



MARKETING GUIDE FOR DENTISTS

**Six Highly Effective Strategies
for Gaining New Business**





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The Myth of the Silver Bullet

You don't have to look beyond your mailbox, local newspaper, computer monitor or smartphone to see that your options to reach dental patients are expanding at an accelerating pace. With so many media channels dividing their attention, there is no "silver bullet" that alone can ensure success.

Rather than relying on a single answer, successful marketing for dentists (inclusive of cosmetic dentists, endodontists, orthodontists, pediatric dentists, periodontists and prosthodontists) requires a combination of tools. With them, you'll not only target prospects wherever they are, but also help them find you wherever they look for the expertise you offer.

We've created this guide to share the six top strategies you need to conduct a successful campaign. Together they take advantage of the channels today's consumers rely on and the latest technologies available to reach them. While each is

powerful in its own right, choosing the optimum combination for your audience is the surest way to deliver your message to the right people at the right time.

To get started, you'll need an understanding of who your top prospects are, where you're most likely to find them, and how they prefer to be reached. Building on this knowledge, you'll also need a plan to attract their interest, fulfill their information needs and encourage them to take action. The six strategies outlined in this guide will help show you the way.



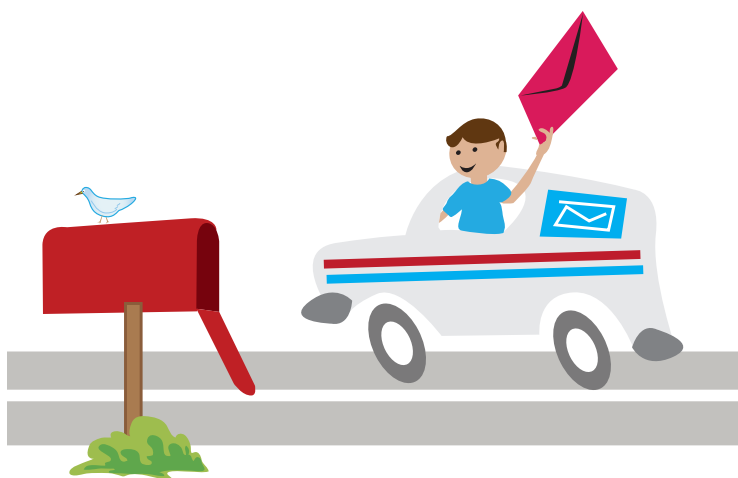
1

Direct Mail Earns a Stamp of Approval

Think direct mail is dead? Think again! The truth is direct mail marketing has never been more effective. It's a fact that 85% of consumers sort through and read their mail every day.¹ Forty percent of people say they've tried a new business after receiving direct mail, and 73% say they prefer printed mailings over emails to learn about new products and services or offers from companies they know.² Most telling of all, while email response rates have declined sharply in the past six years, direct mail response rates are holding strong.³

When creating your mailer, remember the importance of an offer. A coupon or special of some kind gives the recipient a reason to take interest in what you mail them. It also provides them a motivation to keep your mail piece and follow up on it!

Of particular relevance to those marketing dental care services is direct mail's ability to reach highly specific audiences. Depending on your market and list provider, you can often target people by income, occupation, marital status, age, location and other selects. Want to promote your pediatric dentistry practice to parents with children ages one and above who live within a 10-mile radius of your office? There may be a local list for this audience. How about families within your zip code with children ages 8-14 who are prime prospects for orthodontics? There could be a list for this target, too!



While traditional, personalized mail is still the cornerstone of direct mail, there are some new options worthy of consideration. For example, dentists who are just starting out may wish to announce their new practice to everyone within driving distance. In this case, you could leverage the power of geography-based postal services that provide blanket coverage (e.g., non-personalized) at some very attractive rates.

Every Door Direct Mail® (EDDM) from the U.S. Postal Service® lets you reach every home (and business) within a selected area at postage rates as low as 16 cents per piece with no mailing list fees.

Similarly, Unaddressed Admail™ from Canada Post allows you to send marketing mail to any mailbox in Canada. The new Precision Targeter tool helps you choose geographies based on more than 50 demographic selections to pinpoint mailings to local consumers.

¹ Epsilon Target, 2011 Consumers Channel Preference Study, December 2011

² International Communications Research Survey, 2012

³ Direct Marketing Association, 2012 Response Rate Report, 2012



Action Items!

1. Choose a format. Postcards, self-mailers and envelope packages are all great choices depending on your message.
2. Announce a new patient special or *free* orthodontics exam; direct mail works best when supported by an offer.

