

Are you ready for a post-COVID-19 world?



Carl Burroughs

By Carl Burroughs

The last 12 months have certainly been a wild ride of mixed emotions and business conditions. The manic feeling we all had when we first went into lock-down, the relief when Job Keeper kicked in, the dental boom we enjoyed when we reopened our doors and since then the ups and downs of various lock-downs and border closures.

Ironically, many dental practices have benefited financially from the pandemic and I am aware of certain practices and corporate groups where the COVID-19 chaos has acted as a much-needed lifeline allowing them to reset and pay off excessive debt levels.

Although the business conditions created by the pandemic and subsequent government policies are uncharted waters for all of us, the concept of booms and bubbles is not. We have all experienced dental booms before, plus property booms and the post-boom trauma created when there is a market correction. It must be human nature, but when things are going particularly well, it seems many people think it is never going to end and it's a big shock – sometimes devastating, when market conditions change.

So, my question to you is, are you thinking and preparing for a post-COVID-19 world and getting ready for a more competitive environment? I know many have taken this opportunity to invest in new equipment, which is fantastic if this enables you to enhance the range and quality of the dentistry you provide. But

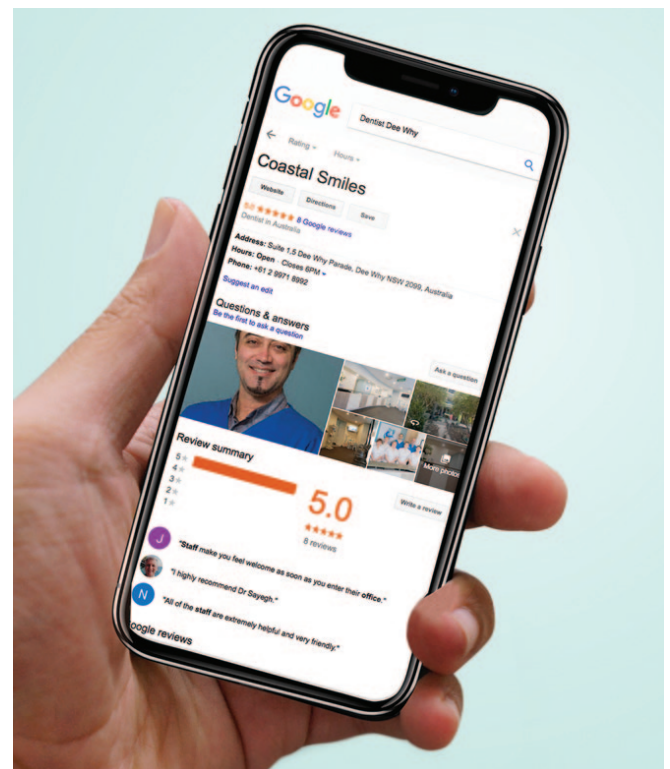
are you investing in your marketing and staff training now to ensure you continue to attract the number of new patients you need when the world ebbs and changes again?

Preparing now whilst your appointment books are busy, is the ideal time, and by not doing so you fall into the same trap as most businesses do and will find yourself having to try and catch up

when your forward book starts to thin.

What we once thought of as new media has now become the establishment and for small localised businesses, such as dental practices, the choice of effective advertising mediums is now less than before the digital revolution started with the behemoths of Google and Facebook now dominating local search marketing.

If your website does not appear in the first few search results on Google, both maps and organically, you are missing out on a significant number of new patients and for most of you, there is no reason why you can't be found first in Google. If your website is out of date, does not look and work well on smartphones, you are



missing out again and if you have yet to move to online bookings, there is another missed opportunity to expand your patient base.

Due to the compounding nature of a dental practice, investing in attracting new patients is incredibly worthwhile. The increase in patients you create this year helps you stay busy next year and allows you to take on another dentist in the following year. However, the old adage of, "It costs seven times more to attract a new customer than retain an existing one," is as true in the dental sector as it is for any business, which means you need to keep in touch through regular and engaging eNewsletters / blogs, ensure your recall systems are effective and use social media correctly.

One other thing I have seen slip in some practices during these weird times, is having regular staff meetings and investing in staff training. If you have fallen out of the habit of holding regular meetings and reviewing communication protocols and patient experience standards, now is always the best time to review and instigate these activities again.

We are not through this yet, but if history teaches us anything, preparation for a better future is the best way to achieve it. ♦

If you need any help or advice with your marketing or staff training, contact Carl on 02 9211 1477 or carl@idm.com.au