Hitting the jackpot

Most dentists are sitting on a potential gold mine, but don’t realise it. But with an effective strategy, your profits could soar, explains Bhavna Doshi

Every day, we diagnose the need for certain dental procedures that will benefit our patients, which could potentially bring in more revenue. Every day we help patients with their pain and discomfort—whether it’s of a biological nature, of structural deterioration or to emotionally charge our patients with confidence. Every day, we provide solutions and answers to these maladies.

Why then, if we are doing so much good, aren’t we generating the revenue that we desire? The answer lies in the need to develop strategies to uncover the wealth within your practice. If you were to take a closer look at your patient charts, you’ll discover there is a huge amount of dentistry you have previously diagnosed. However, not all of this is treated dentistry and hasn’t been transferred from your patient charts to the mouths of your patients. Why not?

The wrong focus

Most dentists concentrate on acquiring new patients and tend to use traditional marketing methods. By following this trend though, there’s only the opportunity to be 10 to 20 per cent better than your competitors. This is because most dentists are focused on improving existing strategies—this way they will only get improved results.

To make advances and see hidden opportunities you need to change the strategies for changed results. You need to step aside from traditional methods and seek out newer, fresher methods and strategise them into processes that you can use to implement all the systems within your practice.

The first process you need to revise is how you can get patients to go ahead with the dentistry you have already recommended to them. You need to set up a filter system to determine what procedures are still relevant from your initial diagnosis and what ones are no longer needed.

It consumes less time, money, effort and energy to re-focus on your existing patients than it does to reassemble a new market. You develop new patients. Working on your existing database is crucial because you are already developed rapport with your patients. Your existing patients know and understand you; then they know you, you already have a database to work from; it’s easier to find out what your current patients want than to explore new territories; you’ve already talked to them about the work they need, so you will just be reinforcing that need and supplying evidence to support why they should go ahead with it.

Effective selling techniques

To make this work, you’ll need to implement the strategies of internal marketing and use all the media available to you to get a greater level of case acceptance. For example:

1. Direct marketing
   a. Personalised newsletters or letters informing your current patient base on all the latest news in dentistry and what you are currently providing for your patients. The aim is to remain in contact with your patient family so that when they think of dentistry, they think of you and no one else.
   b. Show off your work by providing your patients with before and after photographs. You can display these in your practice or you can directly show an interested patient with similar wants in dentistry.
   c. Use a patient questionnaire to advocate any concerns the patient may have regarding dentistry. This can be sent to them in the mail or filled out in the practice and then marketing time allocated to discuss this. Often all patients need is time quality time spent with them.

2. Indirect marketing
   a. Any senior member of your staff or you yourself can interview and spend time with your patients to determine any concerns the patient may have. This process can be made more effective if you were to go through a set of oral photographs. This will enable you to make the patients aware of the situation in their mouths. This will help patients to accept your recommended dentistry better.
   b. Put up pictures of other patients you have treated around your practice for patients to continuously be exposed to what you can do for them also.
   c. Customer service to all patients. Do whatever you can to make your patients life easy whilst they are in your care and with you. For example, offer them tea and coffee. Use your imagination to explore all the small things you can do to become a talking point for your patients later on. It could be simple gestures such as remembering their birthdays and having a little in-surgery celebration.
   d. We live in a service-oriented world and increasingly patients are becoming more used to being treated with care. Create a motif to treat all your patients like celebrities. This is how patients are more likely to refer other people to you and help you to grow that pot of gold right before your very eyes.

Get out there

You need to network. Networking comes in many guises, but the type you need to focus on initially is networking with your existing patient base. Here are some pointers:

- Understand who your patients are. Find out where they like to go and what fills their annual lives. Are they in business or part of any local community organisations? This knowledge will allow you to communicate better with them—you’ll be seen more as a friend and advisor than just their dentist. It will also give you the opportunity to be seen

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