
As a marketing professional I am constantly looking for new marketing concepts and how and if I can incorporate them into my work helping dental practices.

The term 'Gorilla Marketing' first caught my attention about five years ago whilst at the Australian Grand Prix. A stunning model dressed in a tiny bikini was walking around the pit area in front of all the TV cameras. Her body was covered with the logos for Bridgestone tyres, onhold messaging, a spark plug manufacturer and others. Interested in this new advertising medium, I investigated further and was astonished to find out that the model had no official access to the pit area but security, just like myself, assumed that her presence was authorised and let her freely walk wherever she wished, gaining her sponsors millions of dollars of advertising around the world completely free of charge.....Brilliant!

The man behind this coo also had the reputation of going to Golf tournaments and holding a golfing umbrella with a sponsors name and logo on directly in full view of the cameras when an important putt was to be made. From these antics, the term Gorilla Marketing was created and it has now grown into a full and widely used marketing sector. Beer manufacturers will make use of parking laws by placing scooters with sign trailers attached outside football stadiums before a match starts and there is currently nothing anyone can do about it.

So how does this apply to dental? Well although I would love to put a beautiful near naked model at this year's Grand Prix, covered with dental logo's I doubt it would achieve very much apart from a possible divorce. However, the principle of getting free or low cost exposure in your area does have relevance to dental practices. There are numerous ways you can increase your practices profile, professionally and at low cost. This will increase your 'brand awareness' locally and will help improve the results from any formal local advertising you are doing, plus will remind your existing patients that you are still there and that they should attend their next appointment. The following is a list of suggestions you may wish to consider for your practice:-

Signage

To rent a billboard can cost upwards of \$5,000 per month, yet many practices I see have window areas that are

equivalent to Billboards in both size and position, yet have nothing more than the doctors name on the door. Now, as with everything to do with dental marketing, the signage chosen must reflect the kind of practice you want to be known as. I am not suggesting flashing neon signs with a moving stick man completing an extraction (of course, if your next practice is going to be in Las Vegas you may wish to consider this). Signage technology has developed greatly in recent years and there will be a signage solution that will both get you noticed and also reflect the level of professionalism that you want to be known for.

Uniforms and Business Cards

In the course of a week, you and your team will go to the bank, get coffee, go to the pub on a Friday afternoon etc. A uniform with your practice brand nice and bold embroidered on the front, will get noticed and will engage people in conversation regarding your practice.

Also, business cards are so ridiculously cheap these days, why not have some made for every member of staff.

When a member of your team is asked what they do for a living at a party or other social event, they can simply pass a business card across creating a chance for a well-qualified referred patient... instantly! Business cards are also a great moral booster and an excellent way of letting everyone in your team know they are valuable to you.

Polo and Tee Shirts

With modern embroidering processes it is now possible to have fully designed and embroidered polo and tee shirts created in very small volumes. Give these to your team for weekend use or for playing sport and you will be amazed at how many referrals this can create.

Sponsorships

Sponsoring the Sydney Swans may not fall within your marketing budget, however sponsoring a local school

team or kids group probably does. Usually the team is just looking for a new strip, which even with your logo on will not break the bank and makes you an instant friend of all of the parents. Of course, it is nice to help a local club or school achieve their dreams, so a real win win situation.

B.N.I. and Other Groups

Business Network International is a group of professionals and business people who meet over breakfast once a week and pass each other referrals. If each member of your team takes turns to attend such meetings you will see a large number of referrals come through and it is yet another way of keeping your team involved from a business stand point.

Getting involved with your local Chamber of Commerce and charities can work in much the same way and keeps your profile foremost within your local community.

Office Block VIP cards and the Intranet

If you have any large office blocks of major companies in your area you will find they will be more than happy to promote your practice to their employees. When approaching an organisation you should offer them something special, not necessarily a discount, although this is the obvious choice, but it could be a value added service such as priority appointments or a free hygiene kit. The main advantage to the employer is that you are local and this should be mentioned. By being local and offering flexibility with 'their' employee's appointment times ensures less down time for the employer. More and more companies have their own intranet systems these days and if asked, the company may be willing to promote this new staff facility on a group e-mail.

It is easy to create a little VIP card for each their employees and if the relationship proves successful, you might find yourself being asked to do a group presentation or being invited to social events.

Regular Dental Column

Newspapers and magazines are usually desperate for interesting stories and columns. We churn through so much information these days that publications are constantly in need of more editorial to keep their publication from becoming nothing more than advertising.

If you approach your local rag and suggest that you will provide a regular and interesting dental column that will be of great interest to their readers, they might just agree. The column achieves several positive things for yourself, firstly it is in effect free advertising, and secondly it raises your profile and makes you the 'dental expert' in your area. Finally, you can use the column to raise the awareness of procedures you want to do more of. It takes a little effort to write a regular column but the benefits are well worthwhile.

So, there are a few tips for your own local Gorilla Marketing campaign. I would like to wish everyone a very happy New Year and every luck in achieving your goals this year.

If you would like any help or advice with any of your marketing requirements, then call Carl on (02) 9211 1477 or e-mail at carl@dentalmarketing.com.au.

