



## How Strong Is Your Internal Marketing?

The previous *PMM* article encouraged doctors to run their practices efficiently to maximize profits due to the increased need of after tax dollars for retirement savings. The large federal deficit creates the need for higher taxes and decreased Social Security and Medicare benefits, thus leaving fewer dollars to meet retirement goals.

Increased production and collection dollars come from **working smarter, not harder** with smart and **efficient practice systems** along with the appropriate **new patient flow** to keep the schedule filled. This issue of *PMM* discusses internal marketing with future issues discussing external marketing and practice systems to help doctors create a comfortable retirement for themselves.

### The Most Important Product You Sell is Yourself

The pediatric dental practice sells **two products**; the **dental procedure** and the **people who work there**. The more important of these two products is YOU. Parents must have **Trust, Like and Confidence** in the team before they will “buy” a treatment plan and it is YOU that creates **TLC**.

Parents typically have the choice of several practices from which to “buy” their child’s dental procedure, a filling, stainless steel crown, preventive visit, etc. Because of YOU, they choose YOUR pediatric dental practice to “buy” the dental procedure. The parent wants YOU and your staff to perform the procedures and help them with scheduling, payment and insurance issues. They like the way YOU take care of them and their child and want to come back to YOU in the future when they need to “buy” more dental procedures.

Each staff member is just as an important “product” that the parents buy as the doctor. A great doctor can be tarnished by a front desk staff member who is rude or a clinical staff member that is rough and insensitive.

Therefore, the internal marketing power the doctor and staff have within themselves to create TLC with parents and children, makes the parent want to “buy” them which in turn leads to the parent wanting to “buy” the treatment plan as well; this power must be realized and used to its full extent.

This is why the dental procedure you “sell” in your “dental store” is the secondary “product”. The parent needs to “buy” YOU before they can “buy” the procedure. Of course the dental procedures must be excellent clinically to maintain parent confidence.

### Creating Relationships That Get Treatment Plan Acceptance

The following is a list of ways to strengthen your personal connections with parents and children to create TLC.

- Use good eye contact and smile as you introduce yourself along with your position in the office.
- Ask them about themselves; dental concerns, interests, hobbies, sports. Show interest in them.
- Find something to compliment them on. Create good feelings. Make them feel good about themselves.
- Listen well, do not interrupt. Be empathetic, friendly and polite.
- Give as much patient education as possible! Research shows that the amount of patient education a patient receives makes the difference between a “satisfied” patient and a “highly satisfied” patient.
  - Inform the parent/child about proper brushing and flossing, healthy snacks and the importance of regular preventive visits. Put the tooth brush in the hands of the parent for the very young children when teaching Oral Hygiene Instruction (OHI), and in the hands of the child for older children.



- Hand out written material to the parent that reinforces OHI or post op instructions. Learning experts say that a person only retains 10 percent of what they hear, 50 percent of what they hear and see and 90 percent of what they hear, see and interact with.
- Make a personal note about the child and date it in the chart so this topic can be discussed at the next visit by anyone in the office.
- Review the personal notes before seeing the child.
- Laugh and have fun.
  - Give balloons, stickers, prizes.
  - “No Cavity Club” monthly drawing for a prize.
  - Guessing contests; jelly beans in a jar at Easter, candy corn at Halloween, candy canes at Christmas.
  - Flowers for moms the week of Mother’s day.
  - Ice cream cone certificate given if in for appointment the week of their birthday.
  - Mail handwritten notes to kids after their appointment complimenting their behavior.
  - Team can dress up for theme days; crazy hat day, baseball day, around the world day.

People remember how you make them feel, more than what you say. Your goal is to make the parents and children feel special and experience a positive appointment that makes them want to return and refer others to your practice.

## Facility Evaluation

Parents judge the quality of the dentistry on everything they see, touch, hear and observe in the office. Clinically excellent dentistry may be occurring, but if the team and facility do not reflect excellence and cleanliness, the parents will judge the clinical dentistry to be behind the times and cleanliness not to be a top priority!

Therefore, an excellent internal marketing program ensures that YOU and your facility send out the right message of excellence.

