Thinking outside the metal box: Why wait?

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During the course of the last decade, the patient pendulum has shifted from “Do I have to wear braces?” to wanting to show off those braces via a “selfie” (also known as a self portrait with a camera at arm’s distance) that is posted to the Internet via a social media site. With this pendulum shift, there is a much stronger desire to show off a smile, face, body or unique personality, and many people, importantly, to describe the experience. It is a newfound freedom that all generations are taking advantage of.

What’s interesting about this new method of sharing data shows that 67 percent of consumers read online business reviews and 70 percent will trust a business review that has 6 to 10 reviews. Further, when an online review is read, 58 percent of readers say that the positive customer reviews will affect their decision making (http://socialmediatoday.com/douglaskary/56225/infographics-why-do-people-write-online-reviews).

Dentists today offer their adult patients tooth-colored fillings, tooth whitening, veneers and caps. Dermatologists offer skin resurfacing and peels, plus Botoks™ to combat wrinkles. Plastic surgeons offer no end of surgical and non-surgical body and face enhancements.

The common thread among these practitioners is the proactive and aggressive approach to discussing esthetics with the patients. In July 2011, a Los Angeles Times article offered that orthodontic technology had advanced right alongside that of cosmetic procedures and that there are now options that provide that “esthetic look” while in treatment, especially for adult patients who are now “opening wide” for braces (Mascarelli, Amanda Leigh. Focus on Dental Health; Braces Grow Up: Los Angeles Times, July 4, 2011, Home Edition, E-1).

These are the cosmetic specialities, including orthodontics, that are being impacted by this wave of patients who want to be seen and heard. A visit to www.healthgrades.com, or a review of your competitors’ websites, will illustrate how positive testimonials and/or referrals are a part of the equation to being successful, helping esthetic services gain ground in consumer health services. The other part of that equation is setting your practice apart by offering a differentiated product.

Historically, the metal bracket has been the bracket of choice, primarily because of functionality, durability and overall legacy of dependability. However, ceramic and lingual brackets now interest patients of all ages and especially the ones who also want fashion and discretion. And because it is this generation of consumer that will provide a testimony of their orthodontic experience, who will take that selfie of their smile and tweet or send a message via Facebook, an orthodontic office with esthetic choices can capitalize on an opportunity to differentiate themselves via the latest social media vehicle.

Today, it is 3M Unitek that offers the orthodontic esthetic solutions to meet the growing demand of consumers who want treatment options that help them be beautiful while becoming more beautiful.

• Clarity™ ADVANCED Ceramic Brackets, incorporating SmartClip™ Self-Ligating System lets you move directly from appliance to your own picture and add Clarity ADVANCED Ceramic Braces or Victory Series™ Low-Profile Braces to their smile. Then they can personalize the braces with colorful Alastik™ Ligatures and send the image via e-mail, Twitter and Facebook to friends and family. The website app has also been optimized for mobile and tablet use.

The 17th Annual 3M Unitek Summit will address the shift to esthetic orthodontics and discuss how you can win in orthodontics. Now offered in two great locations, you can enjoy the desert or the city while unlocking the secrets to winning the patient game and “thinking outside the metal box.” For more information, contact your 3M Unitek sales representative at (800) 423-4588.

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