



## **How to Attract New Dental Patients**

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Increasing production depends on many factors, but first on the list is new patients. They not only replenish your patient base but also typically represent more production on a per-patient basis. The question is, how do you generate a steady and substantial influx of new patients month after month, year after year? Aside from traditional external marketing—which can be very costly and seldom yields satisfactory results—there are three proven new patient strategies that you can implement:

### **1. Patient Referrals**

Personal recommendations have always been the most powerful form of advertising. If your current patients are happy with the service you and your staff provide, you can count on them to refer their family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to your practice... *IF* you encourage them to do so.

There are many ways to generate patient referrals. A simple sign in the reception area indicating that you welcome new patients can be highly effective. You, the hygienist and other team members can ask patients to refer people they know (scripting can make this easy technique even easier). You can also use other channels of direct patient communication to get the word out. Practices that implement a range of patient referral strategies consistently receive at least one new patient referral annually from 40–60% of their existing patient base.

### **2. Community Outreach**

Less direct yet equally effective long-term are activities that raise your profile in the local community. The idea is to earn top-of-mind awareness of you and your practice so that, when the time comes to find a dentist, prospective patients will think of you first. Outreach can consist of local team and event sponsorships, participation in health fairs,

volunteerism, making speeches and writing articles about dental care for local audiences, and otherwise establishing a strong, positive reputation among community members.

### **3. Online Presence Marketing**

Your practice's online activities can have a tremendous impact on new patient numbers, including the reinforcement of the patient referral and community outreach strategies discussed above. For example, your website... which should be optimized to achieve high search rankings... will often be consulted for details about your practice after a referral has been made. Similarly, your social media activities represent an excellent form of "outreach." Other components of your online presence, such as directory listings, reviews and targeted promotional messages, can also generate and strengthen new patient referrals.

To increase the number of new patients coming through your door, focus on these three strategies. They represent the surest and most cost-effective ways to increase production... one new patient at a time.