

Are you buying sales leads?



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By Carl Burroughs

The idea of paying for a fully qualified new patient who wants to move into some expensive treatment such as aligners or dental implants, is certainly appealing and this appeal has triggered a raft of so-called marketing companies to offer this service.

These companies refer to patients as sales leads which is akin to how the car industry refers to its customers. The other similarity to car yards is these marketing companies expect you and your staff to have the sales skills to convert these sales leads. In addition they very often promote a guaranteed increase in reviews which may indicate they are not up to date with the current AHPRA guidelines.

Now, the point of this article is not to discourage you from trying new marketing opportunities, as marketing trends change all the time and I am a massive advocate of looking for new ways of attracting patients into dental and specialist practices. No, the point of this article is to encourage you not to forget the marketing fundamentals that work for you all day every day. Or to use some 15th century proverbs, 'don't throw the baby out with the bath water' and 'don't put all your eggs in one basket'.

I am now in my 20th year of helping build successful dental practices by attracting new patients and implementing systems to ensure existing patients remain loyal. I have seen a huge amount of change over this time; the rise of social media and the public's almost total reliance on search engines, just to name a few. But the one thing that has not changed throughout this New Media Revolution is the need for trust between a patient and a practitioner.

Trust cannot be traded in the form of a sales lead, which is why the vast majority of big cases come from small cases. Creating a constant stream of new patients into a practice then educating these patients about the care and services you provide is the key to building the trust required for patients to accept the treatment you diagnose. The compounding nature of this approach also allows the practice to expand and simply means every year you have a larger patient pool and every year



becomes easier to remain successful as a business.

So, what are these marketing fundamentals?

If you are going to do a review of your current marketing, a great starting point is to do a survey of one and check to see if you would interact with your own practice if you were a patient looking for a new practice.

Are you found on Google Maps easily on a generic search such as Suburb Dentist or Dentist near Me? Are you found organically on Google on the same search terms? If you are using Google Ads are these coming up correctly? Does your website look good and is easy to interact with on a smartphone? Is it easy to book an appointment online? Do you have compelling reasons for a new patient to book with you? In short, would you choose your practice based on your marketing platforms?

If you feel any aspect of your marketing can be improved, then investing in improving how people find you and interact with you, will give you long-term and tangible results.

Most practices will track how patients find them, but if you are not already doing so, it really is not that hard to track the journey of each patient. Things like the

type of treatment offered, if this treatment was accepted, the value of each visit and if the patient has re-booked.

Overtime this type of information builds a picture of not just how a patient has found you, but the type and value of each patient. This information allows you with confidence to expand the marketing that works and wind back those things that don't. I have a very extensive Key Performance Indicator (KPI) excel spreadsheet that tracks these things and much more. If you would like a copy, simply contact me and I will send you one you can use.

And finally, if you find yourself, like many practices, busier than you were pre-COVID, then don't be complacent. The best time to work on your marketing is when you are busy and it's not critical as this saves a lot of stress of having to react urgently when it is critical.

What the last 12 months has shown us is that none of us can predict the future, but one thing is for sure, which is nothing lasts forever and those who are prepared have an advantage.

Here's wishing you a safe, happy, healthy and successful 2021. ♦

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