



The days of driving patients through the door with an ad in the Yellow Pages are long gone. Today's patients evaluate every aspect of your practice before scheduling an appointment, from your website to your technology. It's never been more important to create an exceptional patient experience.

**Fred Joyal, entrepreneur and author of the best-selling book *Everything is Marketing*,** knows that the new rules of marketing can seem counterintuitive to dental practitioners. "They've been told in dental school that if they get better at delivering dentistry, they will get more patients," he says. "However, patients have no way of assessing a dentist's clinical skill. They are going by everything else they can gather to make a decision about the practice."



## TAKE A NEW PERSPECTIVE

The first step in creating a better experience is to see your practice through your patients' eyes. Since it is impossible to objectively evaluate your practice, you'll want to enlist the help of an uninvolved third party.

Have this person walk through the practice and tell you what they see. Ask them questions, such as: How does the reception area look? What does the office smell like? How do you feel about the lighting and the colors? What do you think about the equipment and technology? Is the staff friendly? What could we do better?

Whether it's refreshing your website, remodeling the reception area, updating your operatory equipment, adding more technology or bringing on different staff members, you will know which improvements you need to make to create the ultimate experience. Updating your office will not only help you attract more patients, it will also help you increase case acceptance. "When you create an environment that makes patients comfortable, they more readily accept treatment," Joyal says.

## SHOW AND TELL

Once you've updated your practice, it's important to show it off. One of the best ways to showcase your cutting-edge facility is by giving each patient a comprehensive tour of the office during their first visit. It's important to plan these tours ahead of time and prepare your staff to ensure they put their best foot forward.

"Walk the patient through the office and explain the technology to them, show them your sterilization area, show them letters from your patients and your degrees and introduce them to your happy staff members," says Joyal. This short tour will go a long way toward fostering patient understanding and confidence.

## ENLIST A STRONG TEAM

Your team is one of your most important marketing tools, so you'll want to ensure you've got the right people in place. "You need staff members who will elevate the value of dentistry through everything they do and say," Joyal says. "They should be just as passionate about dentistry as you are."



Having a friendly person with great phone skills at the front desk is critical to creating a great first impression for every patient. "This person needs to be really nice, friendly and outgoing, which is much more important than being good at collections and software," says Joyal.

Once you've built a great team, it's your job to teach them how to talk to patients about everything from technology and treatment planning to insurance. "Many times they will over explain or improperly communicate about technology and the procedure to the point where the patient doesn't think it's worth doing," says Joyal. "It's critical to develop the right verbiage."

## BUILD YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

When patients are deciding whether to schedule an appointment with your practice, one of the first things they will do is check the web. If your website is outdated – or even worse, if you don't have a website at all – they may never pick up the phone. "You need a good, dynamic website," Joyal says. "It's the cornerstone of your practice."



Your website should not only have information about your clinical experience, services and technology, it should also feature testimonials from patients. Joyal encourages doctors to grab their smartphone and record video testimonials to post on their website and social media channels such as Facebook.



## GATHER FEEDBACK

Taking the pulse of your practice on a regular basis is key to your continued success. Joyal says that many practices fail to communicate with their dormant patients, allowing them to fall deeper into procrastination, and eventually to another practice.

Services such as ReActivation Pro use phone operators to help you understand why your dormant patients haven't come back. "We probe to find out why they haven't returned, and aggregate the feedback so the doctor can see a picture of two or three things they could be doing better," Joyal says. "Patients don't tell you what's wrong, they just leave. We help you find out why so you can fix it."

**Looking for more tips to enhance the patient experience in your office? Contact your Patterson representative or call 800.873.7683.**