Touting your wares

Sheila Scott, business consultant to dentists and their teams, discusses the power and focus of dental practice promotions

How much are you spending on promotions?

A significant number of practices are spending a lot of money on marketing promotions at the moment – particularly to attract those interested in cosmetic treatments. A quick web search in your region for whitening, invisible braces, veneers and other cosmetic treatments including facial aesthetics, will throw up countless practices chasing the cosmetic holy grail – the new patient who needs a makeover. And there are offers galore: benefits and discounts on advertisements, articles, flyers, web offers, special days and open sessions.

Sustainable marketing expenditure

Now, the practices that are spending on marketing are undoubtedly building profile and attracting new patients. But do you think that the long-term benefit of this expenditure will be well worth the cost? It is totally concerned with cosmetic opportunities. What if a number of these new cosmetic patients accepted a course of treatment and then disappear? If you’re not also working hard to encourage them to become regular attendees, that could cost you dearly.

Promotion can become a vicious cycle that makes existing patients feel uneasy in those who already have a dental health. If you don’t want to give them that much attention, you can help them to keep strong and healthy, and help keep problems at bay!

Encouraging referral

If you’re already doing all of this, can you please now think about giving your patients some ‘free’ dental health advice to tell their friends about, or to pass onto other friends who might be interested? Can you please dedicate most of the space on your website to telling patients how you can help them to keep strong and healthy, and help keep problems at bay?

And if you must produce some promotions, can you think of ways to prove your attention to the most important things that patients want from practices...

1. To trust their dentist and
2. To receive care and treatments that improve the health of teeth and gums

Once you’ve set the scene as a totally health-focused practice worthy of the patients’ trust, you should find that occasional promotions for cosmetic treatments, promoted as an adjunct to the health-based care you offer, attracts more new patients and interest from existing patients without causing that little bit of unease in those who already think you’re wonderful.