

# Understanding how your practice wants you to promote their practice

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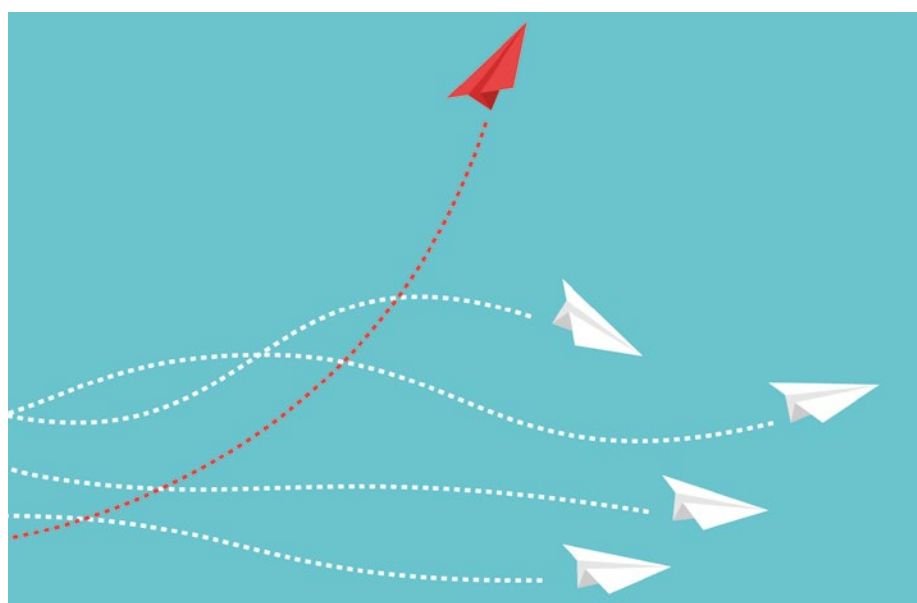
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**A**s a dental associate, you may think it is not your concern how the practice attracts patients or promotes its business. However, if you want a bustling patient list and to perform dentistry to your best ability then growing your own patient base and building relationships with patients both for yourself and the practice is key.

Every practice will have its own business and marketing plans. They will have overall aims and objectives they want to achieve and a specific image they want to portray. A good practice owner will share these with you. They will introduce you to the business and the practice's vision and ideas. If you are unsure, then talk to them.

Ideally the practice will layout the business aims and objectives in staff and associate handbooks, policies and contracts. When you join the practice, the induction process should introduce you to these practice policies and procedures. Each year you should work with your practice owner to develop your personal objectives for the year. There should also be regular staff meetings to discuss any particular changes in direction or strategy. Marketing and practice promotion should be a team effort with all staff working together to educate patients about the practice's procedures, provide high quality treatment and excellent customer service.

Discuss with your practice owner your practice's unique selling point in the marketplace. What is your primary patient base? Do you have lots of young families? Is it an extensively NHS or private practice? Are your patients more interested in cosmetic types of treatment? Engage with your practice owner on what sort of image they want the practice to portray and then ensure that your communication with patients reflects these aims. Don't be afraid to consider yourself as an important part of the team and the importance of your role to the success of the practice.



In addition to considering your patient demographic, you have to be sensitive to the current climate. Patients may be feeling more nervous and anxious than usual. Therefore, clear communication with your patients at this time is more important than ever. There have been countless cases of misinformation on what services dentists can currently provide and the service they can expect to receive when they visit. Discuss with your practice owner how best to communicate with patients. This could be via the practice website, on social media or mailings and good communication means you can preempt any changes that could cause concern for your patients and ensure they know what to expect from their visit. In addition, you need to be sympathetic to the current times with what services you are promoting.

At present, there is a requirement to triage patients before they visit and this means there is an easy way to open the communication channels with your patients to ensure they are comfortable on their return to the surgery. Taking that extra time to engage with your patients and show that you care will keep your patients happy and loyal to the practice. A loyal stable patient base is extremely important as it demonstrates that patients are happy with the services you are providing. In

addition, it is a brilliant free marketing tool via word of mouth referrals!

Benefits of good customer service include repeat customers, more sales, and better cash flow. This benefits you the associate and not just the practice. How you conduct yourself impacts not only on your reputation but the business reputation. No business wants complaints and if you have good, positive relationships with your patients then you are more likely to reduce this risk. Poor communication is one of the main reasons that patients complain. Ensure that your patients understand what you are telling them about their treatment in as straightforward terms as possible. Remember to record carefully in the records their consent and the communication that took place.

Always listen out for patients' comments and feedback and communicate this back to your practice owner. Encourage patients to leave formal feedback too. All of this will establish your position as a vital member of the practice team, help build both your patient relationships and relationship with your practice owner and bring rewarding job satisfaction.

BDA members can access further advice for Associates at [www.bda.org/advice](http://www.bda.org/advice) ♦

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