2

What's the Good Word? Referrals!

Word-of-mouth advertising is marketing at its most basic ... and most effective. Today, 76% of all economic activity is influenced by personal recommendations.¹ These include, of course, a consumer's choice in a dentist.

Given that nine out of 10 people trust the recommendations of friends,² a referral program can go a long way in driving new patients to your door. With such a plan, current and former customers can become your brand advocates. What's more, you'll enjoy excellent flexibility; your options described here range from the modest to the more ambitious.

Consider a simple program where patients are contacted via email or mail and asked to refer relatives, co-workers, friends and neighbors to your dental practice. If not the main focus of your ad, email, postcard, letter or website, be sure to include a request for a recommendation somewhere within it. You may also wish to employ an incentive to spur results: "Refer a friend; get a free gift card to a local retailer."

Of course, digital communications are redefining the concept of "word of mouth." So, as a next step, create a page for your practice on a social media site such as Facebook and encourage customers to become "fans" and "share" their endorsement of you with others. (Read more about social media on page 8.)

Another option is an *automated* online referral program of the type offered by our Referral Management System. With it, you can launch a customized referral website that will help turn current and former patients into referral-generating advocates, with the added advantages of easy campaign management and results tracking.

No matter which word-of-mouth option you select, the most important advice regarding referrals is also the simplest: *Ask for them!* Give satisfied customers every opportunity to recommend your dental practice or firm to others in support of your new business efforts.

Tip: Monitor the efforts (including Facebook pages) of other dentists to see how they solicit referrals. Of course, if you need professional assistance with your referral program, we can make a recommendation of our own: contact us.

¹ eMarketer Research Report, 2012

² Nielsen Online, Global Advertising Consumers Trust Real Friends and Virtual Strangers the Most, July 2009



Action Items!

1. Ask current and former patients to recommend your practice to others.
2. Take the next step and request that customers "like" you on Facebook and submit positive reviews.



"The recommendation of someone else remains the most trusted source of information when consumers decide which products and services to buy."

Source: Nielsen Online, 2009

3

Websites “Click” with Dental Prospects

An informative and up-to-date website is a must for today's dentists. A site establishes your legitimacy in the marketplace and helps qualify patients. Those looking for general dentistry, for example, might not be a prime candidate for you if you specialize in periodontics.

In addition to a welcoming home page, most websites for dentists include pages for procedures/services offered, dentist and staff profiles, smile gallery (with before-and-after photos), testimonials, special offers and contact us. To boost traffic and improve your site's rankings on search engines such as Google, publish a “blog” or series of posts on dental care topics that will induce visitors to come back for more.

Whether creating a new website or updating a current one, you'll want to ensure it's optimized for smartphone use. Why? Mobile devices are rapidly replacing traditional computers as the preferred platforms for search, information sharing and driving directions. Today, more than half of all adults in the U.S. have smartphones,¹ and 47% of Canadians have joined the smartphone revolution.²

Mobile devices are also driving expanded delivery of location-based information to connect prospects and marketers in local markets. According to the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life project, 74% of smartphone users today get real-time, location-based information on their mobile devices.

The number of small businesses with mobile-optimized websites is expected to triple in 2013. Yet more than 80% of small businesses will still not have their own mobile sites this year.³ With customers rapidly making the smartphone their online tool of choice – and with Google, Bing and other search engines empowering local search as never before – this is no time for you to be left behind.

A good mobile site takes key information from your regular site and makes it easy to read and navigate on smaller mobile screens. The information should fit nicely on the screen and scroll down – not across. If you have to manually resize the screen to find what you need, your site is not optimized for mobile users.

Keep in mind that 57% of consumers will not recommend a business with a poorly designed mobile site, and 40% of them will go to a competitor's site after a disappointing mobile experience.⁴ If you're unsure how to go about this, talk to a designer experienced in mobile web development. With our GrowMOBILE™ service, we're another good source for this expertise.

¹ comScore, 2013 Mobile Future in Focus, February 2013

² Ipsos Reid, Mobil-ology Study, January 2013

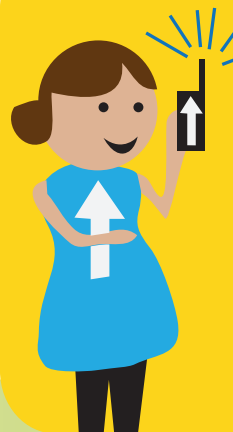
³ Forbes Magazine Online, Local Marketing in 2013: The 10 Key Trends to Watch, January 16, 2013

⁴ Pew Research Center's, Internet & American Life Project, January 2013



Action Item!

