

Are you recession ready?

By Carl Burroughs



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Interest rates are on the rise, inflation is at its highest rate in 21 years, the price of basic day-to-day living expenses such as energy, fuel and food are rising exponentially, and the proportion of the average person's wage spent on housing, either on rent or mortgages, have never been higher.

If it looks like a recession, smells like a recession, acts like a recession, whether we have had two-quarters of negative growth or not – we have the effects of a recession.

Whilst the big-end of town may claim we can escape a technical recession due to the continued international high demand for our resources, it's what is happening in your neighbourhood that matters, not the balance sheets of the federal government. History tells us that when the public's wallet gets squeezed, the priority of nonessential dentistry diminishes rapidly.

Plus, there are some other factors that will mean that dentistry will be hit harder than other sectors by the current cost of living crisis. We are a nation of travellers, 30% of all Australians were born overseas and many more still have family in other countries, family members that they have not been able to see for three years. Not to mention the pent-up demand for all travel in general, we are already seeing many people head to Europe or take a break in Bali, and this will only increase in 2023 and beyond, taking even more money out of the family purse.

For those of you who were in practice before the GFC in 2008, you will remember cosmetic dentistry was booming. LVI had an almost cult-like following; there were full-page ads in publications such as Vogue, national TV campaigns, Zoom Whitening was everywhere and just about every practice was benefiting from the high demand for the perfect smile. You may also remember; cosmetic dentistry fell off a cliff in the summer of 2007 / 2008 and it has not recovered to those halcyon days since.

Sure, the dental sector slowly bounced back from the GFC, helped by the government's introduction of the CDDS, the rise in demand for dental implants and more recently the meteoric rise of all things aligners, but when the GFC hit, it hit the dental sector hard and it took several years to bounce back.



**“The further backward you look the further forward you can see”
Sir Winston Churchill**

We are right in the middle of the busiest time of the dental year, so you may yet to be feeling the pinch from all the current economic doom and gloom, or you may have seen a slight downturn that has yet to worry you. But knowing the economy is going to become worse before it gets better and also knowing that history tells us that dentistry is one of the first things to slide down the priority list for many in society, should you not be taking corrective action now?

What should you be concentrating on? The list is fairly obvious, but taking the necessary actions takes time, commitment and the skill to implement them.

- ◆ Retaining existing patients
- ◆ Making treatment plan acceptance easy
- ◆ Attracting a significant amount of new patients
- ◆ Providing high demand dental procedures
- ◆ Upskilling
- ◆ Staff training
- ◆ Defining your compelling points of difference
- ◆ Improving your communications systems
- ◆ Reputation management

- ◆ Recruitment
- ◆ Improving personal patient referrals
- ◆ Practice presentation

By implementing the small things, that make a big difference, plus whatever is required, for your individual and unique needs.

In the next edition of *Australasian Dentist* magazine, we will hear from a wide range of respected dental experts from around the world talking about what they believe Australian dental practices should concentrate on to thrive whilst others wither during the troublesome months and potentially years ahead. This will be a significant supplement designed to motivate you to take the corrective actions to assist you to stay busy and profitable moving forward.

In the meantime, if you are concerned that your marketing is not up to speed, your website does not work well on smart phones or your Google Ads are not working as hard as they should, please do not hesitate to contact the IDM team for an assessment of how you can achieve a better ROI from your marketing dollar. ◆

To book a Zoom meeting with a dental marketing specialist, simply call Sonia Kingman on 02 9211 1477 or e-mail sonia.kingman@idm.com.au