



Practice marketing: Why do it in-house?

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Some people see marketing as a dark art, something that should be outsourced to an agency or specialist at all costs. Not something that healthcare professionals should be dabbling in. If this is how you feel about marketing your dental practice, you are not alone.

Traditionally, dentists were limited as to how much and what type of marketing we could actually do, so it has been ingrained in many of us that it's best left to someone else. *BDJ In Practice* spoke to **Dr Grant McAree** on the benefits of initiating marketing within your practice using your team instead of outsourcing.

Does outsourcing have a place?

GM Of course, outsourcing has its place. If you genuinely can't do something or would waste too much time and money doing yourself, then bring in the big guns. But here's a fact many dentists don't realise. 60% of your marketing you could easily do yourself. 60%!

Outsourcing is what happens if the business is not skilled at something, but there's no reason for you not to be skilled at marketing your own practice up to a certain level. Anything that's beyond that, get someone else in, but make sure you find a good company to outsource to – one that understands you – and make sure you learn basics yourself, so you are not walking around blind.

I believe that every practice owner or principal dentist needs to try and do some of it for themselves. One of the main reasons they end up outsourcing marketing isn't because they can't do it; it's because of a perceived lack of time and knowledge and mainly because of fear. Fear they are doing

the wrong thing. Fear they put an advert out and it costs money and isn't going to the right place.

Why should you do your marketing in-house?

GM Of course, doing your marketing in-house can save you money, but it's much more than that.

In fact, in-house marketing is becoming more and more popular across all industries. This is because people realise that no one understands their business better than them and their team. Dentistry is no different.

My dad was a dentist too, and, in his day, the most marketing he could do was sticking a gold plaque up on the wall. So it makes sense to me that some people still hold the belief that marketing is unprofessional when you are in healthcare. However, I'm here to tell you the ugly truth. Those ideas are outdated. Marketing is an extremely effective tool for your business, and by outsourcing it, you could be missing out, and I don't just mean financially.

Doing your own marketing is not only empowering, but it can also be really enjoyable because your team are taking ownership of something that has a tangible and visible impact on your practice, your patients and their working life. Don't believe me? Marketing is not just about getting more patients through the door; it's about following that patient journey through, right from the first moment of engagement, and here's why.

Marketing is a vehicle for sales, and sales are happening all around you every day. Every time you walk through the door of your practice, you and your team are selling. Every time they pick up the phone and interact with a patient they are selling. Even if they don't realise it. In-house marketing pulls all that together. It puts you and your team in control of the messages you are putting out to existing and potential patients. No one understands your brand, philosophy, culture or patients better than you and your team, so you are much better placed to put out relevant content than someone who is doing it without that insider knowledge.

What advice can you offer to get the team involved?

GM The first thing you can do is get outside help to educate your team. Send them on a course so that everyone has a level of knowledge to start from. Even the bad apples can become forest assets with education.

Even if you end up outsourcing aspects of your marketing, understanding it will mean you and your team are better placed to deal with any agencies or outside parties. You can't get blinded by smoke and mirrors or marketing jargon if you have a level of knowledge yourself.

In my practice, marketing is ingrained. I have automated systems in place so that every member of staff is trained from day one. Once everyone is on board and understands that you are taking ownership of your marketing as a practice, I would advise having team meetings that are just about marketing. We have morning huddles, which are a great way to connect with your team. Make it fun and get your team to input ideas. The younger generation is particularly knowledgeable about Instagram, so ask them!

Make sure as the owner/lead you really listen to people. Have 360-degree feedback

sessions, and don't be afraid to say if you screwed up. Be willing to learn. Your team is an invaluable marketing asset, but many principals/practice owners don't realise this (until they have been on my course, of course).

You can even give individual team members who have a particular interest in it a more involved role, for example, have a team marketing lead and a team sales lead. But I genuinely believe in getting the whole team involved.

When your team comes together to work on something that benefits everyone, you will have a happy owner, happy manager and happy team.

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What are the most common mistakes people make, and how can they be avoided?

GM The number one mistake people make when it comes to marketing is not giving it a go, so my number one piece of advice is just to try it.

The other things that really let marketing down are awful photos, spelling mistakes and poor targeting.

You need to identify your USP and your target audience before you start putting stuff out there. This is your 'why'. Why are you providing this service, and who to? Once you have your USP nailed down, you can develop a strategy around it. Always keep your core 'why' in mind. That is what will build your business and get patients through the door.

Don't put before and after images up that are completely unrealistic or unrepresentative of the quality work you do. You'll lose the patient's trust before they walk through the door. And spelling mistakes. I don't need to tell you why these make

marketing communications look sloppy and unprofessional.

If you are still unsure of what approach to take, then there are courses out there, like my Dental Business and Marketing Course, which can help give you a much clearer understanding of what marketing is and how to implement it. You can also get stuck into reading some business or marketing books. The For Dummies series is actually very good. Google has a wealth of information, so if you don't know how to do something, Google 'How to...'

If you still want to outsource, ask colleagues for recommendations but make sure you meet the marketer yourself first. This person will be responsible for putting out messages about your business, so don't just outsource and think 'out of sight, out of mind'. Make sure you are involved in the process and are working with someone you trust.

Most of all, remember when it comes to marketing, 'it ain't rocket science'. Just give it a go. What have you got to lose? ♦

For more information visit www.dentalbusinessmentor.co.uk.



Bio

Dr Grant McAree is an award-winning dental marketer and experienced dental practice owner supporting the growth of dental businesses.

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