Let’s start with the most consistent problem we find through the tabulation of patient questionnaires. Patients will not know that you are accepting new patients, and most of the ones who assume or know that you are, are not motivated to refer their friends and family members. On average, 50 percent of patients assume that you are not accepting new patients! Why? You are not communicating that important fact to them, be it verbally or more importantly, visually.

Visual communication is the key to encouraging patients to remember important information presented to them. We recall up to 80 percent of what is presented to us visually compared to less than 10 percent of what is presented through verbal communication. Walk through your office. Are you communicating to patients visually? It is a proven fact that we must repeat something at least seven times before people will retain the information.

Are you communicating to your patients seven times that you accept new patients? You may think this is too much, but in reality, it is very simple to do. Place it on your business card, appointment card, yellow page ad, website, your television systems in your treatment rooms and reception area, outdoor signage, on your wall facing patients in the dismissal area, on your main entrance door, on your on-hold system on your telephone, your custom brochure and your own custom gift card. That was 11 instances.

In addition, there are so many other opportunities to communicate that one simple point, which in turn will be of great importance in building your business!

First, inter-mixing verbal and visual communication is of great importance. Your receptionist is so important in so many aspects of your business. He or she is the first individual whom your patients will meet, speak with, and in most cases, the last person they will speak to when they are exiting your office. Take advantage of the few moments at the end of a visit by communicating the fact that you are accepting new patients, as it is the last piece of information that your patients will hear when they leave your office.

I would suggest that the individual dismissing your patient say something like, “Mrs. Smith, I would like to give you a couple of our new office brochures. If you get a chance to give them to a friend or family member, we always appreciate your referrals.” This is a very good way of presenting the information verbally and reinforcing with a visual idea. There are so many ways to do this, and it is important for your team to have systems in place to comfortably ask for referrals.

Take full advantage of the internal marketing opportunities in your practice. Much less expensive than eternal advertising, once you have the proper team members that create enthusiasm and excitement in your office, internal marketing will help you build your practice more than external marketing in almost all cases.

Secondly, one of the most overlooked aspects of marketing is the “experience” of visiting the dentist. Creating an enjoyable experience through proper team enthusiasm is by far one of the most important ingredients to maintaining and building your patient...
base. The “spa” type practices are certainly building through such simple ideas as hot towels, the new massage dental chairs, warm blankets, televisions in the ceilings, headphones, video games for the kids, a pleasing atmosphere, etc.

Enhancing the experience of the dental visit can be one of the most important aspects to help you build your practice. It is also important that if you have any of these amenities, you should include it in your advertising. Every dentist offers crowns, but few offer many of the amenities just listed.

This brings up a very important point when it comes to advertising and marketing. What sets you apart? What are patients looking for when they are selecting a new product or service? The answer is: benefits! What are the benefits of becoming your patient, as compared to the practice down the street? For that matter, why visit the dentist at all when I could take that same piece of expendable income and go on a vacation or buy a new car?

Your communication, both internally and externally, is of such great importance, yet most offices have no idea how many opportunities they miss due to a lack of proper and effective marketing or communication. Nevertheless, let’s talk benefits. These are what set you apart and make the difference in your advertising and creating a sense of urgency through a professional offer.

So, what are the benefits of visiting your dental office? Consider this carefully; as mentioned, the experience of visiting your practice is huge when gaining or retaining patients. However, your experience and continuing education is vital to growth. The more you know, the more you can help patients, and this of course will increase the possibility of more patients visiting your practice.

Most practitioners feel awkward communicating the fact that they are taking continuing education courses to improve themselves to be of more help to their patients. Most patients will feel more at ease and certainly quite happy knowing that their dentist is on the “cutting edge” when it comes to their dental care.

In closing, communicating visually, understanding the importance of your front office team, your continuing education, the patient experience and benefits are some of the keys to growing your practice. Taking this and creating a professional marketing plan with team members designated for implementing such a plan will certainly elevate you to success.