

● certain type of patient. Your brand is a kind of promise and can't be all things to all men. Make sure you know what your brand stands for and demonstrate this from the outset, making patients feel confident about the type of dentistry they will receive and the way in which it is being delivered.

Marketing a practice has not traditionally been something that dentists have had to concern themselves with, as patients had been well trained to return for check ups and treatment, but the recent recession has changed all this. Patients are now looking for more than just dental care; they want a pleasant experience, excellent results and value for money, all delivered in a relaxing environment. Your brand image can help communicate all these qualities and continually reinforce them to patients.

Patient loyalty

These days, there is a lot more to developing a successful practice than just providing dentistry. Principals must look closely at their business development strategy and consider ideas that will attract patients and build patient loyalty.

Introducing a practice-branded dental plan is one strategy that can provide considerable benefits to both practice and patients and a tailor-made plan will help reinforce your brand values. A dental plan will allow patients to budget for their routine dental care and most practices find that once patients have committed to a plan they are much more inclined to return for regular treatment. This in turn benefits the practice with improved cash flow, increased appointment bookings and greater financial peace of mind, providing the foundation to look into future planning and investments with confidence.

Stand out from the crowd

The impending NHS contract has caused increasing uncertainty amongst dentists in the past few years and this has resulted in an environment which is not necessarily conducive to business growth or investment. In fact many practitioners are currently awaiting firmer details of the new contract before once again considering their allegiance to the NHS.

Converting to private practice can be an unnerving experience, but taking control of one's practice affairs, free from the vagaries of government and the Department of Health, can be an attractive proposition. Installing a practice-branded dental plan can be an ideal way to help maintain a regular income stream after a switch to the private sector, and when presented in the right way can help to recruit more patients. Working with a provider that recognises the significance of your brand and understands its importance in relation to the value of your practice is vital when making these key decisions.

Your brand should be unique to you, particularly if you have created and nurtured it. In the face of the increasing competition levels already evident in many areas of the country, the need for a strong brand identity that will make your practice stand out from the crowd is now more important than ever. Don't be left behind – get to grips with your brand, start living it and you'll never look back.