

# Innovating Your Practice

by Marc Aronson

Our seven-step *Formula for Market Dominance* initial action is called *deserve the business*. This means in order for a medical or dental practice to implement the most effective marketing strategy, it first must ensure it provides a service that is perceived as being clearly superior to its competition. Superiority must be in terms of one or more of these five areas: quality of care, customer service (patient relations), convenience (waiting time, location, parking, etc.), consistency or price (insurance acceptance).

## Quality of Care

Surveys show that consumers have a rough time judging whether a medical or dental practice provides high quality care. Rather, people tend to judge a doctor's or dentist's competence based on communication skills and presence (charisma). Thus, in order to separate your practice from your competition in terms of quality of care, you must first educate people how to judge competence. Criteria to evaluate capability could include education, board certifications, patient testimonials, medical staff memberships, malpractice lawsuits (whether any exist), and continuing education. Next, compare how you stand up to the criteria you identified. If you hold up exceptionally well to these gauges, prospective patients will more likely choose you.

## Customer Service, Convenience and Consistency

The approach for these criteria is somewhat different. First, you must determine the emotional hot buttons for each criterion. Once you have identified the hot buttons, you can figure what actions you can take to separate your practice from your competition. You do so by initially holding a brain-storming session. In this meeting, let your ideas flow freely without any constraints, including budgeting and personnel requirements. Come up with dozens of ideas until you've completely exhausted your imagination. Then determine which have the most potential and

feasibility for success. Once you've selected one or more ideas you wish to implement, check to see if your competitors have already put your ideas into place. If they have not, you have one or more innovations you can implement and promote. Next, create promotion that focuses on your innovations.

## An Example of the Innovation Process

Let us say you are a family dentist who wishes to do something that would separate your practice from other dentists in terms of customer service. Two major hot buttons you uncovered were that people found dental visits *boring* and *feared* visits would be *painful*. So, you held a brainstorming session and decided, based on a financial/market analysis, it might be worth the money to place a 60 inch HD TV in your reception area, 20 inch HD TVs in each examination room and give away free DVDs. You tested this concept on your patients and they overwhelming told you they loved the idea. This being the case, you researched movies you could purchase that could reduce stress and fear. Then, to determine whether your idea was unique, you contacted every family dentist in your community. As a result, you learned that although a few had HD TVs in their reception areas, none had individual TVs in their exam rooms. These findings motivated you to purchase the TVs, wireless headphones and 122 popular DVD movies that might reduce stress.

Since all of the family dentists in your area say just about the same thing in their ads ("we provide painless dentistry"), you created a campaign that took painless dentistry one step further. Your headline read, "*The only dentist in town that provides PAINLESS DENTAL CARE while you watch a movie you'll love.*" Then your sub headline read, "*You'll choose the movie and get to keep it too.*" Next, your sub-sub headline read, "*We carefully chose 122 movies that will help relieve your boredom and take your attention off your treatment.*" Your copy then

started by saying. *“We reviewed 3 clinical studies that determined what kind of movies lower people’s stress levels. As a result, we chose the most popular comedies, family films and love stories.”* You also created a report and added a section of your ad that read, *“9 questions you should ask a family dentist before you commit to an appointment.”* This gave those who weren’t yet ready to make an appointment a chance to first receive valuable information. By making this offer, you provided a *confidence builder* that resulted in more immediate patients.

Your practice would actually have to conduct the research and spend some money. So, is there big payoff? Of course! *You effectively separated your practice from your competition and demonstrated you truly care about your patients rather than just stating it, as your competition does.* This ad would blow your competition away regardless of where you placed your promotion, so long as you chose media your prospects pay attention to. There are literally hundreds of actions you can take

to innovate your practice. Hopefully, the one above will stimulate your thinking. Call us if you would like us to help you create and implement a superiority strategy that will enable you to Dominate Your Competition.

