

First and last impressions count



Carl Burroughs

By Carl Burroughs

It takes a lot of effort and usually quite a lot of money to attract new patients. You have invested years into staff training and motivation to create a practice that patients want to refer their family and friends to and more recently you have found yourself spending money on Google Ad Words and Facebook advertising.

So, with such an investment, it is important that patients have an exceptional experience from start to finish. In this article I would like to talk about two very simple activities that any practice can introduce to make sure a patient's first impression and last impression of a practice visit leaves them feeling truly cared for. Both of these suggestions have been around for years, but as I go around the country visiting practices, very rarely do I find these activities done or done well – so it's time to revisit them.

The welcome kit

I know some practices send out a welcome e-mail to a new patient and I applaud this, however, why not expand on this idea and make a really great first impression.

It starts with gaining the new patient's e-mail address over the phone. Gone are the days when people were sensitive about giving their email address out when asked, but if there is any resistance it is as easy as saying, "we would like to send you a little package as a welcome to our practice," and that will do the trick.

So, what to include in your welcome kit? A medical history-questionnaire is obvious – but make it an interactive PDF, so patients don't need to print it out, but can complete this and e-mail it back to you in preparation of their visit. Then you need to get creative, which could include a map of how to find you, a brochure called 'what to expect on your first appointment', maybe the ADA's brochure about the links between oral health and general health to get them taking their appointment seriously and of course include a nice freebie. I rather like the idea of a coffee voucher that they can use if they are running early for their appointment or if they would like to relax afterwards. Correctly implementing the welcome kit will succeed in getting this transaction off to a great start.



The TLC call

Easy to do – easy not to do!

Most dentists will call a patient after a major procedure – but what about the idea of calling every patient after every visit? Stupid idea, I hear you say, what would we talk about? Well, let me tell you a story.

I have a client, indeed a friend in Sydney who calls every one of her patients at the end of every day in her car on her way home. When I say she is a client, she does not spend much money with me because she does not need to – she is fully booked all the time and I believe her daily calls to patients are a major contributing factor to her success.

What does this wonderfully caring dentist talk about? Easy, she makes sure she has taken notes and knows about her patients. She asks if they have any sensitivity, she asks if they got home OK, she reminds them to do what was discussed, such as rinsing their mouth out with salt water or flossing more regularly and of course, if there was more complex dentistry then there is more to talk about. The point here is her calls are caring, chatty and make the patient feel great.

"I can either listen to crappy FM on my way home or build a multi-million dollar practice," she says.

It's the small things that leave a massive impression. So, if you have forgotten about these simple techniques – it could be time to revisit them.

Good luck.

