Think about how your patients’ attitudes will change once they know they have an oral healthcare provider who personally cares about them. One from whom they receive support all year round—not only in the form of a letter, but also with a lovely box delivered directly to their home containing all the necessary oral health care tools, information on oral health and a reminder for their next appointment. Your patients would eagerly await the arrival of this box since they read your personalised newsletters. What if patients could even engage in a continuous dialogue with your practice through a website and an app?

Most dentists care about, and like to read about, prevention. However, what matters in the end, is to have a tested concept or approach where prophylaxis at least pays your rent, equipment and salaries. New business models and concepts for prevention and oral care in dentistry require five things to succeed:

1. High-quality oral care products that are demonstrated in the practice to explain the reasons and necessity for daily oral care.
2. A high level of communication to increase involvement with existing and potential patients, ideally through digital media such as a website, app or social media.
3. An advanced marketing concept including easy-to-handle software, which supports recall management, patient communication and process optimisation.
4. Continuous education and motivation of one’s own practice team, who can then pass this new knowledge and motivation on to their patients.
5. A look and feel of the practice with consistent marketing material and practice interior.

Prevention One (P1) fulfils this purpose. It represents a holistic business model for the dental practice to activate, reanimate and motivate existing and new patients. Every dental practice has hundreds of inactive patients in their database, with no means to reactivate them. P1 unlocks this hidden potential and uses a full range of marketing services aimed at bringing the patient back to the practice. At the core of this practice concept are products and services for comprehensive home care for healthy patients.

A new business model
P1 is suitable for any dental practice and all its employees (the dentist, dental hygienist or assistant). It provides a preventive-oriented concept for dentists determined to add new services, pursue entrepreneurial success and increase their overall communication with patients. The entire team receives advanced training to provide better oral healthcare instructions to patients. By doing this, the entire team essentially helps build a base of more loyal patients.

P1 is designed to integrate easily into the practice, as it interacts with all existing dental and prophylaxis offers and therapies in the practice. No additional dental chairs or rooms are needed. The patient and the dental professional sit comfortably together at a specially designed table where both work on improving or maintaining the patient’s overall health. In order to get those patients to the table, P1 combines treatment programmes, oral care products, software, marketing and communication material and an educational programme for the entire practice team. Essentially, it covers all the important aspects of an oral health strategy for each day of the
Dentist Thomas Gasser and prophylaxis assistant Birgit Toffol, standing near Rathaus Street in Liestal close to their dental practice. They will soon be introducing P1 to their patients: “Our practice stands out from the competition and is prepared for future challenges, as is every clinic within our practice group,” said Gasser.
year, in other words, it provides a 360° degree approach to oral health.

A tailored dental fitness programme

Curaden developed P1 in partnership with other experts in oral health prevention, including the University of Zurich. “Many patients do not know what they should pay attention to and how important oral health is for their overall well-being. They do not know what tools and instruments they should use, what quality they should be looking for and how they should apply them,” explains Clifford zur Nieden, a member of the Curaden board of directors. “We will guide and coach them and provide continuous education and support. The patient—now called the client—does the actual training himself or herself, but they receive the proper introduction, guidance, information and motivation to stay on track. That is why we like to call P1 a dental fitness programme. A fitness programme tailored to the needs of each individual by the dental practice.”

The trainer, or P1 coach, is a dental hygienist or dental assistant in the dental practice. The P1 coach designs a specific training programme based on the individual patient’s requirements using a special P1 scoring tool, which forms the basis of an individual oral health strategy and becomes a means of measuring oral health. Based on the patient’s P1 score, the coach can develop an individual strategy for each patient to achieve the best possible result. Once this baseline is established, all improvements are made manageable and visible by achieving a higher score. Similar to a golf handicap, the patient is given one number, which is easy to remember and easy to work with.

A score to revolutionise oral health

The place? London. There are 8.7 million inhabitants and we’re close to the busy Oxford Street. Theodora Little prepares herself for her next patient at Holford Partners Curaden dental clinic. One can instantly recognise her red hair, radiant smile and motivational attitude. Every sentence she speaks conveys the feeling that dental schools should change the name of dental hygienists to oral healthcare specialists. Theodora is a dental hygienist, who graduated from King’s College in London in 2013 with a diploma in dental hygiene and therapy.

During her time at university, oral hygiene training was very theory-based, with a few representatives visiting to demonstrate and provide different products. Shamefully, she did not receive any interactive practical training on brushing from an instructor. As soon as she started practicing, she wanted to empower patients to maintain or improve their oral health. Unfortunately, owing to time constraints that the United Kingdom has implemented, she was not able to carry out an effective and thorough oral hygiene strategies by means of dedicating time to individual patients’ education and coaching.

In the UK, most dental hygienists have 20 to 30 minute appointments. Theodora has worked to this pressured sched-
ule in the past, so she understands how difficult it can be to carry out thorough oral hygiene and answer any questions the patient may have. Like many of her peers, she was left feeling empty at the end of each day and questioned whether she was really helping and making a difference to her patients’ lives. Since 2015, she has been fortunate to work in a clinic with hourly appointments. Last year, she went a step further.

Depending on the patient, the length of time between appointments varies. Some patients require more frequent appointments, such as every three to four months, whereas others may see her every six months. Now, as soon as Theodora welcomes a new patient, she prefers to start with P1—the development of a personalised oral health strategy. The result is that after the first session, patients usually request a recall after one, four or six weeks. How does that happen?

