Giving something back to the profession

*Dental Tribune* speaks to Mike Volk Sales and Marketing director at The Dental Directory on celebrating the 40-year-old business

**DT:** How will The Dental Directory be celebrating the 40 year landmark?

**MV:** What’s interesting is that if we go back 40 years, the chairman Gordon Mills, who started the business thought that to celebrate 40 years we would run our largest ever promotional campaign – The Value + campaign. So, from September onwards we will be carrying promotions on 1000s of everyday, essential product lines; it will be our biggest ever promotional push and we’re doing it because of these economic times. We're trying to help our customers; we appreciate that fewer people are going to the dentist and that both private and NHS dentistry are suffering. Also, dentists are facing unprecedented increases in regulatory costs, so we thought we’d help our customers and offer them even better value and that’s why we’ve put out these promotional offers.

**DT:** What kind of lines are you looking at?

**MV:** Oh everything, from anaesthetics to composites, to rotary hand instruments right across the board; it’s our top moving line. We’re taking between 17 and 30 per cent off our retail prices, depending on the product, so it’s going to be a big push from us to help our customers in these difficult times.

We're doing special flyers and advertising and our 28-strong sales team will be communicating these prices to our customers. And the interesting thing about our guys, unlike all other dealer reps, is that they don’t get paid commission. There’s no incentive for them to over-sell, they’re purely there to sell the products and promotions and help our customers in any way that our customers want us to help them.

**DT:** So you keep old pieces until they discontinue them completely?

**MV:** Yes – and we’ve got loads of those sorts of products; we’re buying six units a month of these types of products to satisfy just five or six customers. It’s difficult, but it’s all part of the service, loyal to a product, they will stay with that product, even if the manufacturers make a new model!

**DT:** So how long is the offer running for?

**MV:** The promotions will run until the end of December; however, we’ll refresh them at the end of each month, adding even more products!

**DT:** What about the more philanthropic side of the business? I understand that The Dental Directory is very supportive of the profession too?

**MV:** Yes – we support about 13 professional groups in the UK. Examples include the AOG through to DPL through to CODE. We offer their members exclusive promotions, but more importantly we offer a rebate to the managing committee to further the aims and objectives, which are often of a charitable nature, of each group. We also support the provision of education through bursaries; an example of one is the bursary we provided for the MSc in Reconstructive and Aesthetic dentistry delivered by the University of Manchester and Smile-on. In the last three to four years we’ve put back into the profession more than £1m in various ways, including a new Dental Chair in primary dental care at the University of Warwick Medical School. We do support the profession; however I’m surprised that a lot of the larger multinational companies, whether they be dealers or manufacturers, don’t support the profession more and instead leave it to smaller, family owned businesses.

At the end of the day, without the profession The Dental Directory would not exist, so we’re happy to give something back.