



# Because one size doesn't fit all

Whatever you need, we have a tailor-made solution.

When it comes to delivering practice-branded dental plans, not all companies are the same. With 18 years' experience we can offer exceptional value, providing flexible, comprehensive and effective dental plan support, all designed to meet the needs of you and your patients.

## BUSINESS

# A year in *Dentistry*

**Sam Brice**, marketing manager at DPAS Dental Plans, gives a whistle-stop tour of DPAS' year of articles in *Dentistry* magazine

Over the past few months, DPAS Dental Plans has worked with some of the leading names in our industry, producing a series of articles containing helpful advice and ideas for practice development. Covering diverse topics, ranging from effective leadership to the importance of preventive dentistry, we hope that these articles have provided some food for thought for dentists striving to deliver outstanding patient care.

### Building your practice

We kicked off our series with Milkshake's Barbara Hutchinson considering the individuality of dental practices, a fact often overlooked when presentations and generic advice are aimed at a wide and varied audience. Every practice needs individual guidance and support, tailor-made to meet their needs, and although 'global' events are great for introducing ideas and motivating individuals, they rarely provide advice that can be taken straight back to the surgery and put into practise. What most practitioners need is 'grass roots' assistance that will help them put in place a practical plan to address their issues, and then provide monitoring and constant communication to ensure that the plan stays on track.

The majority of dental practices need a wide range of support and it's important to ensure that this support comes from experts in their fields. At DPAS, we deliver a comprehensive dental plan administration service, backed by a full programme of support services to ensure the



long-term success of any plan, while also recommending specialist providers, as and when required.

### The green shoots of recovery

By April, it was becoming clear that the green shoots of recovery were taking hold, so to motivate dentists to take advantage of the improved outlook, DPAS commercial director, Dean Hallows, outlined in his article how key strategies could ensure a practice is in good shape to face future challenges.

Market predictability is a critical success factor and any tools that can help to smooth out the peaks and troughs of fee-per-item income should be welcomed. Practice-branded dental plans can become a powerful,

value-adding device, around which patients can focus their loyalty and are instrumental in achieving a regular monthly income, putting dentists in a sound financial position for future investment.

### Leadership

Jane Lelean, from the Institute of Dental Business, focused on the key issue of leadership in her article and offered a valuable insight into how a good leader can make or break an organisation. She urged readers to take a look at their skills and consider using the acronym 'HEART' to promote a happy team and thriving business.

HEART or helpful, educated, attention, relationships and trust, highlights the fundamental attributes of a good leader, from being knowledgeable to inspiring a love of learning in others. Helpful, positive and affirming, a great leader will always give credit where it's due and accept responsibility when things go wrong. Ultimately it's about building trust and good relationships along the way and above all being a good listener.

### Considerations when going private

With changes to the NHS contract imminent and more practices considering their options, financial expert, Richard Lishman of Money4dentists, advised practice owners to obtain a professional assessment by an independent adviser before reaching a decision.

Richard explained that although dentists have the

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potential to earn more in private practice, there are many other factors to consider. Private practice offers the opportunity to spend more time with patients, increase income, expand into specialised areas and cut NHS red tape, but although dental plans can offer financial stability in private practices, the loss of benefits and a guaranteed contract must be taken into account when considering conversion.

## Tailor made for you and your patients

As Dean Hallows explained, setting appropriate fees is of paramount importance when introducing plans into a newly private practice, and it's equally important to review these each year to ensure your plan remains profitable and competitive with your fee-per-item charges. That's why DPAS carries out annual fee reviews with each practice we work with, conducted by a local practice consultant with the support of a dedicated office-based team, meaning every practice can benefit from our 18 years' market experience.

When it comes to financial matters it's essential to work with an established organisation, with a proven track record that can support you and your practice. Launching plans for the first time or changing plan providers is a process that needs to be carefully managed in order to maximise patient take-up. Working with a plan provider

who has successfully overseen this process hundreds of times is crucial to ensure the success of your plans for the long term, and will give the whole team confidence and reassurance when taking this important step.

## Dental marketing in the digital age

There has never been greater competition for your patient's hard-earned cash and with 90% of people looking online before making a decision to buy, dental practices need to make their website an enticing shop window.

Dental Focus offered readers a whole host of practical hints and tips, making it clear that any practice without a good online presence in 2014 is gambling with their future. The web marketing agency advised dentists that websites must be informative, functional, engaging, user friendly and clear, or 50% of visitors will leave within seconds, stating that: 'In the coming years there will be two types of dentist: those who know exactly where their patients have come from, and those who don't know where their patients have gone.'

## Developing your online voice

In October I built upon the online theme, discussing how it has become second nature for many patients to share their dental experiences on Twitter and Facebook, making it absolutely crucial for practices to ensure that they are engaging with, monitoring and taking command of this increasingly important aspect of social communication.

My article explained how easy it is for a practice to establish a social media presence, providing an up-to-the-minute, friendly platform for patients to keep in touch, while also spreading awareness and helping to attract and retain patients. Having an integrated social media and web platform with clear links between the two is vital to encourage patient engagement, while such activity will also help with search engine optimisation.

## Why prevention is better than cure

We rounded off our series with a contribution from award-winning dentist, Kirk Young, who explained how opting for a practice-branded plan enabled him to successfully convert from NHS to private and gave him the financial confidence to put his passion for preventive dentistry into practise.

Kirk explained that his decision to move to DPAS Dental Plans was driven by our experience, expertise and resources, which he felt would ensure the long-term success of his plan, as well as the benefit of practice branding, which enabled his business to maintain its own unique personality.

'My practice benefits from a predictable monthly income whilst promoting our own brand, and I can offer patients a solution to budget for their preventive care, which means my philosophy of how to practise dentistry isn't compromised in any way. Any practice wanting back up and support to help implement preventive treatments should take a look at DPAS Dental Plans.'

We hope that you've found our articles to be informative and valuable throughout 2014 and with any luck learnt more about what we do here at DPAS Dental Plans. Of course, the tips and advice we have offered don't expire when the clock strikes 12 on 31 December, so we hope you can make use of all the ideas we've discussed well into 2015. **DD**



Sam Brice is the marketing manager at DPAS and has worked with hundreds of practices across the UK since joining the company in 2008.

**IF YOU LIKE** what you've read and would like to learn more about our flexible, comprehensive and effective dental plans, call us on 01747 870910 or visit [www.dpas.co.uk](http://www.dpas.co.uk). Look out for more articles from us in *Dentistry* magazine in the New Year.

## Flexible. Comprehensive. Effective.



We supply marketing and patient recruitment support tailored to your needs, along with in-practice team training, online patient registration and much more besides.

So if you want a bespoke dental plan to suit your practice, **JUST ASK.**

To book your free consultation, email [enquiries@dpas.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@dpas.co.uk)



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