

32 Marketing Ideas to Use Now

External marketing involves activities based on relationships with current patients and other area residents who might become patients once they know about your practice. Listed below are 32 ideas from an almost limitless inventory of marketing activities, restricted only by the dentist's professional preferences and budget and time allowed for staff to work on marketing activities.

1. Develop and maintain an attractive informative online presence, including your website and all social media outlets. Outsource these efforts if necessary.
2. Enclose a small peel-and-stick label (gold or silver foil is attractive) listing your practice name, address, website, and phone number with the letter of thanks to a referring dentist or physician. Mention in the letter that the enclosed sticker can be attached to the patient's chart in that doctor's office to provide quick reference in case dental questions arise. The stickers are reminders of your practice in those referring offices. Receiving offices that are paperless will appreciate the letter of thanks even if the sticker cannot be used.
3. Enclose the same type of sticker with a letter stating that you are the patient's dentist to every new patient's physician whether or not he/she referred that patient. This will keep your name in the physician's and his/her staff's minds.
4. Email or USPS mail a note of thanks to every referring patient, attaching or enclosing a \$5-\$10 gift card to a local coffee shop, snack bar, bookstore, etc.
5. Record the date and a patient's blood pressure on the back of your business card and instruct a patient to give it to his / her physician at the next appointment.
6. Have lunch delivered for the entire staff in another healthcare office that refers patients. Staff members in those offices frequently refer as many or more patients than the doctor does, and lunch is a great "thank you".
7. Subscribe to dental journals or other appropriate periodicals for neighboring physicians who refer patients to your office.
8. Invite local artists and craftsmen to use your reception room as a gallery. A newspaper article about this would be interesting publicity, or hold an open house for the public to view the art.
9. Sponsor local educational, artistic, and civic events.
10. Sponsor an amateur sports team or, perhaps, a Special Olympics event.
11. Establish an office Benevolent Fund administered by a staff member. Such a Fund provides a specific amount of money for charitable donations and can take the dentist herself or himself off the hook when inundated with requests for donations to various charities and community projects, by simply referring a solicitor to the Benevolent Fund Administrator.
12. Offer tours of your office to school groups, or your Dental Health Educator/ Marketing Coordinator (DHE/MC) can work in schools, educating students about maintenance of oral health. This is particularly appropriate during Children's Dental Health Month, but can be equally effective at other times, particularly if material with your practice name is sent home with students.
13. Provide career counseling at local high schools and colleges to familiarize young people with careers in dentistry.
14. Participate in area health fairs – distribute literature or giveaways imprinted with your practice name.

15. Offer to teach preventive classes at local hospitals, and other healthcare centers. Teach in special-needs facilities, cerebral palsy centers, dialysis centers, and offer similar programs for local civic, service, or educational organizations.
16. Provide in-service training sessions for teachers and other professionals who must have continuing education credits.
17. Develop an attractive practice brochure (yes – a printed piece) to distribute through current patients, pharmacists and real estate agents. In addition to satisfied patients, pharmacists and real estate agents are excellent referral sources.
18. Become a sponsor of organizations and events focusing on newcomers in your community.
19. Ask staff members and even long-term patients to contribute recipes for a cookbook of healthy foods produced by your office team. Distribute the cookbooks through staff, patients, and area clubs or other organizations.
20. Join the Chamber of Commerce. A list of people inquiring about your city is available at most Chamber offices. Send a letter to welcome prospective newcomers and offer dental services should they move to the area. Enclose a practice brochure. This low-tech personal contact can be an effective way to spotlight your practice.
21. Hire someone, a retiree for example, to play Santa during the holidays. He can be in your office several hours daily to delight patients. Give a Polaroid snapshot of patients with Santa and include your practice name via a small sticker applied to the photo. Also, consider having a staff member escort Santa throughout the community to deliver toothbrushes, fruit or some other small giveaways to school children, social agencies, hospitals, etc. This idea is particularly appropriate for pediatric dental practices.
22. Purchase a telephone on-hold message system to educate callers about your practice and the variety of services offered when they must be placed on hold.
23. Plan a charitable dental project. The delivery of treatment to area residents who cannot otherwise access dental care marks your practice as socially responsible and is a source of pride for your staff members, the primary marketers for your practice.
24. List a "New Patient" number in the telephone book – a subtle message that new patients are welcome.
25. Develop a practice logo and use it on every online presence, form, letterhead, business cards, media pieces, your office sign, etc. – make your logo recognizable throughout your community.
26. Have an attractive sign displaying the practice logo visible from roads surrounding your office. Light it at night.
27. Outdoor seasonal decorations such as attractive flags distinguish your office from others.
28. Specialists should produce a specialty-specific article for the newspaper or educational brochures to distribute to patients and other healthcare offices.
29. Offer a 5% to 10% courtesy allowance to police officers, fire fighters, or teachers' associations members. These public servants appreciate such consideration.
30. Utilize computer technology, outsourcing the work if necessary.
31. Stay on the leading edge of new methods, materials, and technology in dentistry – and let your patients and others in the community know about your new services. Write articles, be interviewed on local TV and radio shows, develop or purchase brochures to address specific cutting-edge dental topics.

32. Hire a Dental Health Educator/Marketing Coordinator (DHE/MC) to coordinate all external and internal marketing activities.

External marketing methods are limitless, bound only by the team's imagination, the dentist's preferences, and the practice budget. Plan your activities, hire, or train a staff member to coordinate marketing efforts, monitor the results, and celebrate when you reach your new patients-per-month goal.