View your website on a smartphone. Is it easy to read and navigate? If not, optimize your site for mobile users.



By 2013, more people will use their mobile phones than PCs to get online.

Mobile searches have grown by 4x since 2010.

There will be one mobile device for every person on earth by 2015.

Source: Gartner Inc., Key Predictions 2011

4

Online Local Search Helps More Prospects Find You

Local search is today's Yellow Pages. Computers and smartphones have replaced paper directories in helping prospects find your dental practice. Just how important is search engine activity to local businesses? Research shows 82% of consumers use search engines to find local resources,¹ and 90% of internet users have gone online to research a purchase and then visited a nearby business in person as a result.² All of which makes high search visibility a cornerstone of effective marketing.

Creating a Google+ local listing is often the first step to ignite your search performance, but it's only the beginning. In the U.S., listings with Yahoo Local, Bing Local, BotW, Foursquare, Neustar/Localeze, Yelp, Super Pages, YP, City Search, InfoGroup, and PrimePlace are also highly recommended. In Canada, you'll want to be on Google+, Bing, Foursquare, Yelp, InfoGroup and Prime Place, plus 411.ca, YellowPages.ca, Brownbook.net, WebLocal.ca and CanPages.ca.

Don't forget to investigate those directories that focus on dentists. These include dentalreferral.com, dentistry.com, healthgrades.com, knowyourteeth.com, mouthhealthy.org, zocdoc.com and 1800dentist.com, among others. A recent Forbes magazine article³ says vertical search engines like

these are becoming increasingly important. Local and regional business directories are another valuable source of search exposure ... they often earn high rankings with the major search engines in local search results.

Strive to make your listings in Google+ Local and other directories as complete as possible, because their impact on search rankings will be greater. All of the principles of website search engine optimization apply to local search engine optimization (SEO) – but with a geographic twist. To enhance local SEO on your website, make frequent reference to the city in which you are located and the areas you serve.

With the right planning and execution, local search can create an immediate spike in patient inquiries. And it's a strategy that keeps on giving, driving a continuous flow of dental prospects to your door while you implement the rest of your comprehensive local marketing program.

¹ Marketingcharts.com, Marketers Say They're Shifting Focus Away from Traditional Media, January 30, 2013

² Pew Research Center, Internet & American Life Project, January 2013

³ Forbes Magazine Online, Local Marketing in 2013: The 10 Key Trends to Watch

* Google is a registered trademark of Google Inc.



Action Items!

1. Go to getlisted.org and enter your practice's information to see where you are currently listed.
2. Update or claim your listings as needed on the top listing sites.



GOOGLE®

Find orthodontist in Orlando.

82% search online
for local businesses

Source: Marketingcharts.com, Marketers Say They're Shifting Focus Away from Traditional Media, January 30, 2013

5

Newspaper Advertising: Read All About It!

For all the attention garnered by the alternatives, when it comes to advertising your dental practice, the tried-and-true option of local newspaper advertising should not be overlooked.

In an online survey of 5,000 U.S. adults conducted by Nielsen for the Newspaper Association of America (NAA), research showed that respondents rated newspapers as the most effective advertising source, placing it ahead of radio, the Internet and television.¹ The study also revealed that among adults, local newspapers topped all other options for likelihood to purchase and propensity to notice ads.

In fact, among 11 metrics measuring average engagement including trust and ethics, how connected media makes people feel, the value or inspiration it adds to life, and the effectiveness of advertising, local newspapers bested all other media. Clearly, local newspaper advertising can be a key component in your efforts to gain new patients.

