

# Why Dentists Need a Marketing Plan



Marketing for dentists is best executed when a multigenerational approach is taken to appeal to the unique needs of people in the local community. Learn how dental practices can use new technology and techniques to retain patients and drive new business.

## Dentistry Trends

Competing with the rising number of dental chains poses a challenge for many independent dental practices. These high-volume, low-fee models attract patients by offering competitive prices and extended appointment hours. Aspen Dental opened its first office in 1998 and now has more than 1,000 locations. Heartland Dental supports more than 1,600 practices across the country and has plans to roll out 103 new sites this year. Only 73% of United States dentists own private practices, down from 84.7% in 2005, according to the **American Dental Association**.

The drop in the number of private practices comes as overall spending on dentistry services is down. National dental spending dipped 1.8% to \$142.4 billion in 2020, the **ADA** reported. Spending shortfalls can partially be attributed to fallout from the outbreak of COVID-19, but private practice appointment bookings are still not back to pre-pandemic levels.

## Take a Fresh Approach

Unless you are a pediatric dentist, your practice serves the entire community, and

marketing for dentists needs to take this into account. Digital efforts will help attract younger generations, but baby boomers may prefer traditional marketing tactics like direct mail. To ramp up business, private practices need a solid marketing approach covering a wide variety of platforms. In addition to traditional advertising and social media marketing, here are a few new marketing techniques to help your practice shine.

**Tell your story.** Your dental practice is not the only game in town. Separate yourself from the competition by telling your unique story and humanizing your practice. Providing a personal approach will amplify what sets your practice apart and help capture new patients. Ditch the glossy stock photos on your website and instead feature pictures of your staff, patients, and, most importantly, you. Highlight what makes your practice unique. Whether it's offering same-day service, dental sleep medicine, or treatment for TMJ, make sure to maximize your unique selling proposition in your marketing efforts.

**New Mover Marketing.** Direct mail postcards are great for blanketing a neighborhood with your practice's message, but a targeted approach can yield a better result. **Our Town America** has more than 50 years of experience helping dental practices add new patients before they form loyalties with the competition. We send a Welcome Package filled with proven offers to new residents to entice them to give your practice a test drive. To get the best results, we compile lists of individuals who have filed some sort of address change in the past 30 days. We filter out the duplicates to increase your return on investment.

**Lights, camera, action!** Did you know that adults are forecast to watch **80 minutes** of digital video per day in 2023? Meet patients where they spend their time by posting videos to your social media feeds. Adding video can increase engagement and help give your practice a personal touch. Consider filming interviews with your employees to help people get to know your staff or make a welcome video. Promote oral health by filming a video outlining the importance of proper cleaning techniques or showcase positive patient testimonials. The options are limitless.

**Rely on referrals.** Launch a patient referral program. Word-of-mouth marketing remains one of the best ways to build a practice. People trust recommendations more than advertising — it's one of the reasons Google reviews are so popular. A patient referral program provides an incentive for current patients who recommend your practice to another community member. Letting your existing patients do the

legwork is a no-hassle approach to adding new clients.

Throw a party. Let's face it. Visiting the dentist can be a drag. Experts speculate dental fear or anxiety impacts **36%** of the population. You can help alleviate some anxiety associated with a six-month checkup by making your practice a warm, welcoming environment. Host an open house with free snacks or a barbecue in the parking lot. Make sure your party appeals to your target customer demographic.

Employee appreciation. The backbone of any successful dental practice is its employees. Your dental hygienists form relationships with customers, and people appreciate familiarity. Make team building and appreciation part of your marketing budget. Showing your employees you are grateful for their hard work will help improve staff retention and create a welcoming environment for patients.

#### Welcome New Movers

Learn more about marketing for dentists and how **Our Town America's** new mover marketing and direct mail services can help your practice appeal to residents of all ages in the local community.