

10 ways to promote a practice

Dental marketing expert **Shaz Memon** offers a checklist of innovations that your team can use to market their services



1 Preventative

Stop the rot – Tooth decay continues to be a major problem in the UK, placing significant burden not just on individuals but also on dental care professionals, the NHS and society. From the cradle to grey, innovation is a driving source in reshaping the oral health and preventative dental care market. There is a very real need to innovate in an ever-expanding oral health market that includes three key areas:



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- The need to see children before they reach their first birthday. The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry has dedicated much time and enthusiasm to raising awareness of this within the profession as well as with patients. It has led a great dental marketing campaign on social media – ‘Dental Check by One or #DCby1 – with the aim of getting children in the dental chair before their first birthday

- Educating patients on diet and lifestyle choices and the impact this has on oral health (erosion/sugar intake/smoking/alcohol, etc) is important and dental teams can encourage patients to keep diet diaries or direct them to websites such as the government’s Change4Life Sugar Smart campaign (<https://www.nhs.uk/change4life-beta/food-facts/sugar#MwtlmyHwwiAOLXE5.97>). Key public awareness drives, such as World Oral Health Day, National Smile Month and Mouth Cancer Action Month, all help to promote the need to view dental health care as a priority.

- Treating the increasing number of older

patients who will remain dentate into their ‘golden years’ but with complex health issues and problems re: dexterity. The term ‘elderly’ is, of course, diverse but do consider talking about the problems that come with age and raise awareness of how your practice is investing in new technology to help remedy some of the problem – easy access, easy payments and innovative cosmetic solutions for older patients should all be included in your dental marketing plans.

2 Restorative

Rebuilding the foundations – Restorative dentistry is a combination of art and science innovations, with the dental technician now a key player in the dental team. Innovation must drive restorative dentistry when it comes to the materials and tools used to make treatments more predictable, safer and longer lasting. Restorative technology now takes away the discomfort of impression material and digital

technology makes systems faster and more efficient – meeting the needs of patients. Crowns, bridges and tooth-coloured fillings now offer more aesthetically pleasing and more realistic results. If you have a dental technician on site, shout about it in your marketing. It reduces treatment time (no to-ing and fro-ing between practice and lab) and gives the technician access to patients – an important consideration in accurate and pleasing results.

3 Orthodontics

Give it to them straight – The phenomenon of adult orthodontics is well documented. Teeth-straightening options are both celebrity driven and more accessible and acceptable for adults, with the internet raising awareness among patients of the aesthetic and health needs for a straighter smile. They are the first thing people notice – but also easier to maintain oral health. It's a huge market and dentists can now innovate (even GDPs) to provide simple (almost invisible) solutions to non-complex misalignment issues as well as specialist orthodontists, providing faster, more effective orthodontic treatments. Technology also means that treatment software enables potential patients to now see results – based on reliable diagnostics – before they've even embarked on treatments.

4 Endodontics

Rest assured restorability – Endo has undergone huge innovation in the last decade but remains one of the most challenging areas of dentistry. Diagnosis is key to good outcomes with ultrasonic techniques making for easier access during RCT. There have been leaps and bounds in the innovation behind anaesthesia, too, and digital radiography has upped its game. If you offer intra-oral cameras and dental sedation options in your practice, market it. Irrigation and magnification also ensure better and more predictable results and help to enhance the experience of something with a somewhat historically bad reputation.

5 Implants

Bridging the gap – Dental implants can change a patient's quality of life and are now the 'go to' treatment for replacing missing teeth – primarily because they are natural looking. Long gone are the days of dentures and bridges being the only

options. Dentists can even fit implants in a day, and there is also the All-on-four option offering cost as well as time savings. Implants are supported by much scientific literature and clinical evidence to show that a well-constructed dental implant replacement of a missing tooth will far outlive a well made fixed bridgework. Key to longevity, however, is the importance of oral health education and support. Explain how dentistry has moved on and share blogs and case studies on a treatment that increasingly has mass appeal.

6 Prosthetics

Naturally speaking – Some patients prefer solutions that don't involve the removal of tooth structure and, thanks to technology, bridges and dentures are more natural looking than ever before. Removable partial dentures meet need of increasing number of partially dentate adults. Dentistry is continuing to innovate when it comes to digital design, materials, and ease of repair, patient education and so on.

7 CAD/CAM

Minimising risk – The dento-legal benefits of CAD/CAM technology (computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing) are countless. It is easy to be seduced by the benefits and opportunities of new treatment methodologies but dental teams need to have an eye on the dento-legal implications of introducing new treatments with an aim to keep risk to a minimum. CAD/CAM helps to enhance view of the oral cavity to ensure safe delivery of dentistry and avoid litigation. Additionally, 3D software is a sound investment in best practice protocols, reassurance for patients, dental team and profit margins alike. It should be part of any practice's dental marketing strategy to sell this 'safety' element to patients.

8 Imaging Systems

Innovate to educate and win more patients – it is always important to innovate with an eye to increasing patient uptake – whilst in the chair as well as via online marketing. We all know that pictures speak 1,000 words etc, and we live in a world where images are key (think Instagram and so on). Patients expect technology to be translated into

the dental practice and dentists need to be up to speed with this. While it is important to innovate to increase patient compliance, imaging is also good for patient education. Imaging systems empower patients to learn. As Benjamin Franklin once said: 'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn.'

9 Treatment centres

How flexible is yours? – Face-to-face communication with patients lies at the heart of dental marketing as well as dental nursing. The psychology of best practice – including equal eye level, an open face, a smile and active listening – all work to build confidence, particularly with the dentally phobic. The dental journey is now seen as co-managed by patient and clinician and your treatment centre needs to deliver opportunities for this scenario as well as the delivery of care. Do you offer easy access into the chair for ALL patients?

A well-designed treatment centre should make all the above seamless as well as ensure a healthier working environment for the team. If fourhanded dentistry is the ideal, does your treatment centre make this protocol easy to manage?

While patients' interests come first, it is also a wise financial investment in order to protect the clinician's back and neck health. There is lots of evidence that career in dentistry that a career can be shortened by serious muscular-skeletal problems.

10 Instruments

Are you in the 'singles' market? – The quality of single use instruments is high thanks to innovation. Safety and infection control are paramount and dentistry has had to develop to meet high expectations re: contamination avoidance and cross infection, speed of use, efficiency and reduction in operating costs. Also, they are surprisingly cost effective (it does away with need for sterilisation). Savvy patients are more risk adverse and may request single use instruments. For some practices, this may be their USP and they should consider marketing themselves as such, attracting more patients and increasing income. Safe sharps are also kinder to the environment – and it is good to be seen that the profession is innovating to save the planet, too.