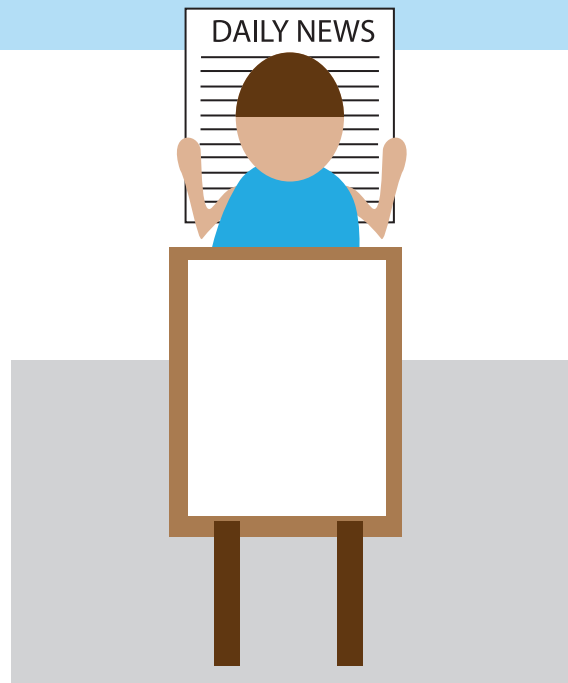
When creating your ad, consider the use of money-saving coupons to attract new business. Many dentists make extensive use of coupon offers including those for discounted dental visits (inclusive of an exam, x-rays and cleaning), free orthodontic exams, discounted new patient exams, and 20% off clear braces, among other special offers.

To get started, conduct an Internet search for thought starters on how other dentists employ newspaper advertising. We're also a great source for ideas, as well as the creative execution and placement that can help make your newspaper advertising efforts more successful.

¹ 2013 Nielsen National Cross-Media Engagement Study

On a scale of metrics including “usually notice ads” and “likely to purchase,” newspapers scored **20% higher than average – above radio, the Web and television.**

Source: 2013 Nielsen National Cross-Media Engagement Study



6

Social Media Brings Smiles to Dentists

Social media – comprised of Facebook, Google+ and other choices – is fast becoming a key marketing tool for many, including dentists. Why? Because that's where the consumers are! It's predicted that by 2014, there will be over 1.8 billion social media users worldwide – including over 170 million in the U.S. and another 18.5 million in Canada.¹

With it, you can gain positive publicity (and potential new referral business) from patients who “like” you and post favorable reviews. By using it to update your audience with helpful advice, you can drive more treatment opportunities to your practice. What's more, a strong social media presence can improve search engine optimization which, in turn, boosts your website traffic

Establishing an account or business page is free. On them you'll feature your name, logo, phone number, services and hours. In addition, specials, events, surveys and contests are all great content for social media. What's more, you have many social media options, allowing you to start small and increase your involvement as time allows. Among the most popular are:

Facebook: Create a business page and use every opportunity (e.g., in your advertising, emails, direct mail and website) to urge your patients “Like you on Facebook” and post favorable comments. Those within the network of your Facebook fan will see a direct or implied endorsement of you, thereby gaining you greater credibility and potential new referral customers.

Google+: In many ways similar to Facebook, this social medium has an added advantage in that your business page on it positively influences your website's ranking on the Google search engine. On Google+, you'll create “circles” of friends who like your practice and share an interest in the information, photos, events, contests and other information you'll post.

Need help in getting up to speed with social media? Our StartSOCIAL™ service includes the creation of accounts and business pages for three of the most popular social platforms, including Facebook and Google+.

¹ eMarketer, February, 2012



Action Items!

1. Start small if you elect to do it yourself. Pick a social media channel and, once mastered, begin adding additional ones.
2. Consider a contest. A “Show us your smile!” photo competition or a simple sweepstakes with a gift card prize can be a great way to extend your social media presence.



A Word from Allegra

Creating and executing a comprehensive marketing strategy can take time that many dentists are hard pressed to find. A do-it-yourself effort when you manage multiple resources or freelancers is often inefficient, and an agency-led approach can be costly.

To make the most efficient use of your time and marketing dollars, you should consider consolidating your promotional activities with a single source capable of helping you plan, produce and implement every tactic you need to execute a successful local marketing campaign, such as Allegra.

Why Choose Allegra?

Like your dental practice, Allegra is locally operated. Locally owned as well, our focus is on small and mid-sized businesses and organizations that need printed and online communications. We offer website development and optimization, mobile marketing, online marketing, email and direct mail marketing.

You can also rely on Allegra for targeted mailing lists, cross-channel campaigns, social media marketing, dedicated referral programs, point-of-purchase and out-of-store displays,

posters and signage. In addition, we can help you with sales literature, promotional items and logo wear, digital video and presentations, public relations materials and more.

Beginning with a clear understanding of your goals and challenges, we'll help you determine how to increase the ROI of your marketing. This includes defining your target audience, developing a multi-channel strategy ... and ensuring that every activity achieves maximum impact with minimum waste to achieve your new business goals. What's more, we'll implement your program efficiently and effectively to drive the desired results within your timeline and budget.

**Want to learn more on how our services can benefit you?
Contact Allegra today.**



