



# Nine steps to becoming a recognized authority

For more on this topic, go to [www.dentaleconomics.com](http://www.dentaleconomics.com) and search using the following key words: *branding, expert, recognized authority, advertising, Gandolf, Hirsch.*

**We're willing to wager that YOU ARE ALREADY AN EXPERT.** The dental professionals with whom we work are all highly educated, experienced, and smart. Almost by definition, every one of them is an expert — and they're passionate about some aspect of their work. The straightforward part is *being* an expert — the important part is how to become a “recognized authority.” Are you missing the advantages of leveraging your expertise to the recognition level? Here's how to move up from “expert” to “authority” with personal satisfaction and growth to your practice.

**First, list what you're truly good at doing.** Park your self-modesty (and your ego) in neutral and list several options. Consult your memory, CV, and trusted friends, and translate clinical skills into patient-benefit values. Isolate one or two core strengths that are your genuine areas of expertise.

**Pick an expertise that supports your practice branding.** A dental practice with the competitive differentiation of “new-you cosmetic dentistry,” for example, can extend that message with a recognized authority in “3-D smile design.”

Now, grow from mere expert to recognized authority:

① **Give speeches.** Community or civic group talks are an easy way to begin. Experienced speakers develop at least one core presentation and adapt it to each audience. Consider a “problem/solution” format where you describe a challenge and tell how your expertise achieved an exceptional solution.

② **Teach a class.** OK, maybe not two nights a week for six weeks, but a once-in-a-while community college class is an excellent public forum. Becoming an adjunct professor and teaching about your practice expertise is an additional credential and often leads to invitations for more public exposure.

③ **Write articles. Write a book.** You could sit down and write a book, but it's easier to climb this mountain a little bit at a time. Write the outline for a book and create it in slices of individual articles. Being a published author is perceived as a highly authoritative credential. Many first books are self-published, at a relatively low cost, and they become a practice promotional tool that's useful when you give a speech, teach a class, or inspire contacts from the radio and TV media.

④ **Consider professional journals and events.** Beyond the usual clinical topics, many publications for professionals are open to good editorial contributions that are professional-to-professional, about practice business, or even lifestyle

topics such as travel.

⑤ **Create once, but use in multiple ways.** Let's say you've written an expert article for the newspaper. With a little revision, this same content can become an article on your Web site, recorded as a track on an audio CD, or presented as a downloadable podcast. Make reprints available in your office, mail them to colleagues, or use them as handouts at public events.

⑥ **List yourself in directories.** Begin with the Yellow Pages (print and online), but reach out to any classified/category directory where your expertise connects. Search online using variations of terms that describe your proficiency. This is likely to reveal dental health sites, associations, groups, and institutions that are an appropriate connection. Online connections are a powerful plus for the practice when online directory listings link back to your practice Web site. These “backlinks” (from another site to your site) help boost your ranking with search engines.

⑦ **Position yourself as an expert in your branded materials, Web site, and advertising.** Review your existing brochures, ads, and letters and revise if needed to showcase your expertise and the benefits to the patient/reader. Confirm that your Web site has the right keywords, tags, and text for search engines to find your site.

⑧ **Maintain and circulate an up-to-date CV.** Carefully document every occasion that you have been published, quoted, honored, or otherwise recognized for your professional expertise. Keep it current and complete, and don't be shy about sharing this with the media, colleagues, and professional societies and in advance of speaking events.

⑨ **Set a schedule.** Getting started is often the most difficult step, but the flow of expert materials grows: a speech inspires a media interview ... a series of articles become fuel for a book ... recognition itself energizes additional recognition.

Recognized authorities are the experts who are willing to stand in the spotlight. Done well, the personal and professional gains are satisfying — and the added bounce to the practice marketing plan is richly rewarding. **DE**

*Stewart Gandolf, MBA, and Lonnie Hirsch are cofounders of Healthcare Success Strategies, and two of America's most experienced practice marketers. They have worked with dentists for a combined 30 years, have written numerous articles on practice marketing, and have consulted with more than 3,000 private health care practices. You may reach them by calling (888) 679-0050, through their Web site at [www.healthcaresuccess.com](http://www.healthcaresuccess.com), or via e-mail at [info@healthcaresuccess.com](mailto:info@healthcaresuccess.com).*