controlled growth and a great work-life balance that busy practices often lack. Unfortunately, we are singing a different tune now. At this moment, because of the economy and increased competition in both the specialty and dental community, blissful abundance is long gone. The passive approach to growing an orthodontic practice will no longer do. One simple answer to the above questions is that many orthodontists aren't confident about how to approach and succeed in the very thing they may need most! So, it's back to the drawing board for those of you who are brave enough to invest your resources in your practice to focus on growth. Tried and true internal marketing will always make a difference. Referring dentists and allied health care professionals cannot be ignored. And "new school" online marketing and social media strategies are absolutely essential elements to continuous improvement in 2012 and beyond. In short, the latest marketing strategies provide you with a blueprint to create new levels of awareness, relationships and conversion to case starts. Learn and assimilate these new skills and tools to market your practice effectively and thrive. Choose not to and... struggle.

SOCIAL MEDIA – YOUR NEW REFERRAL ENGINE

Acquiring new patients by referral from existing patients continues by far to be the most cost effective and easiest way of growing your practice. The Social Media age doesn't change this one bit! In fact, it magnifies the

equation. Word of mouth has now become world of mouth! You know the basic premise: a referral is a genuine testament to how much your patients value your practice. Patients and their parents recommend your practice to others when their clinical and customer service expectations have been met and exceeded. Patients who act as referrers to your practice are, in fact, your ambassadors – your raving fans! In the old days, I would tell my wife, my buddy, and probably a co-worker or two. Now I can tell approximately 322 people in the blink of an eye! Now that's an ambassador on steroids!!

GET THEM TWEETING

The primary objective of the entire team is still to create raving fans who constantly recommend you to their loved ones. But now, they will also “Yelp,” “Tweet,” and submit “online reviews”, which will drive more new patient prospects to you in far greater numbers. Because of the new social media component, the verbal skills to engage your patient ambassadors are fundamentally different. It's always been about a great experience for the patient, which doesn't change. What does change, is the formerly shotgun approach of asking every patient or parent for a referral following a compliment about the practice. Don't misunderstand, that's still important. But what needs to be added to the standard referral is your team's ability to identify and engage the powerful social butterflies of the online world. These are the individuals who take enormous pride in the size of their personal Internet fiefdoms (Facebook, Yelp and Twitter) and pledge to pass on the secrets of living the good life to their subjects. No joke! Each and every digital pronouncement about a great experience is a plea for social validation, something we all crave. So how do we encourage our patients to pass on their great experience to others? By asking! Here is how:

Let's say a patient compliments a member of the team. We could say:

“Thank you so much for telling me that! You know, we love getting compliments from our patients. It really makes our day. We also love it when our patients shout it from the

rooftops by posting those compliments online! Would you be willing to post this compliment on our Google or Yelp profile? I can even send you the link and type up what you said to make it really easy for you...”

Some patients will say no. That should not stop you. We routinely coach our teams to steadily build their online review bank, and it works!

The Social Media age continues to present paradigm shifts to all businesses, including ours. But beneath these shifts, traditional laws continue to operate.

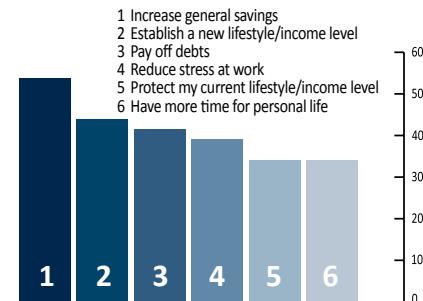
REFERRAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE STILL HERE... JUST DIFFERENT

So why do referring dentists and allied professionals refer? This is straightforward. The thinking is “If you can do something well, that I don't know how to do well, or don't like to do, I may refer to you. If you can make life easier for me, I may refer to you. If my patients like you and you make me look good for referring them to you, I may refer to you. But if you violate any of the above, I probably won't refer to you.”

Superimposing the new world of Internet and Social Media, the law operates in augmented fashion. Historically, most of the proof source of the criteria above was demonstrated through conventional methods like mailed x-rays and individual patient word of mouth. Now, a referring dentist can easily go to Yelp and learn that a patient thought the specialist's team was rude or the dentist “doesn't give a damn about anything but money.” (That's a real review excerpt!) Do you think the referrer will hesitate to refer, knowing very little else about the specialist? Consider it for a minute. How can I, knowing that my patients read sites like Yelp, send my patients to providers with scorching negative reviews right out there in the open? It's a huge dilemma! Fortunately, the converse is that your Google review page may be flooded by 4 and 5 star reviews saying all of the positive things that the referring dentist wants his patients to feel about his referral choice. Do you think you could use that data to your advantage in your personal communications with your referring

What are your clients looking for in their lives?

