



How to get patients to ask about your high-end procedures

For more on this topic, go to www.dentaleconomics.com and search using the following key words: *high-end procedures, storytelling, quality dental care, acceptance.*

The overwhelming reason why patients don't ask about your high-end procedures is because **THEY DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT YOUR PRACTICE OR PROCEDURES — HIGH-END OR OTHERWISE.**

And unless they have a strong personal need or envision a value to themselves, they also have no interest. Short conversation ... over before it begins.

It's simply a matter of perspective. You and your staff are deeply immersed in all that is the art, science, and endless details of providing quality dental care to a stream of individuals each day. You have the micro view of dental care because you work at extreme close-up range.

The typical patient sees things as a quick snapshot from an earth-orbit distance. These patients know what you do on the basis of today's prophylaxis or during 90 minutes spread over many visits. Their most immediate experience is nearly the full extent of what they know about your range of capabilities.

To inspire patients to ask about certain procedures, first grow awareness, then interest, and then acceptance. It's all about what's important to the patient. Perhaps your most powerful and effective tool to inform and persuade is to simply tell a good, friendly, and personal story. *Good storytelling fuses information and feelings.*

The secret to telling an effective story is to unite an idea with an emotion. It's a potent combination that is more memorable and stays with the listener. A good story presents information and touches the listener's emotions and energy.

And when patients personally relate to the story, by projecting the storyline to themselves, they are likely to remember, retell, and act.

Identify the keys to happiness. The one nearly universal reason people come to your office is *happiness*. They will be "happy" when you stop the tooth pain; or "happy" with the added self-esteem that comes with newly whitened teeth; or "happy" when cosmetic dentistry advances their career or social life.

So what is it that you do that brings "happiness" to patients? How do you deliver happiness by their definition and values?

Think of six (or more) happy-patient stories. No doubt you can easily think of dozens of real and compelling

situations where you, your practice, and your services truly made a patient happy ... really over-the-top happy.

- How about the recent grad whose parents gave her a going-away-to-college smile makeover the summer between high school and college? (*veneers story*)
- What about the UPS delivery person who gained the confidence to become district manager? (*invisible orthodontia story*)
- Or the hard-working mother of four who never thought she could have a dazzling new smile for herself? (*affordability*)
- Then there's the person who refused to smile (and others thought was unhappy) until you took away the embarrassment with a "smile lift." (*upper and lower crowns*)

Ask open-ended questions. Good conversation (one that leads to the right story) begins with listening before talking. Asking questions that open the door for patients to talk about themselves can channel the conversation and allow you to draw on your insights. Listen attentively to their answers to know just when to weave in a patient-benefit (happiness) story.

Link the story to an action step. When your anecdote resonates with the patients, be clear about how your practice can deliver this happiness/benefit to them, their family, or someone they know. It should be clear this is a procedure that you do, and that "we can tell you more and arrange a convenient time to begin."

Practice and coach the staff. This talent takes practice. Plan, rehearse, and involve the entire team in gathering happiness story material, in practicing the telling process, and most of all, in listening to patients' interests and values.

The process of getting patients to talk about your high-end procedures begins and ends with what is important to their needs. The classic axiom in business is, "You can get everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want." Telling a benefit-laden, patient-centered story helps people know what you do and what you can do for *them*. **DE**

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