It’s not always about you

By Louise Malcmacher, DDS

E very dentist that I meet thinks that for some reason he or she is a master advertiser and marketer. The dental ads you see primarily are basically a cheap thrill ego trip where the dentist’s face is plastered all over the ad and the copy reads about how absolutely wonderful the doctor is.

I have a simple lesson that I would like to teach you about marketing to consumers that I hope you will take to heart. The American public, the average consumer, your patient, at the end of the day, does not care about you, your education, your car, your clothes, your house, your kids or your life. Your patients care about themselves! If they are coming to you for treatment for anything, it is in order to make themselves look and feel better, not to make you look and feel better.

Let’s learn together some examples of where dental marketing should be from the leaders in dental advertising and marketing to consumers. Right now the two best-known dental companies known to consumers are 1-800-DENTIST and the Lumineers Smile Discovery Program.

Lesson No. 1
The first lesson to learn from both of these companies as they advertise to the American consumer is the lesson of branding. People recognize their names as soon as they hear them and they understand the purpose of what they do. Most dentists think that their personal name is the brand of their office. You couldn’t be more wrong. We brand our office 25 years ago by calling it The Healthy Smile. Everyone in our community knows the name, The Healthy Smile, because of our external marketing efforts. Come up with a good branded name to help patients remember who you are and what you do.

Lesson No. 2
The second big lesson we can learn is to identify what patients want first and advertise to their needs and wants, not to yours. Their No. 1 concern is themselves. If a patient needs a dentist today for an emergency or needs a simple cleaning for a month from now, 1-800-DENTIST can help him or her find that dentist. The Lumineers Smile Discovery Program advertises to what the patient wants, which is minimally invasive, no pain esthetic dentistry, with little or no anesthesia.

Lesson No. 3
The third lesson we can learn from both of these companies is how to talk to patients and how to treat them when you have them on the phone. Our office recently received referrals from both of these programs. The patients came in with this independent referral in both cases, which was very meaningful to the patient. They had never met the people they had spoken to but were still told how wonderful our office is. Treatment acceptance is then so easy once a referral like that comes into the office.

Going beyond
There is a lot more to external marketing than what has been presented here. An esthetic Web site is essential for every dental practice. You should be outsourcing your Web site to a company that has well prepared modules that you can just add your name and address to. We looked at about 15 different companies before deciding on Prosites, which is a Web site company that came from the plastic surgery field. They provide some of the esthetic Web sites in dentistry at a reasonable cost. You can visit www.prosites.com/smile for their meeting specials.

With a soft economy, external marketing is even more important than ever. You need to do everything you can get to new patients into your office without wasting your money. External marketing takes time, money and the ability to try different things. I sincerely recommend outsourcing and carefully evaluating most of your external marketing to companies that can do it much better than we dentists can ourselves. Hopefully, this article gave you a little insight as to what is involved in doing a great job to help you create the practice of your dreams.

About the author
Louis Malcmacher is a practicing general dentist in Bay Village, Ohio, and an internationally known lecturer, author and dental consultant known for his comprehensive and entertaining style. An evaluator for Clinicians Reports (formerly Clinical Research Associates), Malcmacher has served as a spokesman for the AGD and is a consultant to the Council on Dental Practice of the American Dental Association. He works closely with dental manufacturers as a clinical researcher in developing new products and techniques. For close to three decades, Malcmacher has inspired his audiences and consulting clients to truly enjoy doing dentistry by providing the knowledge necessary for excellent clinical and practice management. His group dental practice has maintained a 45 percent overhead since 1988. You can contact him at (440) 892-1810 or e-mail dryozwa@mail.com. You can also see his lecture schedule at www.commonsense.dentistry.com and sign up for his affordable monthly consulting programs, teleconferences, audio CDs and free monthly e-newsletter.