



THE THREE STEP MARKETING LADDER

Marketing takes place in three steps:

1. Awareness
2. Education
3. Action

Step 1 - Awareness

Awareness is when someone knows you exist. It's the knock-knock part of the knock-knock joke. It's when people know about you and want to learn more.

- Awareness marketing is sexy
- You don't need to be known by everyone, just the right ones
- Awareness probably isn't as much of your problem as you think it is

Step 2 - Education

Education is the story you tell, the transfer of information and emotion from you to the aware dental prospect.

- Most dentists are too busy promoting themselves to educate well
- Education takes time
- Education takes many forms. Providing experiences is the most trusted and highest impact way to educate

Step 3 - Action

Action is the last marketing step, but the only one your accountant is measuring. If you sacrifice the first two steps to boost this one, you'll live to regret it.

- Natural, smaller actions happen more often than ones that require a leap. Make it easy for people to visit your office the first time.
- Anticipated action generates fear. Do everything you can to lessen it.
- When you treat the patients who take action well, they will probably tell their friends... which facilitate Steps 1 and 2 above.

The three steps outlined above form your marketing ladder. If any one of them is missing or lacking, your new patient flow will be compromised. Analyze your marketing ladder often because the most effective ways to make people aware, educate them and move them to action are constantly changing.



TIPS

Marketing for your Dental Practice

THE MOST IMPORTANT MARKETING QUESTION

The most important marketing question is not:

- Are our fees low enough?
- Are we unique enough?
- Do we offer enough advantages?
- Are we on the right social media channels?
- Is the website cool enough?
- Is our offer compelling enough?

The most important marketing question is, "Do they trust us enough to believe

our promises?" Without trust, you have nothing. If you have awareness, but people haven't been in your practice, it's likely they don't trust you as much as you would hope. If your value proposition is solid, but your practice isn't growing, look for and correct trust issues.

Earn their trust. Then earn some more. Now you can worry about the rest.



FIVE EARLY MARKETING QUESTIONS

Before you spend a minute or a dollar on marketing, answer the following five questions:

Who, precisely, are you trying to reach?

If you're trying to reach everyone, you won't do an effective job of reaching anyone. What patient group or groups desire the kinds and quality of dentistry you want to provide?

What change are you trying to make?

Exactly, what do you want these people to do? Come to your office for a specialty service? Switch to your office from another one? Overcome their fears and see a dentist for the first time in years? Make their dental care more convenient with your location and office hours? If you don't know what change you want people to make, they won't know either.

How will you know if it's working?

Early U.S. merchant, John Wannamaker, said, "Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted; the trouble is, I don't know which half." I know you've heard this a thousand times, but you must make the effort to track your marketing efforts.

How much time and money are you prepared to spend?

It seems like effective marketing always costs more than the plan said it would. What are your time and money limits? And do you have the fortitude to abide by these limits?

Who are you trying to please or impress?

I've seen several dental websites that look like they were designed to impress other dentists. Websites should be designed to make it easy for people to take the next step. Or to help a current patient learn more about your services and ask you about them. Or to influence a non-patient to pick up the phone and schedule an appointment.

It's less expensive to ask and answer these questions early than it is to spend time and money on the marketing later on.



THREE TYPES OF ADVERTISING

There are three types of advertising you can use:

Direct Response Ads, when they work, pay for themselves. If the response generates revenue, you can run the ad again. Google's business is driven by direct response advertising.

Trust Ads are generally unmeasurable. Effective trust ads create the "I've heard great things about this practice" response in prospective patients. Without consciously realizing it, we often choose to do business with the familiar... with companies we trust. And ads increase familiarity; particularly the right ads that run in the right places. This is advertising that tells a story, advertising about belief, not necessarily action.

Demand Enhancement Ads remind us that on a hot day, we'd like a cold drink. They are ads designed to tickle and provoke, to increase the number of people in the market for your services. The best kind of highway billboard is the one that says, "Next Exit." An ad about replacing missing teeth with implants is a dental example of a Demand Enhancement Ad.

For most dental practices, it's best to run a combination of all three types of ads... and budget appropriately. The very worst thing you can do with an ad is to spend too little on the campaign. It will get you the same results as spending nothing.