



LCP Dental Team Coaching (the new name for Julie Weir & Associates) is recognized as the premier consulting firm specializing in pediatric dentistry since 1996.

10 Internal Marketing Steps That Will Increase New Patients and Patient Retention

Internal marketing will increase new patient referrals and set a practice apart from its competitors through building and maintaining relationships, brand awareness, positive reviews and a strong online presence.

Many practices do not have a structured internal marketing program and/or these marketing efforts often get pushed aside for other priorities. Therefore, it is important to set up consistent internal marketing actions to regularly produce a strong flow of new patients each month. At your next team meeting, discuss the importance of internal marketing and how everyone is a part of the marketing team and responsible for creating a positive experience as they interact with parents and patients.

I. BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

- Make every visit an experience the children and their parents want to tell all their friends about. People remember how you make them feel and like to share positive experiences. The best compliment an office can receive is a personal referral.
- Be sincere and genuine when speaking and take time to understand their questions and concerns. This will create trust and loyalty which increases treatment acceptance.
- Inquire about their personal interests or hobbies. Make a note in the patient's chart that can be used for conversation topics at future visits.
- Show appreciation to your patients and their parents by sending handwritten notes thanking them for joining your practice or telling "Johnny" what a good job he did being brave at his appointment. Kids love to receive mail addressed just to them.
- Host an annual patient appreciation event that shows gratitude towards existing families. This can be done at the office or off-site at an ice cream shop, local park, movie theatre or family entertainment center.

II. ESTABLISH A MARKETING TEAM

- Encourage a team approach to marketing by selecting multiple team members to assist with marketing tasks.
- Designate a marketing team leader who will be responsible for delegating the various marketing duties and holding the marketing team accountable.
- Choose team members who have the right skills and personality to assist with specific responsibilities, such as social media tasks and creating and delivering gift baskets.
- Print and review the referral report monthly.
 - Are monthly new patient goals being met? If not, what will be done differently or what marketing actions need to be implemented moving forward?
 - Where are referrals coming from?
 - Are the current marketing actions producing new patients?
 - Who needs to be sent a thank you note/gift for referrals?

III. CREATE A REFERRAL APPRECIATION SYSTEM

- Make sure all referral sources are being tracked in dental software under the referred patient.
- Create a system to thank parents and patients who refer new patients. Write handwritten thank you notes which can include small gifts (Starbucks, iTunes, Amazon, local restaurants and ice cream or frozen yogurt shops, etc.)
- Check state regulations for gift giving guidelines, as some states have specific rules regarding what type, how much or if gifts can be given at all.

IV. IMPLEMENT THEME DAYS

- Start out small and schedule one theme day/month. Preschedule all theme days for the entire year.
- Ideas for theme days include: Sports Day, Moustache Day, Crazy Sock Day, Twin Day (pair team members up to dress like each other), and Crazy Hair Day. Also, host theme days according to the season, such as Hawaiian Day in the summer or Cozy Pajama Day in the winter. Have fun with your theme days.
- The entire team should participate.
- Take photos and videos and post on social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- As the team gets more comfortable and confident, plan theme days more frequently.

V. HOST RAFFLE PRIZE GIVEAWAYS

- Host monthly raffle prize giveaways for patients and families. Giveaways can be in the form of holiday gift baskets, fun toys and games, tickets to a local sports game or amusement park, etc.
- Take a photo of the giveaway, if possible, and post to social media promoting the raffle prize. The presentation of the giveaway should be exciting and colorful, attracting families to the prize.
- Once a winner has been drawn, take a photo of the patient holding the giveaway they won and announce on social media, with signed parental consent.

VI. CELEBRATE PATIENT BIRTHDAYS

- Celebrate patient birthdays that fall within one week prior to or after their scheduled appointment.
- Prepare small wrapped birthday gifts or gift bags in advance so they are ready to be given each day. When the patient arrives for their appointment, designate a gift to them by writing their name on a gift tag or notecard attached to the present. Kids love receiving gifts.
- The small present could be a gift card, movie tickets or special birthday prize.
- Have the patient open their gift while in the office. Use a birthday hat or cut-out photo frame to take a photo and post to social media.
- Utilize patient communication software by creating a birthday video with entire team to send to patients by email on their birthdays.

