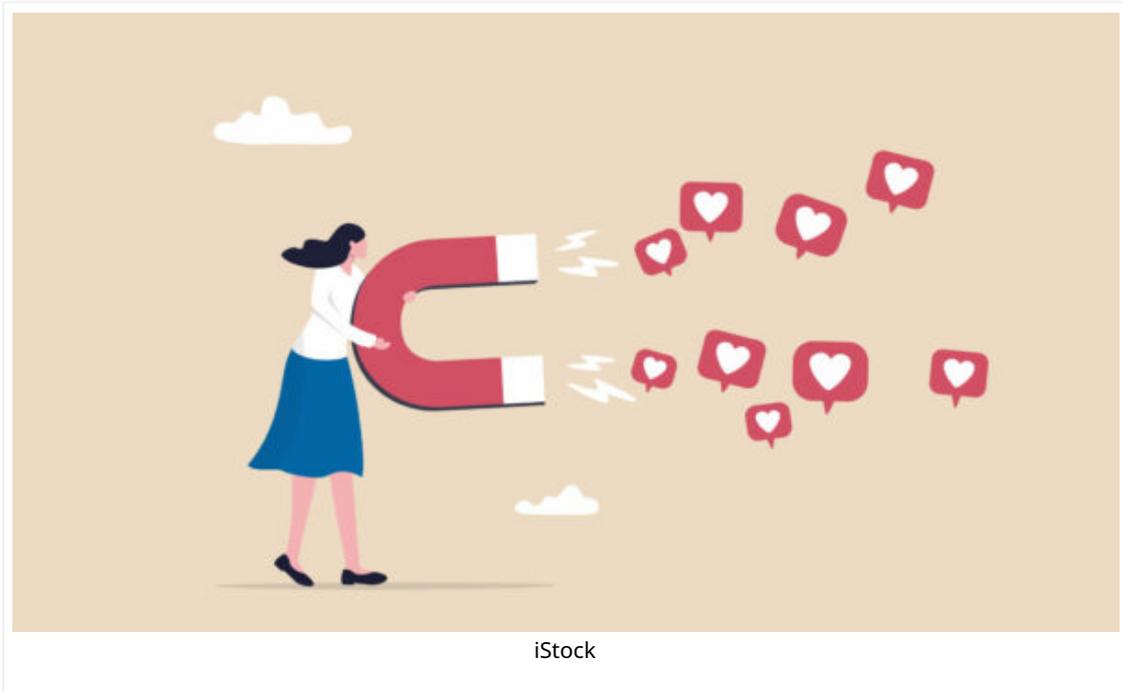


Attracting and Retaining Patients – Key to Dental Practice Growth

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If you want the phone to ring more often in your dental office, your waiting room to be full, and your treatment chair occupied all the time, you are not alone. This is precisely what every dentist wants. However, if you are one of several dentists operating in the same area, it may not be the most straightforward task for you to stand out amidst all the competition.

You may be a skilled and experienced dentist, your staff may be friendly and ever-ready to help patients, and your office may be clean, welcoming, and equipped with the latest amenities and technologies. However, the patient flow may not be quite what you would like to see. Although you want to attract new patients and retain existing patients, neither of these may be happening. Even the inquiries through the phone may not be converting into appointments. What could be wrong? And what do you do about it?

Simply having provided good care and treatment in the past to your patients does not necessarily guarantee repeat visits by them. How you and your team interact with patients is key, especially the first time they come to your office for treatment and even before that, when they call your office or browse your website.

Visually attractive and easy to navigate website

Yes, you read that right! More patients these days do a web search to find a suitable service provider for their needs in their local neighbourhood. If your website isn't responsive and user-friendly, the potential patient will stop then and there, and move on to the next dentist on the search results page. So, having an easy-to-navigate, up-to-date website is imperative to the success of your dental practice. Getting professional help to design and maintain your website wouldn't be a waste if you are looking at the long-term growth of your practice. The patient experience from your website should be positive and pleasant to make them want to revisit and take a more in-depth look at your website. An attractive yet uncluttered look is a must for your website to stay ahead of the competition.

Also, your social media presence is just as important as your website, which carry much weight in today's digital world. Make sure what you post there is relevant to your practice and informative. Invite current and potential patients to get involved by liking, sharing, commenting on, or tagging friends. The content should contribute in such a way that would make current patients continue to seek your care and make potential patients want to book you for their treatments and dental care.

If the potential patients like what they see on your website/social media pages and decide to call your office, make sure your staff are friendly, caring and professional. First impressions do matter, and is crucial to patient retention.

Staff attitude is key

A warm and friendly greeting at the door will go a long way when your patients turn up for their appointments. Visiting the dentist is stressful for almost everyone, but the patient will feel welcomed and at ease with friendly and caring staff. This is most important for you to get repeat patients. Be sure to pay attention to every detail from the beginning of their visit to the end – whether successful treatments are provided, the patient experience in the treatment chair, the clarity of instructions given, the facilities at the office and how they help the overall patient experience, etc.

Checking back on the patient post-treatment is also very important for their retention. This shows the patient that they are not just a number to the dentist and staff; the team cares about their health and wellbeing and would take every possible measure to ensure they are being well looked after.

Make it a priority to train all your staff on office/telephone etiquette. Providing them with continuous education on general office behaviour apart from their specialized areas is another must if you want to increase your patient numbers and boost your practice growth.

Feedback and referrals

Feedback and referrals from patients are an excellent way to get an idea about what patients think of their experience at your office. If the feedback is positive, you can pat yourself on the back and then work harder to get more positive feedback from patients and to attract more new patients to your office on the strength of this feedback and referrals.

Negative feedback is just as important. When you receive such feedback, consider whether there is a genuine reason for the patient to make such criticism. Address the issue, bring it to your teams' attention, and try to improve the services to prevent similar problems from happening again. Ignoring patient complaints is a huge no-no.

Appreciate and reward the relevant staff for positive feedback while expressing your concerns and emphasizing the need to address matters when negative feedback occurs.

Keep in touch

Offer special discounts or gift vouchers to patients who refer your services to family, friends, and colleagues.

Never underestimate the power of email. Emailing your practice newsletters, information about new products and services, and special events and offers is a great way to keep your patients in the loop.

Great marketing plan

A great marketing plan which details how your services differ from other dentists in the same community is a must. Your strengths should be highlighted compellingly to encourage would-be patients to dial your number on their phones. From there, the team should do their part to ensure the call is converted into a confirmed appointment.

Conclusion

In an age and time when patients have endless options and choices, and an overload of information at their fingertips, it is more than possible to use these factors to build, adapt, and grow your dental practice to succeed and stand out from your local competition – having a visually attractive and user friendly website, improved staff communication, paying attention to patient feedback, encouraging referrals and having a great marketing plan is key to attracting and retaining patients to your practice, and making it grow.

About the Author



Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by visiting

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