



The Importance of a Practice Brochure

By Carl Burroughs

You only get one chance to make a first impression

This is true for most businesses, but especially for the dental profession. The moment a potential patient walks through your door, they begin to form lasting opinions about you and your practice. Once formed, these opinions can be very difficult to change. Every dental practice gives out messages about the standard of care they provide, the services they offer and the manner in which the practice operates. In some practices this is a conscious process and in other practices this is an unconscious process. What do I mean by this, well in some practices I visit the doctor and their team are fully aware of the experience a visitor to the practice is going through, from the first greeting, the smell of the practice, what a visitor is seeing and what a visitor is reading whilst in the patient lounge. Transversely other practices I visit are totally unaware of the messages given out by the practice and the staff, but the messages coming out of this practice are just as bold as the practice who has thought the whole process through. The difference is that the first practice has taken control of the patient's experience and the second practice has no idea what the patient is feeling about the process and therefore can not influence the situation and wonders why treatment plans aren't fulfilled or that they are not as busy as they were 5 years ago.

This is why the reception area of a practice needs to be friendly and a patient greeted as soon as they walk in. No matter of the style of your practice it always needs to be friendly. You may have a stark, minimalist, ultra modern reception area or you may have a heritage building with a cottage style feel, but the welcome still needs to be warm and gentle to build the correct image in your patient's mind.

When I discuss this on my practice visits I am often told, 'we are too busy to greet every patient and they just have to wait until we have finished with the patient we are dealing with' and 'how would the patient who we are dealing with feel if we ignored them to deal with someone else'. Well the answer is very simple and we have all experienced both the

best and the worst of this process in the retail and restaurant industries. No matter how busy the person is on reception as soon as anyone walks into the practice they need to be met with eye contact (with a smile behind their eyes), a broad smile and something as simple as 'Good morning, I will be with you in a moment'. This can be done in every circumstance even if you are on the phone. The visitor to your practice feels acknowledged, it's probably the first genuine smile they have received all day and the process of their experience in your practice is off to a cracking start.

For many practices, however, that critical first impression begins to take shape long before the patient ever sets foot in your office. In fact, it starts the moment someone picks up your brochure or sees your Yellow Pages ad or local newspaper ad and begins to read about you. If they don't like what they see, or if they get turned off by your message, you may never have another chance to attract them to your practice again.

A patient does not choose dentists solely on the quality of their brochures. But a well-written brochure can play an important role in helping to build your dental practice. To create an effective brochure that conveys the messages you want prospective patients to know, keep the following principles in mind:

- 1. Understand the brochure's purpose.** The primary goal with a practice brochure is to get potential patients to take the next step in the buying process. So in addition to including your name, location, phone number and the services you provide, it also needs to motivate people to take action. In the case of your dental practice, that action should involve a phone call to learn more about your practice and to schedule an appointment or at least to visit your website.
- 2. Sell benefits, not features.** To motivate people to take action, sell benefits, not features. People already know that you clean teeth, fill cavities, treat gum disease and so on. Those activities represent the features of your business. The



benefits include things like the prevention of cavities, the self-confidence that comes from a beautiful smile or the ability to eat hot and cold foods without pain.

3. Get to the point. In today's world, people are bombarded with unsolicited information. As a result, they don't take the time to read long-winded, poorly written marketing messages. To get and keep their attention with your brochure, get to the point fast. Use simple, easy-to-read language that provides educational, benefit-oriented information. Write to the demographic you are trying to attract and be careful to find a balance between using jargon that the reader will not understand and duning your message down to the point that the reader feels that you think they are stupid.

4. Reasons to read beyond the headline. Two brochures sit side by side. The first one says, 'Dr A Smith B.D.S (Hons) Syd Uni and Associates'. The second one says, "Five Good Reasons to Make Studio Dental Your Dentist of Choice". Nine out of ten people will read the second brochure first. Why? Because it offers a promise of new and useful information. If you want people to read your brochure, give them a reason for doing so.

5. Build trust. At best, most people dislike going to the dentist. At worst, they fear it. To overcome that fear, your brochure needs to build trust. Include pictures of happy, smiling patients, testimonials (in the states that allow it), list your credentials and years of experience. Highlight any awards you have received. Above all, let your patients know that you will treat them with care and that you have the competence to fulfil their requirements.

6. Include a call to action. A good brochure always includes a call to action. It doesn't have to be an aggressive sales pitch, just a friendly reminder to take the next step in the buying process. i.e. 'For a whiter, brighter smile, call 1800 990 111'. Or, 'Let the team at Studio Dental make your next check-up the most pleasant ever. Call us today to schedule an appointment'.

A great practice brochure will not replace great dentistry but it will help you attract more motivated patients to your practice who then, through the standard of dental care and the overall experience they receive from the practice, will become long-term patients.

Specialist Orthodontist Dr Kerry Lester had this to say about his practice brochure.

"I am especially happy with the tri-fold brochure as it reinforces my practice image and treatment modalities. It has been extremely well received and almost immediately began to generate new referral sources."

If you would like to know more about how to write your own practice brochure or would like Carl and his team to organise one for you, then just call (02) 9211 1477 or visit www.dentalmarketing.com.au.