VII. VERBAL SKILLS

- Review verbal skills for phone calls with the front office team. A parent's first impression of the practice will determine whether or not they keep their appointment. First impressions are lasting impressions.
- Use the patients' and parents' names when speaking to them.

- Encourage VIP's (Very Important Parents) to tell their friends and family about the practice. Let them know the practice is always accepting new patients.
- Encourage VIP's to write an online review on Google, Facebook, Yelp, Health Grades, etc.
- Respond to every positive review so that others can see the kind interaction between the patients and the team.

VIII. CREATE A SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

- Take time to review the website and all social media accounts to view them from a parent's perspective. Parents tend to research dental practices online before inquiring about a new patient visit. The website will give the parent a first impression, while any social media accounts will allow them to see reviews and give them a look into the practice, team and community involvement.
- A Facebook page is a platform to show potential families what it is like to be a patient in the practice. The page displays the relationships you have amongst your team and your families.
- Getting existing patients involved in social media is a great way to create organic content on Facebook. In the office, encourage parents to post a photo of their child on their personal page and tag the practice page. All of their Facebook friends will see that their child had a fun and stress-free visit. This is organic marketing, not paid advertising.
- Designate a team member to monitor and post on social media accounts one to three times per week; Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Post fun and engaging content such as patient photos, theme days, team member birthdays and anniversaries, community event photos, and current contest giveaways and the lucky winners.
- Many younger parents prefer to have Instagram accounts instead of Facebook so make sure to create an account and post frequently. Link the two pages and the option will be there to share the Instagram post to Facebook.

IX. UPDATED FACILITY AND MAINTENANCE

- The appearance of your office (exterior and interior) shows your attention to detail. Parents will assess the skills of a doctor by how modern and clean the office looks. They may think the doctor's skills are inadequate if the office décor is outdated. Office décor should be updated every five to seven years.
- When an office is not spotless, parents will worry if sterilization is a priority. Employ a cleaning service, apply touch-up paint to walls that have scuff marks and abrasions, keep carpets and upholstery clean, keep floor boards clean and dust free.
- Update equipment and technology, as necessary, to keep up with the progressive changes in dentistry.
- Consider replacing fixtures and toys once they begin to show wear and tear.
- Replace exterior sign if it begins to fade or looks dated.
- Update the practice logo if it looks dated.

X. TEAM OBSERVATION EXERCISE TO IMPROVE YOUR FACILITY

- First, take the time to observe what a new family would see when they arrive for their first visit. Start with sitting in a car in the parking lot. How does the surrounding location and office building look; road and building signage, front door, building paint, windows, corners of ceiling under entryway roof (spider webs?), walkway, parking lot and landscaping?
- Second, have the front office team do a walk through the clinical area and have the clinical team walk through the reception area. Each team (front office and clinical) retraces their own footsteps many times a day and may become oblivious to disarray in their work area. Have each team make notes of clutter, disrepair, dirt or dust. Pay close attention to outdated or damaged items and the cleanliness of the furniture, doors and walls.
- Third, hold a team meeting to discuss each person's observations. Create an action plan of items that will improve and upgrade your facility.

Referrals from satisfied parents are a direct result of strong and consistent internal marketing actions and a family's commitment to the practice is directly correlated to the confidence and trust they have in their dental care team.

“People influence people. Nothing influences more than a recommendation from a trusted friend. A trusted referral influences people more than the best broadcast message. A trusted referral is the Holy Grail of advertising.”

Mark Zuckerberg

Published four times a year, Practice Management and Marketing News is a featured column in Pediatric Dentistry Today.

Be the Dental Leader Your Team Deserves!

Event: 6th Annual Business Leadership Conference (BLC)

Venue: JW Marriott Tucson Starr Pass Resort & Spa, AZ

Date: Thursday, September 27th to Saturday, September 29th, 2018

(Registration and early-bird pricing available for a limited time! Register and see all details at JulieWeir.com/conference/)

If your response is YES to any of the following questions, then you and your leaders should not miss this event!

- **Would you like to know how to understand your software reports and what all those numbers mean?**
- **Do you know how to hire the right team member for each position in your practice?**
- **Want to know what Marketing will give you the best return on investment?**
- **Would you like to increase team morale, learn to train employees, and create a cohesive team?**
- **Could communication be better between your administrative and clinical team?**

Training is for all Office Leaders: Dentists, Practice Administrators, Office Managers, Clinical and Front Office Coordinators

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