

PRACTICE PROMOTION DEFINED

Most private dental practices are independently owned and operated. Every single business decision has to be made by the owner, usually the doctor.

Just for a second, let's think about what that means. The doctor not only has to work IN his/her business (by seeing patients), he/she also has to spend time working ON his/her business (to stay in business). That's pretty much like having TWO full time jobs. Take a look.

WORKING IN YOUR BUSINESS

- Treating patients
- Performing dentistry
- Writing treatment notes
- Overseeing team members
- Returning/making patient calls
- Speaking with specialists
- Completing continuing education
- Repairing equipment
- Dealing with sales meetings
- Communicating with labs
- Meeting with the team
- Reviewing reports

WORKING ON YOUR BUSINESS

- Dealing with accounting/banking
- Implementing marketing strategies
- Arranging for various insurances
- Negotiating with landlord
- Paying bills
- Networking with other professionals
- Learning about new developments
- Participating in dental associations
- Reviewing reports
- Creating efficient systems

As you can see, there are many things to take care of in a dental practice. Truthfully, there are probably 100 more things to add to each list. But let's move on.

Let's now put this into context.

Now, most dental offices aren't like the store, Target. Target has corporate offices that handle things like marketing. The employees who work at your local Target store don't have to worry about creating Target ads or commercials. They don't have to even THINK about promoting their business. They have a department that takes care of all of that. Most dental offices don't have a corporate office (unless of course, they ARE a corporate dental office) that takes care of advertising and promotion.

Most dental offices have to promote themselves for business. With all that the doctor/owner already has on his/her plate, practice promotion becomes the responsibility of EVERY team member.

The doctor should not be the only one supporting marketing efforts.
 The doctor should not be the only one asking for referrals or reviews.
 The doctor should not be the only one seeking out opportunities.
 The doctor should not be the only one to participate in community events.

On the following pages, we will discuss different aspects of practice promotion and help the assistant to understand how he/she should contribute to promoting the practice.

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Before we go any further, I want to put this section into context for you.

I visited a local bakery once. The shop was clean and smelled like all kinds of deliciousness.

I scanned the menu quickly and then got in line. There was one undecided customer in front of me and a bored looking female behind the counter. The customer was talking with his friend about his choices, but was clearly having a hard time making up his mind. After a minute or two, he gave the employee his order.

She took a cookie out of the case, boxed it up, and finished the transaction with very few words. I placed my order, shoved my cupcake in my mouth before I even got to my car, and started thinking about the service the female employee had just demonstrated. It didn't sit well with me and, in fact, I thought about it for many days afterwards. That sweet bakery had left a sour taste in my mouth.

Here's the thing. That counter employee did NOT realize what she REALLY should be doing for that business. Yes, she should have smiled more. Yes, she could have been friendlier. But there's more. Her job REALLY should be MUCH more than just handing over orders and collecting the payments. So much more. She missed out on SO much opportunity for that bakery. In other words, when the customer was not sure of what to order, she should have been making suggestions or offering samples. She could have mentioned specialty items or best selling items. She could have ended the transaction by mentioning that the bakery also bakes special order items for parties and events. She should have been a true advocate for that business-promoting the brand, the product, and the amazing baker.

Speaking of the baker. Let's talk about her for a minute. The baker of this particular bakery was also the owner of that bakery. Where was the baker during that transaction with the undecided customer? She was in the kitchen of course, baking additional goods! It is not

practical for the baker/owner to be baking all day AND promoting the products to the customers out front. Do you see how it would be impossible to be in two places at once all day long?

Have you read the book, The E-Myth? This real life experience reminded me of that book. The E-Myth discusses working on verses in a business.

That bakery closed about six months after I visited. It made me kind of sad because they had quality products, and it was a nice little shop. But those things aren't enough. I can't help but wonder if they would still be open if they had a team full of people who were promoting their products to every customer who walked in.

So what does this mean for dentistry? A dentist/owner is often in the back ~~making cookies~~ doing crowns and it is impossible for the doctor to be in two places at once. A dental practice cannot survive unless the whole team is supporting the business by expressing value to patients and promoting services.

All this talk of baking is making me hungry for cake. Will you make a recommendation for me?



PRACTICE PROMOTION ASSIGNMENT

GOAL: To understand this practice's brand

LOGISTICS: Answer the following questions.

Now that we know how important it is for dental practice survival to participate in marketing efforts, let's discuss different types of marketing. Marketing is not just things like TV and radio commercials—it's so much more.

But let's keep it simple for now.

Marketing is any opportunity we have to get our brand in front of a patient's eyes and/or ears. In order to do this, it is important to know a few things about this practice. No two private practices are the same. Some have a focus on technology. Some only do extractions and dentures. Some practices only see kids. Every practice has a different feel to it. Most practices can be summed up in one sentence. To better understand how to help promote this practice, it is a good idea to first get an understanding of the practice.

If this practice had to be summed up in one sentence, what would it be?

What is the practice mission statement?

Describe the practice's brand/philosophies/value system.

Date of completion:

Reviewed with doctor/manager:

Initial after satisfactory completion: