

IVI Visions

MAY / JUNE / JULY / AUGUST 2009

Succeeding in Michigan Saving the Delivery Appointment

Establishment of a temporomandibular physiological state

**with neuromuscular orthosis treatment
affects reduction of TMD symptoms in 313 patients**

**Differentiation of Obstructive (OSA),
Central (CSA) and Complex (Mixed SAS)
sleep apnea syndromes**

A Pilot Study



Succeeding in Michigan

Jeffrey S. Haddad DDS

News of the economy continues to be the top story in the media and I imagine most people, like me, have grown tired of hearing about how bad the economy is. Please know I do not mean to make light of the current economic situation, because I take it very seriously.

I practice in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan. Chrysler Headquarters is literally in our backyard, so I am definitely in touch with the state of the economy. However, it is extremely disappointing to see it become a media-fueled, self-fulfilling prophecy that alters sound business policy and actually prevents success. It does not have to be that way. In

fact, our practice experienced a record year in 2008 with production up over 20% from 2007 and 2009 has been just as promising. January marked a record month and production goals were exceeded in February and March. More importantly, the number of new patients continues to increase each month. It is phenomenal that our business is succeeding and even growing, especially since

we are located in one of the most affected markets in the country. My hope is that after reading this, others will realize that what you do, and how it is executed, is much more important than where your business is geographically located.

During down economic times, people look for answers to help them succeed or simply survive. Too many dentists continue to practice and run

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their business the same as when they graduated dental school. Clinical techniques, dental materials and business practices have changed significantly in the last decade making it impossible for most to continue to practice the way they first learned. The world is changing as drastically as dentistry has changed and unless you choose to change as well, the economy will be the least of your worries. Over the last few years, several of our business practices have evolved in order to keep us ahead of the curve. Although I do not have all the answers, many of the ideas and methods that have been successful for our practice can be beneficial to other dental practices.

I am sharing some easy-to-follow guidelines categorized under three areas: Education, Exposure, and Referrals.

EDUCATION

Becoming successful and continuing that success almost always requires a continuation of education. It is imperative to keep abreast of the latest in dental procedures and technology as well as keep a fresh mind. By doing this you will continue to be able to provide the best care for your patients and they will appreciate it. If you are beginning to see a slowdown

in your practice and the negativity from the media is invading your thoughts, spending money on your education may not seem like the right approach. Do not make this mistake. Increasing your skill set and allowing yourself to be the expert in your area is priceless. Most people who suffer from headaches or jaw pain will continue to seek care despite the economy. The desire to live pain-free is far too important, and you can provide this care to many patients!

My story is a great example about the importance of education. After graduation from dental school in May 2001, I received my license in the fall that same year. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to become an associate of Dr. Kurt Doolin who had been in practice for almost 20 years and just started his LVI journey. Kurt would not hire me unless I agreed to further my education at the Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. In fact, he offered to pay for half of my entire tuition because of how strongly he believed the importance of this education was to our success. This was a huge decision for both of us. First on Kurt's part to invest in my education knowing that it would benefit him and the practice as a whole, and secondly for myself to spend this large amount of money that I truly did not

have at the time. Luckily, we chose to make education a priority. I know now that our successes are due largely to the initial decision to attend LVI, our commitment to completing the curriculum, and our continual attendance of the latest courses offered.

EXPOSURE

Perfecting clinical skills and increasing knowledge alone does not guarantee a larger patient population. Being a great dentist does not create a path to your door. An investment of time, effort, and money is required to create awareness and increase exposure in your market. Patients need to know who you are, what you can offer them, and how they can find you. Your practice must stand out from the rest. Since forming our partnership almost five years ago, Kurt and I have continually worked to build our reputation and promote ourselves through advertising, charitable events, and other standard forms of marketing.

Our efforts in more recent years have been modified to accommodate the changing world of advertising and marketing. The best example of this would be web-marketing. A presence on the web is no longer something that you can afford to ignore. Every progressive dental prac-

tice should have an attractive and informative website that accurately reflects the high-quality dentistry that is provided. When your patients perform an internet search for certain dental services and procedures, are they finding you? How many new patients are a direct result of the internet and your practice website? We receive approximately 60% of our new patients from the internet and this continues to increase every month. Without fully utilizing search engine optimization (SEO) and statistical data the internet would not be an effective tool in growing the business. We have exercised all of the SEO tactics to optimize our website presence and it has served us well in the past. However, Social Networking sites are changing the way in which the market works. People are flocking to sites like Facebook and MySpace because it allows them to connect with others and share their life experiences. Today, websites must be interactive for a desirable search engine placement. Patients should have access to informative content and a platform that allows them to submit responses. Patients want a voice. This is the future and dentists must be part of it.

Dentists are in the perfect position to capitalize on Social Media tools because of the positive experiences that happen every day in the dental chair. At completion of a smile makeover the patient is beaming ear to ear often with tears in their eyes.

When they turn to you and say “how can I ever thank you”, what is your response? More than likely the standby response is something like; “If you know anyone else who would benefit from this type of dentistry, please let them know.” This business practice does not take full advantage of the opportunity. You should leverage these types of scenarios to market yourself. There are several ways that your existing patients can help you sell the amazing services you have to offer. Get creative! Have a patient experience testimonial form at hand to give to patients at those opportune moments. Take it to the next level and get permission to showcase their entire experience in your next e-newsletter or blog. You can capture their emotions, include quotes, and even have them directly praise you and your office to other potential patients. Patient quotes and testimonials can be utilized in advertising, on the practice website, and on blogging platforms. The benefits of positive patient experiences are immeasurable!

About a year and a half ago, we decided to try something new. We invited 15 of our patients to attend a professional photo shoot and cocktail party at the office. The group was comprised of maxillary veneer cases, full mouth reconstructions, and even some small veneer and whitening cases. The original objective of the photo shoot was to gather a huge portfolio of photos to use on our



website and for other advertising materials; however it turned into something much more. Our patients were very appreciative and flattered that we invited them to be part of the event. More importantly, we provided an experience that they wanted to talk about. News of our event spread throughout town, including other patients from our practice who jokingly asked why they were not invited! Consider how this helped to distinguish our practice from the others. This event accomplished several things:

1. Allowed us to capture many beautiful photos of our own patients. Actual patient photos are one of the most powerful tools you can have at your disposal.
2. Promoted our cosmetic and dental skills by the most influential marketing tool of all; word-of-mouth. The word-of-mouth was created without direct effort or selling on our part.
3. Most importantly, it largely increased the exposure in our market through the conversations about us personally, our office as a whole, and how much we are thinking outside the box.



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**Sam Kherani,
DDS, FAGD, LVIM**

Attend the HOYA ConBio **Comprehensive Treatment of Perio Disease with Lasers Workshop** presented by Dr. Jay Ohmes, Thursday, July 30th, 10:30 to Noon, at the IACA Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA July 30th - August 1st, 2009.

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If you are not educating patients about your training, and what you are capable of, then you have missed an opportunity with your most captive audience. Take advantage of these occasions by showing patients your skills and telling them about your specialized services - initiate conversation. The majority of patients have minimal amounts of dental work completed, so do not limit your efforts to only large-case patients. Patients trust you and believe that you are a great dentist, however they cannot recommend you to their friend who is suffering from daily headaches if they do not know you can help them.

The walls of our office feature framed portraits of patients from the photo shoot. There are also photo albums in the reception area and operatories but the portraits in the halls are the most visible and generate the most conversation. This is not a new idea, however in my opinion, not enough cosmetic dentists are doing it.

We also utilize the Pure Power Mouth Guard to educate patients on the services we provide. Last year, attendance at the ESPYs put us in contact with some very elite professional athletes. Many of them were fitted with the PPM. So that our patients would be informed of our training and services we decided to showcase signed jerseys and photos of all of the athletes we fit. There were numerous inquiries about why these jerseys were on the walls. This

opened the door to talk about how we use the same technology for these athletes as we do to cure headaches and treat TMD. Remember, the more you educate people on what you can offer them and get your patients talking about you, the more you increase exposure and potential for success.

REFERRALS

Building a Referral Network will increase your circle of influence. With specialized training in areas like TMJ, dentists can form valuable relationships with other health-care professionals such as Chiropractors and Physical Therapists. With extensive knowledge of airway obstruction, tonsils and adenoids, and sleeping disorders, dentists should continually refer to ENT Physicians and sleep centers to help their patients. I once had a patient tell me that I saved her daughter's life because I observed her extremely large tonsils and referred her to the ENT we have worked with for years. Do you know how powerful that is? I was not the one who performed the tonsillectomy, but because I was the one who demonstrated my knowledge and took action to direct this

patient to the right person, I became the hero.

From a business perspective, your practice will directly benefit from these professional associations as well. A formal referral network will make you the dental expert in your area and bring in new patient referrals. Consider the mutually beneficial relationship a cosmetic dentist, a plastic surgeon, and a dermatologist could have. These professionals have a similar patient pool that could benefit from services of all three. Because patients trust you and value your opinion, they will often ask you who they should see for a particular service or procedure. Make it easy for them by introducing them to other health professionals and health-related businesses in your area. Your patients will thank you and talk about you. Again, it is this dialogue that will increase the public's awareness of you and your practice.

Our office has a formalized alliance in several areas of medicine plus a large family practice and a high-end salon. This network has been successful for several years because our patients need services from these other professions and we

*"Building a Referral Network
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circle of influence."*

have experienced a consistent source of referrals for our services. Networking like this generates a huge return with very little investment.

Unfortunately, referring patients to other professionals often fails because of inconsistency, inefficiency, or one-sidedness. Mentioning a name to a patient is not enough. The key to successful referrals is to first build a relationship then educate the other professionals on what you are

able to offer their patients and vice versa. Provide those in your network with brochures, business cards, and referral slips and be sure to get the same from them. Once this mutually beneficial referral relationship is in place, everyone will succeed.

As the world evolves so too must the dental profession. Forget about the way things have been done in the past. Set out to distinguish yourself from other dentists in your area.

Do not let economic fear prevent you from investing in yourself or the advancement of your practice. Build awareness by stimulating discussions about the life-changing dentistry that you provide. Maintaining and increasing the visibility of your practice will not only help you succeed today, but will help you thrive when the economy rebounds. Think outside the box. If you do not – some other dentist will.



Jeffrey S. Haddad D.D.S. received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from the University of Michigan in 1997. He completed his dental education at the University of Michigan in 2001. Since graduation, Dr. Haddad has been immersed in his training at the prestigious Las Vegas Institute for Advanced Dental Studies. Dr. Haddad lectures locally on cosmetic dentistry, TMD, and practice marketing. He lives in Rochester with his wife Melissa and his beautiful baby girl, Brooklyn.

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