

Put a spin on it

Dentistry is beset by poor media coverage – so what can you do to flip the negative publicity and get more patients through your door? **Shaz Memon** explains

Very few of us are blessed with the ability to create prose that flows as perfectly as the ink from a Montblanc fountain pen.

As a clinician, you are unlikely to need to add this to an already comprehensive skillset, even though written communication plays a big role in dentistry as the spoken word.

The power of words – especially in a world built on trust and where patients hang on to every one you share – is a key part of your professionalism that requires frequent revisiting and fine-tuning.

Words need to be communicated with clarity, they need to be kind, caring and comforting, but they also need to engage and, essentially, make what you do – dentistry – attractive and appealing. Not easy when the media often shines a spotlight on the less palatable side of the profession!



Shaz Memon

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Writing styles

As a clinician, you are proficient at writing up a thesis or dissertation, a case study or a medical history. Additionally, you are expected to ensure all patients understand any issues under discussion whether it is about:

- Explaining histories
- Agreeing treatment
- Raising concerns over an outcome
- The making of a complaint.

Indeed, each and every member of your dental team has a role to play in communication and its proper implementation in order to manage a patient and his or her expectations – from the initial ‘meeting’ (online and off), throughout treatment planning and beyond.

Increasingly, words play a key role in the marketing of your practice, regardless of whether you delegate that task to an outside resource or a member of the practice team.

Your brand is very much dependant on using the written word to create a business ideal to which patients are attracted and to which they can relate.

There is also a need to ensure you spin key messages in a positive fashion – using the phrase ‘oral health promotion’, for example, is better than ‘preventative dentistry’ and a ‘smile makeover’ beats the somewhat dated concept of a dentist ‘fixing teeth’.

Equally, do you offer a ‘suite’ or ‘menu’ of treatments and are those who present in

your chair ‘patients’ or ‘clients’?

Using the right words can enhance the patient experience even before they have set foot inside your clinic, spa or surgery.

PEOPLE LIKE TO READ ABOUT PEOPLE

Influencing behaviour

As any good business owner understands, there is a very real need to harness the power of the internet. Commonly acknowledged as a legal and ethical minefield – so much so that all nature of bodies cover it in their legislature – it is regarded a necessity in the communication process with dental patients.

While observing the regulations that prevent you from using hyperbole and making sweeping claims as to what your skills may achieve for patients – ie, you will not change their lives with a new smile – there is, nonetheless, a strong argument to communicate in a professional way via the internet.

Engaging and persuasive language to encourage behaviour change in potential patients – ie, to get them through your practice door – needn’t be too limiting, and it is important to have a handle on some more creative writing projects, such as blogs,



BE THE DJ

- Use simple words that your patients will understand; avoid dental jargon
- Consider the power of online: make the most out of your social media following and practice website
- Keep it short and sweet; your blog should not be longer than 500 words
- Use your imagination!

website information, practice newsletters and social media posts.

A master of words

Consider the following:

1. Always write about something you have a complete understanding of or have a passion for – whether it is teeth whitening or orthodontics, your enthusiasm will shine through
2. Keep it snappy. Brevity is particularly important when it comes to social media posts. The 140-character demand of Twitter offers a challenge for even the most talented wordsmith. Less is more, and 500 words should suffice for any blog you plan to post on your practice website
3. Use a hook to entice the reader in (newsworthy topics and celebrities are always a safe bet). For example, if you are

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putting together an article on teeth whitening and orthodontics, you may find a celeb who has just had a smile makeover or a poll that reveals the latest statistics of those patients seeking cosmetic dentistry. Kick off your blog with a snappy intro – ‘A white, straight smile is more likely to secure you that job, according to a recent survey...’ or for orthodontics, ‘Track cyclists Laura Trott and Jason Kenny blaze a trail with invisible braces and we can do the same for you...’. Don’t be afraid to be bold with your intros


4. Use positive outcomes and patient testimonials and their ‘back’ stories. People like to read about people! It makes what you have to say about your chosen treatment less abstract and somehow more accessible
5. Pepper your blogs with statistics, quotes

and study references. We all love facts! And it adds evidence to your messages

6. Do not sweat the small stuff. It is important to remember that there are proof readers and editors out there who can clean up copy and SEO experts who can amplify your website content
7. Be original – don’t rip off articles from elsewhere. If the reader has already read your copy, it will turn them off. Use an online plagiarism checker if you are in any doubt.

Get creative

Enjoy and be consistent in your messages in order to get across your clinic’s branding and ethos. Patient education, of course, is the underlying message – but this doesn’t have to mean communication is dull and unimaginative.

Ensure the whole team understands this need to use positive language and phrases and words that are patient-friendly and have consumer appeal as well. 



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