

Use incentives

Incentives work! People are motivated by money and appreciate the opportunity to make more of it. With a good incentive program, staff members will increase their production and create a win-win situation for you and themselves.

Over-deliver everything

The key to becoming wealthy is to give more in value than what you are receiving. This creates trust and loyalty. You need to put your patients first, even if it's inconvenient. For example, you should make appointments easy and provide a comfortable checking in and waiting experience, perhaps offering a snack and drink bar, warm towels, or a hand massage. Set up the ability to make payments chairside and offer terms that are easy for your

patients to handle. Whatever you can do to make the dental office experience beyond the customary and into the extraordinary will be over-delivery of services.

DISCUSSION

It's important to invest in your practice if you want to see success, growth, and an exciting future. Tracking your progress, putting forth the effort needed to achieve your goals, offering incentives, handling frustration proactively, and over-delivering on everything are essential to achieving your goals.

Geier J: 20 years of lessons learned. *Dent Econ* 107:42, 44, 99, 2017

Reprints not available

Learning marketing tools



BACKGROUND

Business consultants can help to move a dental practice forward, but there are some things that the dentist can do to become educated about marketing that will enhance the process. Understanding business marketing concepts helps dentists position their practices to differentiate themselves from the others and be more successful. A good starting point involves understanding some basic marketing concepts.

SEGMENTATION, TARGETING, AND POSITIONING

All marketing decisions are based on the foundation of segmentation, targeting, and positioning (STP). Before launching any marketing plan, it's important to identify the segment of the population to be reached. Segments are based on several determinants, such as demographics (age, race, marital status, occupation, education, income), geographic location (area of the city or state or a space defined by school or employer), lifestyle and/or interests (outdoors, technology, fashion), and behavior (those sensitive to price or motivated by benefits).

Once the segment has been identified, targeting and positioning come into play. Targeting involves evaluating how best to reach the selected audience, usually based on common characteristics. Finally, the dentist should position the practice to deliver the product and the experience promised to this segment.

ADDING PRODUCT, PRICE, PROMOTION, AND PLACE

After taking care to identify the segment being targeted and position a practice to deliver what that population expects, it may be time to bring in an experienced marketing expert. This individual

can help the dentist evaluate the 4 Ps of marketing and incorporate them into the marketing plan. These Ps stand for product, price, promotion, and place.

Product

Just as it was important to identify the segment and determine how to reach them, it's equally important to identify what product that segment is looking for. The goal is to deliver a product that is highly desirable or unique.

Price

The expert can also help in setting prices for the product. The price set impacts the practice's margins, budget for marketing, supply and demand, laboratory selected, and many other aspects.

Clinical Significance

Getting started requires that the dentist identify the segment of the population he or she wants to reach and determine how his or her product will meet their needs. Then it's time to determine where the targeted patients can be reached with the message. It's important to clearly distinguish the practice from all its competitors and to build value for the services being offered. One thing that should be determined is how much the practice is already interacting with the target population. Putting all these things together and consulting with a marketing expert can craft marketing approaches that will help build success for the dental practice.

Promotion

The way the word gets to the selected segment is determined by where those potential patients are looking. There must be a strategy behind the choice, and it should be in line with the brand of dental office and product being offered.

Place

The right location depends on the target audience. It applies not just to the office's street address but also to how the office looks inside. If the goal is to reach technologically savvy patients, the office's technology should be up front and visible to patients when

they enter the office and throughout their experience there. The right location is a key ingredient in creating a unique product.

DISCUSSION

Careful consideration of the basic tools of STP and the 4 Ps can increase the dentist's success in marketing his or her dental practice.

Rindler E: STP and the four Ps of marketing in dentistry. *Inside Dent* 14:18-19, 2018

Reprints not available

Adding millennials as new patients



BACKGROUND

Millennial is the term used to identify people born between 1983 and 1997 who tend to display traits defined as sheltered, confident, team-oriented, conventional, pressured, and believing themselves to be special. They tend to delay marriage, often change jobs, and have perhaps the lowest birth rate in history. They have commonly borrowed huge amounts of money to pay for their schooling and graduated with college degrees during the Great Recession. This eclectic generation is technologically savvy, oriented toward engagement, pragmatic, diverse, and progressive. The question becomes, how do dental offices turn them into patients?

THE CHALLENGES

The qualities of millennials that drive their decision making can be challenging for the dental office. These include their engagement mindedness, their curiosity, and their practicality.

Millennials share a sense of community and seek to be engaged in organizations that promote and encourage their values. They want to feel like part of the organization and to be appreciated. To a millennial, this is what it means to be loved.

Millennials' curiosity is often the motivation behind their constant research before making a decision. They want to know everything about what they spend their money on and to believe in what they are purchasing. They use the technology available to them to become well informed and want to be involved in the provision of their care.

Financially, they are meticulous. They constantly feel they must be fiscally responsible, perhaps as a result of the Great Recession they experienced. Groupons can bring them into the office, but they then expect to get a great deal and can be difficult to satisfy if they don't get it.

THE ANSWERS

Addressing these qualities will sometimes take flexibility on the part of the dental office. To meet their need for engagement, it's important that millennials be greeted by name, quoted on the office website, and asked about their recent trips or their pets. It's important to personalize their experience so that they feel valued. In addition, if they miss an appointment, the office staff should help them know that they were missed. Ideally, they will feel they are truly loved and appreciated by the office and then they can commit to the plan of care.

To satisfy the millennial's curiosity and need to be informed and a part of the care decisions, dental professionals should plan to have a dialogue with these patients. Co-discovery is an effective technique because they become part of the solution to their own needs for dental care. Providing reliable, evidence-based resources where the millennials can do their own research can also satisfy their need to be aware of all the facts.

For millennials who come with a Groupon for an FMX, comp exam, and free cleaning, it's important that they get what they anticipate—a deal. If they require additional services for which there is an added fee, they can be unhappy. One of 3 responses is likely: (1) the patient gets the treatment completed but paying for it may take several monthly payments broken up over an extended period; (2) the patient looks for an office that provides the same service for less; or (3) the patient demands the prophylaxis as part of the coupon. These last 2 responses may signal a problematic patient and may not be the investment that was sought.

Some millennials will come because they just want the free cleaning and will be happy with it. Some are seeking a dental home and will respond if the office manager can honor their fiscal responsibility in some way, perhaps by responding with the small payments over a period of time. It's important to have a