

# Generating Patients For Your Dental Practice



Trying to attract new patients can be one of the most challenging parts of owning or working in a dental office. It can be hard to determine how, where, when, and who to market to, which is why we've put together our top tips to help you get started with a marketing plan to attract more customers to your practice.

## Developing a Marketing Plan

### 1 Define the Market

Defining who the patient base will be defines the market, and for most dentists this will be largely influenced by the location of your practice.

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### 2 Target Your Audience

Segment your audience into the groups you want to appeal to.

- Geographically based on where they live
- Specific demographics
- Psychographic segmentation—like if your office has a fear reduction program targeted at those afraid of dentists
- Behavioristic segmentation—like putting flyers up in locations, like a gym or health foods store, where people are more likely to participate in preventative health care measures

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### 3 Track the Effectiveness of Your Marketing Efforts

Ask patients how they heard about the office and use dental software to track the results so you examine the responses to see where you may be wasting advertising money versus where you may want to add more.

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## Marketing Strategies

### Internal strategies

Internal efforts focus the attention on the existing patients of the practice.

### External strategies

External efforts focus the effort on people who are not present patients of the practice.

#### Branding

Use your logo, stationery, advertising, office décor and ambience, staff training and attire, and website to drive consumer perception and offer consistent messages about the value of the service provided.

#### Insurance Plan Participation

Whether or not your practice participates in a given insurance plan has a large impact on generating patients for the practice.

#### Fees

The better the service solves the patient's problem, the more they are willing to pay for the service.

#### Credit Policy

Patients look more at the monthly cost of a payment plan than the total cost of the procedure, so the credit policy impacts how much dentistry you can "sell."

#### Facility

In addition to cleanliness, match décor (color, lighting, furniture, and open or closed operatory arrangement) to the desired clientele. Accessibility for disabled and geriatric patients is important too.

#### Communication

With verbal communication, everything from the words you use to the tone you say them with can affect how your patient feels about you or a procedure.

#### Information for Patients

Have brochures on common procedures or DVDs that explain what might happen during a procedure.

#### Asking for Referrals

Encourage patients to refer additional patients and consider developing a reward system for thanking them for referring others.

#### Public Relations

Public relations efforts often involve brochures or newsletters, which you can write or purchase already written.

#### Professional Relations

Let other professionals in the area know where you are and what you can do regarding patient referrals.

#### Signage

Keep the sign simple. The "40-40 rule" says that a person should be able to read a sign from 40 yards away at 40 miles per hour as they drive past.

#### Advertising and Promotions

Advertising channels include Yellow Pages, direct mail, radio or television advertising, or a website. Direct mail is more effective in blue-collar neighborhoods. Websites are more important for targeting a younger, more affluent group. Senior citizen newsletters, high school sport brochures, and new mother publications are effective media for their target audiences.

#### Websites

Websites can outline services, introduce the dentist and staff members, inform patients of hours and policies, and house downloadable forms for patients to complete before their visit.

#### Mailings

Target zip codes or areas near your office and use them for at least 3 to 4 months to imprint your name on the minds of those who receive the mailings.

#### Yellow Pages

Older clientele use Yellow Pages searches more than younger people, so use this method for that market.

For more ways to stay up-to-date in your field and find a range of dentistry resources to help you grow your practice, visit [www.wiley.com/learn/dentistry/](http://www.wiley.com/learn/dentistry/).