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As she continues, a movie promo playing in the home entertainment zone catches her eye. A new Disney DVD to keep the kids amused while she and her husband entertain seems ideal, so she tosses one into her cart.

For the average shopper, signage is the key to her buying experience. It offers a 'professional opinion' on a product that she might not know a lot about and values the advice.

This is no different for someone walking past or driving past a shop front. The image and product needs to jump out and catch their attention. Advise on what is inside and providing them a brief idea of what they can expect when they walk through the door.

Many practices keep their windows simple and clean, with the doctor's name in small writing and perhaps some blinds up to add a little privacy to the patients inside. If your practice has a large window area, go outside now and see what it looks like. Then look at potentially how many people will see it over the course of the day and night.

I thought so! You are now starting to realise the impact your window could have. To invest in window signage is a sensible move from many angles. The marketing of your name will continue to be promoted, even when you are not there and the reach that you will get is much further than that of say an advert in a newspaper or a flyer as it cannot be thrown away.

Standing Out

If your practice is one of many shop fronts along a street, what will make you different from the rest? A SIGN! Now, it doesn't need to be one of those terrible florescent yellow and green signs, saying 'Dr Jones practice, today only, half price check up and clean'. That is not going to attract the patient you want or represent the image inside. You need something eye catching and something that can capture who you are and the patient you are trying to entice inside.

Materials & Options

There are many different materials that you can try for your window signage, neon signs (although I would perhaps advise against it), vinyl lettering, digital printing and products such as one way vision. One way vision allows you to completely cover your window with an image yet when you are inside, it does not take away any of the natural light and you can still see outside. This technology was widely used on the high rise buildings during the Olympics In Sydney. Vinyl lettering is a simple way to create impact on your window and is now readily available in a variety of colours, so you will be able to keep close to your current practice image. Using a lifestyle image on your window will also help attract attention. Perhaps throughout your marketing there is an image, or a few images that represent you or perhaps you have even had your own studio shots made with your own models. Continuing along the same theme on the practice window adds impact to your image and gives your building space some life. Seeing a beautiful woman with a beautiful smile as you walk past a window is bound to catch someone's attention. Couple this with a brief outline of the services available and that is a recipe for success.

In addition to this, you could perhaps consider using TV as a medium in your window. Married with prominent signage, TV is a great use of technology to provide passers

by with information on you. Having an information CD playing about you, your practice, your philosophies and the services you provide is not only very cost effective but also acts as though you were there yourself, promoting your own practice.

What to say

When thinking of what to tell the public before they walk through the door, you have to remember that it needs to be brief, eye catching and to the point. You only have their attention for a few seconds and in that time you need to tell them: -

- Who you are
- What you do
- Your telephone number
- Your web address
- The services you provide (the services you want them to know you provide)

Promoting that you offer root canal therapy is not a great idea if it is something you don't want to do a lot of. If you have decided that you want your practice to be seen as the cosmetic institute of your suburb then tell them you provide cosmetic dentistry. It is all about attracting the patient that you want that will make window signage, as with most marketing activities, work for you.

When do you change it?

Whenever you like! The beauty of window signage is that it is not permanent. If you want to advertise a product a month then go for it! Make an arrangement with the sign company that they need to provide a new sign every 4 weeks and you won't even have to think about it. Depending on the materials you choose to use, this may become an unnecessary expense however it is possible. I would suggest however that you try to keep the same sign for at least 2 months. This way, people that walk or drive past will get used to your message, your style and your design and take notice.

Design

When you do change the sign, make sure that the style of the design is similar. You are getting people used to your signage and it is important to keep things consistent.

The design of your signage is probably the most important aspect. Eye catching, professional, stylish, modern, corporate, child friendly- whatever it is that represents you and your practice and patients, it needs to come across in the design.

Content, not technology, is the key to success with window signage. You could use the best possible materials however if you have not delivered the right message, what is the point.

Your window signage will become what is in affect, a permanent advertisement for your practice and a continuation of the atmosphere and style you have created when you walk through the door.

Creating a comfort zone

If you have a practice that is not geared towards treating children, why would you advertise an image of a child on your window? Create a design that is going to make your patients comfortable in knowing they are welcome inside. You need to entice and welcome patients with the sign, not put them off or perhaps make the practice look something it isn't. If you are in a corporate environment then it may be ideal to have the design the same way, with the same rules applying to residential areas, families and well being style practices.

Window signage is your key to adding external value to your business and making use of the great advertising space you have- for free, 24/7! The dental profession is just that, a group of professional and highly trained people. The community trust your opinions but in order to get them into your practice, you must make that statement known.

For more information on creating impact with your window signage, simply call IDM on 02 9211 1477 or email carl@dentalmarketing.com.au. IDM can create an eye-catching design for your practice window that represents your practice and image perfectly.