Professional cleaning, coaching and home care

In combination with individual coaching and dental care, Theodora has started using the scoring system. The score guides her patient through a multiple-choice questionnaire, beginning with oral hygiene aids and questions about how often they are used. It continues with the frequency of visits to a dentist and/or oral hygienist. The second part includes a health and lifestyle questionnaire and the third part includes the oral examination, which quantifies their plaque and bleeding index. At the end of these sections, the patient receives a score as a percentage. The patient and the coach look at the data together and discuss where and how they can improve the patient’s score.

At the end of the appointment, the patient receives a general score—the P1 score, which can then be compared to past and future scores to show the overall improvement in a patient’s health. The score helps her measure the patient’s individual oral health and gives her a modern instrument to communicate failures and suggest improvements easily. Theodora is convinced that the score works. “This method motivates my patients to carry out effective oral hygiene at home, because they want an improvement in their score at our next appointment,” she explains. “Even if a score only shows a small improvement, the patient feels happy and empowered by his or her own efforts. It really gets them involved. And I will smile, too, and be proud of them.” The positive information from the P1 score encourages the patient and the dental hygienist to progress further and put forth a greater effort on improving the patient’s general health. It helps that every patient wants to see Theodora smile.

The next step in prophylaxis

Liestal is a small, charming Swiss city close to Basel, with 14,000 inhabitants. In the centre of the city is Rathaus Street where three dental practices compete for patients from Monday morning until Friday afternoon. One of them is the newly designed practice “Die Zahnärzte” (German for “The Dentists”), part of a practice group with ten clinics in the Basel area. Open
365 days a year, with emergency services and multilingual medical and dental specialists for all disciplines, Die Zahnärzte invested a lot of time and effort into attracting new patients while keeping their existing ones. As of September 1st, 2017, Liestal will be home to the first P1 practice in Switzerland.

Thomas Gasser welcomes us at the practice with his assistant, Birgit Toffol. He has just come from one of the other practices in the centre of Basel. Thomas took the lead at the Liestal practice this year and spent a lot of time on the practice's interior and equipment. He speaks with confidence and pride about the latest addition to the Swiss dental practice group. The practice currently offers three dental units, a separate playroom and treatment room for children and the latest equipment. In fact, the practice can also be extended to six rooms, one of which will be dedicated to the treatment of physically handicapped and geriatric patients from September onwards. “Our practice stands out from the competition and is prepared for future challenges, as does every clinic within our group,” says Gasser.

One can sense Gasser’s passion for dentistry right away. He is determined to provide the best treatment for the lifelong preservation of teeth. A graduate in 2013 at the University of Basel, this tall, young man has been working on his PhD in endodontics. “Endodontics fascinates me as does dentistry in general. Our practice soon expects the delivery of the latest endo microscope and endo motor,” he says, smiling. “However, my work can only last if my patients improve their oral hygiene before and after our restorative treatments through continuous recall appointments. Prophylaxis is a prerequisite, should always be adapted to the individual situation and has to be presented to the patient together with a mirror. The value of prophylaxis for long-lasting restorations is undeniable.” For sustainable dentistry, dentists, dental hygienists and patients must work together as partners at Die Zahnärzte.

Gasser first came into contact with individually trained oral prophylaxis when dental hygienist Edith Maurer Bussink visited his class to present new interdental studies. “It was captivating to hear her explain oral health care instructions to the patient. In school, we were required to measure the plaque index and BOP index. Only then could we start the treatment,” he says. In 2012, he volunteered to work in Cambodia where a team of dentists also provided oral hygiene instructions to approximately 900 children in eight orphanages. Around 400 kilograms of dental supplies, among them CURAPROX products, were donated to dental students at a Cambodian dental school. "It was a great time that taught me a lot, both as a dentist and an advocate of prophylaxis worldwide.”

An increase in quality
When he first learned about P1, it reminded him of his time at university. “We use the plaque index, BOP, basically all of the parameters where we can measure the patients and help them improve their oral health. Communication with the patient has to be visual and we need to use digital health scores that are easily understandable for the patient instead of printed clinical records today.” This professional training in prophylaxis and first-hand contact with patients convinced him to see prophylaxis as a priority.

Die Zahnärzte have decided to test P1 as a way to remain up-to-date, use the latest scientific studies and cleaning methods, increase their service portfolio and simply stand out in Rathaus Street. Gasser adds that even a large group like Die Zahnärzte cannot afford advertising in print and digital media to attract new patients. At the same time, practices need to be visible online in order to gain a certain reputation. P1 takes over the patient promotion, leaving marketing in the hands of industry experts while giving Thomas and Theodora more time to focus on their patients. Essentially, the concept increases the quality of the practice’s work, by allowing more time to focus on patients and increasing the practice’s capacity.

Today, dentists need to adjust their practice concepts according to the patient and not the patient according to the concept. As a way to reactivate and get new patients, the dental practice needs to provide new concepts that suit the trend towards prevention. For these concepts, industry and academia have to work together. P1 gives the dental practice a tool for long-term patient satisfaction and recognition, measurable oral health and professionally educated employees. Just like software, it will be updated and upgraded regularly to address new market requirements. Practices will not only benefit from the latest insights and concepts in prophylaxis, but they will also profit from healthy and happy clients. London and Liestal are only the first examples. P1 will launch in Germany and other European countries later this year.