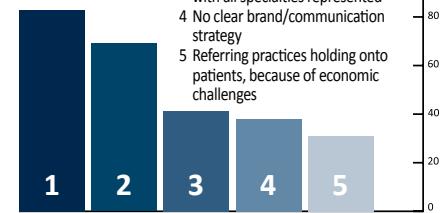
Which of the following life style goals would you like to focus on in the next 12 months? Choose up to three.



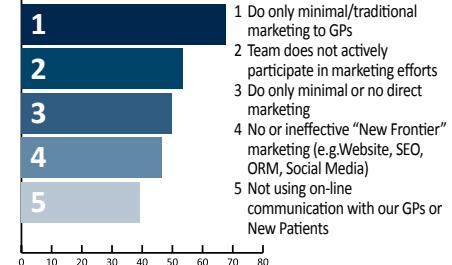
What are doctors looking for in their practices?



What challenges are doctors facing? External Challenges



What challenges are doctors facing? Marketing Challenges



New School Marketing Continued



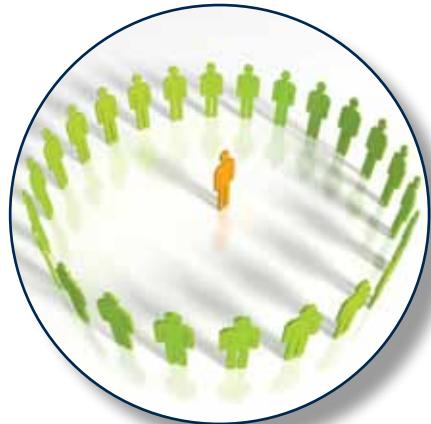
HOW DO I CONTINUE TO GROW IN A CHALLENGING ECONOMY?

In these challenging times, it is essential that every orthodontic practice focus on creating new levels of AWARENESS, ENGAGEMENT and COMMITMENT with their existing patients, potential new patients and their medical/dental community!



WE ASK OUR PATIENTS FOR REFERRALS, ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?

The primary objective of the entire team is still to create raving fans who constantly recommend you to their friends and family and even acquaintances. But now, they will also "Yelp," "Tweet" and submit "online reviews", which will drive more new patient prospects to you in far greater numbers.



WHY INVEST TIME IN MARKETING TO OTHER DENTISTS?

So why do referring dentists and allied professionals refer? This is straightforward. The thinking is "If you can do something well, that I don't know how to do well, or don't like to do, I may refer to you. If you can make life easier for me, I may refer to you. If my patients like you and you make me look good for referring them to you, I may refer to you. But if you violate any of the above, I probably won't refer to you."

doctors? Would it carry weight in your newsletter? Would it look good in your direct marketing campaign or your new patient packet? You bet it would! Again, the key is to create a remarkably positive experience for your patients. But to go "out-of-the-box" just a bit, you can engender good will amongst your referring providers by asking your patients to generate positive reviews for them. Simply repurpose the script above and send a link with instructions for posting on their Yelp, Dr Oogle, or Doctor Base page. Finally, don't forget to notify the practice that they received a compliment and you supported them by requesting a stellar online review.

STANDING OUT IN VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

So if you are ready to begin to put your toes in the waters of social media strategies, where do you begin? It all starts with your primary source of real-estate in your online community – your website! A website is a key component of any dental practice marketing plan. Admittedly, it is almost cliché at this point, which is sad. Previously no more than an online brochure, your website can now position you to recruit patients, internally, market your practice more effectively, invite testimonials, and create interactive engaging experiences with all who click on your site. It's a 24-hour virtual community that enhances relationships with

existing patients, referring practices and potential new patients. What most orthodontists don't understand is that search engines like Google host web-wide competitions for websites and businesses to duke it out for the attention of consumers. If your website is your real estate in a virtual community, your neighborhood is where you place when someone does an orthodontist search. The art of search placement is called Search Engine Optimization (organic) and Search Engine Marketing (pay per click). Google will reward those who know best how to play the game. If you have the right trainers (hosting company, site designers, consultants, etc.), your website can stand atop the online search rankings ready to seize the next patient who comes along looking for braces. And that's just the beginning. So get off the ropes, get solid trainers, and get in the game!

If everyone agrees that marketing is vital for growth in 2012 and that new school solutions offer the biggest, most immediate return on resource investment, then let the action planning begin! Start with your internal marketing, followed by the website, SEO/SEM strategies and head straight into the wonderful world of social media. If you aren't confident in how to approach your plan – choose your experts wisely. Our goal is to find in our next surveys that orthodontists have not only risen to the marketing challenge – but are experiencing results!