

Five Mistakes: Why Patients Choose Your Competition

Stop Losing Patients to Your Competitors

Under current economic and market conditions, prospective patients are harder to attract and harder to book for dental procedures. They have less expendable income and are more careful how they spend what they do have. Yet, most practices make the same five mistakes that send their prospective patients to their competitors.

Read more to learn about these common five mistakes that cause patients to book with your competitors. Then, call Ceatus to learn what you can do about it!

Economic Climate and Market Conditions

- Q4 2010 witnesses a surge in Negative Home Equity. A full 27% of borrowers are now "underwater" according to CNBC.
- Home values fell again in Dec 2010 and are at 5.9% below December 2009, according to Zillow.
- Expendable income continues to fall as savings rates climb among consumers. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis (US Dept of Commerce), savings rates as a percentage of disposable income have risen from around 1% in 2005 to above 6% in 2010.
- Due to economic factors, high-end dental procedure volume, such as dental implants and laser dentistry, has fallen each year from 2007 to 2010.
- The Dental Products Index (created by Brocair Partners) fell by more than 50% from 2007 to 2009 and still remains well below its peak value established July 2007.
- Dentist fees have dropped by 10% on average from 2008 to 2010.
- Consumer Confidence Index, according to Conference Board, is stalled at 60.1, well below its peak in 2006 and 2007 of 105 to 110.

MISTAKE #1

The Staff

Booking consultations and cosmetic and other dental procedures is a sales job. The person in your practice who is performing this function is perhaps the most important deciding factor as to whether a patient books with you or with your competition.

Most practices suffer from inaction of personnel management. The dentists are very busy seeing patients and performing procedures, and little thought is given to hiring the right personnel, creating the proper work environment and installing an incentive plan. Many times the “treatment coordinators” and front office staff are not sales-minded. Some have been promoted or transferred from hygienist or clerical positions and have no sales training, experience or in many cases, interest.

Certain techniques must be applied during the hiring and training process of these key employees to ensure that you are achieving the results you desire. The people who interact with patients are the face of your practice. If these staff members do not make prospective patients feel welcome and present your practice in the best possible light, patients will not book their procedure with you.

Patients go to your competitors because they have better sales-minded people on staff.

MISTAKE #2

Visibility on Google

Word-of-mouth continues to be the most important tool for generating new patients. However, now prospective patients use the Internet to perform research on you before scheduling a consultation. Of course, while a patient is learning about you online, they also learn about your competitors. If your competitors have better visibility on Google than you do, patients often choose them. Why? Because top visibility is associated with quality. If you consider the last time you looked for a restaurant online and could not easily find it, your first thought was, *“How Good Could this Restaurant Be?”* In reality, the quality of the food at the restaurant has little to do with Google rankings, just like the quality of the services you provide have little to do with Google rankings. But that is not a consumer’s perception.

Patients go to your competitors because they are perceived as being higher quality dentists due to their superior visibility on Google.

MISTAKE #3

Website Does Not Reflect Your Practice

When consumers are searching online, they inevitably end up on your website. If your website does not provide a positive, professional image for your practice you will lose this prospective patient to your competitor. Just as in the case of Google Visibility, the quality of your services have nothing to do with the quality of your website, but consumers will continue to make this association. A successful website must include very specific components to effectively captivate prospective patients. It is critical to remember that your practice website often provides the first impression of your practice.

Patients go to your competitors if their websites provide a more compelling first impression than your website.

MISTAKE #4

Initial Contact with the Patient

Practices spend tens, and in some cases, hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on marketing, and then totally collapse after a lead is generated. Prospective patients who call in are often placed on hold, transferred from person to person or find themselves talking to an answering machine – and in some of the more egregious cases the calls simply don't get answered! After all the effort and money you spent to encourage prospective patients to contact your practice, making them feel unwelcome is bad for business. And this is not where it ends. In many cases, the person answering the phone is not asking the patient to book a consultation. They simply answer a few questions, with the main goal being to get the caller off of the phone as quickly as possible.

Patients go to your competition because the person answering the phone at your competitor's office is friendly, welcoming, and knowledgeable; and they asked them to book an appointment.

MISTAKE #5

Converting the Dental Consultation

When a prospective patient arrives for their consultation, do you expect to perform the examination, recommend a treatment strategy and then have the patient just say "OK I am ready to go?" Probably not. Practices that do not have a closing process in the office during the consultation and a follow-up process after the consultation are simply generating demand for the procedure, but providing the patient with no firm solution to satisfy it – effectively sending the patient to your competition. Research shows patients may require 6 to 9 months, or longer, to make a treatment decision. And many patients visit more than one practice when choosing a dentist.

Patients go to your competitors because your competitors have a better closing process in the office and better follow up after the consultation.

**You can prosper in this difficult economic environment.
Schedule an appointment with Ceatus to learn how to overcome these
and other detrimental practices. Call 858.454.5505 today.**