

Better, Bigger Business

These tips can boost your patient funnel

There are only three ways to drive a business: Acquire new patients, upsell a current customer, or get your current customers to buy more frequently. My column this month focuses on tips and strategies that can help you with all three.

When you got your dental office, hopefully it had great demographics. (In the U.S., the average is one dentist for every 2,000 people; people who are killing it are in areas where there's one dentist for every 3,000 people.) And hopefully, when I drive by your office, I can see a monument sign for your practice. But on top of that, I want you to think about the funnel.

We continue to see that it takes about 100 people to land on your website for five to call. So why did 95 out of 100 who landed on your website not call—and how can you improve those numbers?



Feeling: If people see a dentist's standard studio headshot on a website, do you think they feel anything? How does a static photo help them connect to you? I've added video to my home page so when someone comes across my name and asks, "Who's Howard Farran?" they can go to my website and they'll see me sitting at my desk asking, "Are you afraid of the dentist? Oh, come on—that's why I went

Why do some people like to go on roller coasters? Why do some like scary movies? Why do others want to hold hands and kiss? In every case, it's because they want to *feel something*. Does a studio headshot on your website make patients feel anything?



Let's use the website for my practice, Today's Dental, as an example. Half of America is afraid of the dentist, and the other half is afraid of paying for it. My practice website, todaysdental.com, addresses both groups.

Fearing and feeling

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to school for eight years. I love it when people come in and I help them get over their fears."

Fearing: For those who are afraid of the costs related to dentistry, our home page also has a video featuring my office manager, Dawn, who allays those fears by discussing how the practice can finance treatment, or do it in stages. And she closes by saying, "If you have concerns about the cost, or if we take your insurance, email me or come in, and let's talk about it."

by Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, publisher, *Dentaltown* magazine

Again, for the average dental office, 100 people have to land on your website for 5 percent to call. I bet when you add a video featuring your doctors, as opposed to just a stock photo, it could add another 5 percent. I think that when your office manager or your treatment plan coordinator talks about money, it could add another 5 percent. Try that.

Conversion conversations

When potential patients finally call your office, an average of three people have to call before one can be persuaded to come in. What happens if someone calls your office to ask how much a crown is, and your receptionist says \$1,000? They'll say, "Thank you very much," and hang up. Fix that!

Two out of every three people who call Today's Dental convert to scheduled appointments. Train your receptionists in conversion techniques. You can do it yourself with the right background, or there's an entire industry—hundreds of dental consultants—who specialize in phone training and conversions.

You also can get your current customers to buy more frequently. At the end of the day, after you've had eight people come in with your hygienist in Room 1 for cleanings, do you check how many of them scheduled to come back and get their teeth cleaned again on recall? If it's only six out of eight, you just lost 25 percent of your practice that day. Fix that right then, before you go home: Get the hygienist, receptionist, someone on the phone to call that person and say, "Hey, you got your teeth cleaned today and you didn't reschedule for your next appointment. Let's do that now."

When someone says, "I'd like to come in and get my teeth cleaned," unless they're an orphan from a foreign country, chances are they have family members, too. When are *their* appointments? If a mom calls to say she wants to bring in her daughter who fell down and bumped her tooth on the coffee table, say OK and ask if there are any other children, too—offer to schedule them all to come in for a cleaning, exam and X-rays. And then when you're done say, "Now, what about your husband?" If you can't upsell 1 out of every 5 calls to make an appointment for another member in their family, you're not even trying. ■

Next month: Why you need to be able to talk about budget-based treatment priorities with your patients.

> See Howard Live!

Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, is an international speaker who has written books and dozens of articles. To schedule Howard to speak at your next national, state or local dental meeting, email rebecca@farranmedia.com.

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