## Internal Marketing Staff Meeting Exercise

- Read the above article to the team and discuss how YOU and the facility are the practice's internal marketing and must reflect excellence.
- Have team members walk the same path that parents walk for their child's dental visit; from the parking lot, through the front door and into the reception area and observe everything around them for items in disrepair and levels of cleanliness.
- Make written notes of observations to be discussed later.
- Divide the team into clinical and front desk staff and give them twenty minutes to walk through each other's work areas to observe and make

notes of anything they see that does not reflect an image of excellence. Front desk staff walks through the clinical area and clinical staff walks through the front desk and conference room areas. Again, looking at the level of cleanliness, clutter and disrepair.

- Gather the team back together and discuss their findings.
- Create an Action Plan of needed changes so the facility reflects the level of excellence to match the community reputation that you desire.
- Do not inform the team ahead of time about this exercise because you want to get accurate feedback on what the parents observe in your practice.

## Top 10 Image Mistakes and Solutions

The biggest image mistakes that I have observed in practices around the country are:

- Dirty outdoor entry...be sure to also look up. Most doctors and staff never enter their office through the same door as the patients and could be shocked at what they find. A team I know did this exercise and found a horrific mass of spider webs under the front porch entry way of an otherwise very nice looking brick building.
- Dirty door handle and the area surrounding it. Again, typically doctors and staff never use the front door entry. In a very nice professional building, I once observed an inside entry door handle black with sticky black grime. As a new parent, I would have turned around right there thinking that cleanliness what not a high priority for this doctor.
- Dirty play toys in the reception room would worry a parent about their child picking up germs.
- Stained ceiling tiles, bugs in lights and stains/scuff marks on floor tiles.

Solve all of the above by paying attention to what a parent sees when they visit your practice... look up and down as well as around. Give a bullet point list of your cleanliness expectations to a good cleaning service. Some doctors have the staff clean the office to save money. However, if the staff is not happy performing these duties and/or too busy to do the cleaning well, hire a great cleaning service and consider it a good marketing investment.

- Clutter everywhere. I have seen the panorex area used as a storage area for boxes and dirty laundry bags. Too much clutter on desktops at the front desk and in the clinical areas looks like disorganization.
  - Insist that the staff de-clutter the office and keep their work areas better organized.



- Torn, frayed and stained fabric on reception room chairs and carpet.
  - Have upholstery and carpets cleaned regularly. Replace all worn fabrics. Apply fresh paint on scuffed walls.
- Staff grooming does not look professional and reflect excellence. Lack of neat hair styles and scrubs that look faded, wrinkled, and drag on the floor.
  - Front office staff look more professional if they wear colorful Polo shirts and slacks or business casual attire that would be appropriate for a pediatric dental practice instead of scrubs.
  - Have scrub pants tailored to appropriate lengths.
  - Have a “make over” expert give better hair and makeup ideas at a team meeting.
- Outdated office décor.
  - Update wall paint colors and artwork to make a difference without a lot of expense.
  - Replace reception room furniture, flooring and counter tops.
- Outdated or generic logo that does not reflect the proper image.
  - Work with a graphic artist to create a memorable branding of your practice that reflects excellence.
- No website.
  - Tech savvy parents Google when looking for information instead of using the yellow pages.
  - Have the ability for parents to fill out their child’s personal and health history information on your website instead of the hassle of paperwork in the office.

***Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.***

***– Leo Buscaglia***

## Practice Tools to Increase Efficiency

☐ <b><i>New Item! - Top 10 Front Desk Verbal Skills Desk Reference</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>New Item! - Team Meetings Kit: Morning, Monthly &amp; Department</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>Benefits of Pediatric Dental Procedures Verbal Skills Flash Cards</i></b>	<b>\$65</b>
☐ <b><i>Hiring &amp; Training Manual</i></b>	<b>\$125</b>
☐ <b><i>Performance Review System</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>Marketing Plan System</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>Overhead Budget Monitoring System</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>Bonus System</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>Practice Management Forms</i></b>	<b>\$85</b>
☐ <b><i>Practice Vital Signs and Goal Monitoring System</i></b>	<b>\$495</b>

These systems can be ordered directly from: [www.julieweir.com](http://www.julieweir.com)



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