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Digital marketing at the ready **Part 1**

Use digital tools to market patient treatment and your practice easily and effectively. Part 1 on this topic looks at customized digital case presentations for in-office marketing. Part 2, in September, looks at Web site, e-mails, and mobile messages for marketing to patients at a “distance” 24/7.

By Dr. Larry Emmott



Photos courtesy of Adstra Systems

Even if you don't mean to, you and every dentist and dental practice markets. Marketing isn't just advertising. It's everything you do in your office that influences a patient—from the color of smocks, to the smile on an assistant's face, to being on time, to how you use technology. They all create a marketing message.

Technology, though, is fast changing how we market and communicate with our patients whether they are in our office or at a distance (that is, at home or at their workplace).

And technology offers many advantages to our marketing efforts. One benefit is that technology allows us to easily customize our communications with each patient. (See the sidebar, “What would it look like?” Customizing a patient presentation” above.) Customizing a presentation is the subject of Part 1 of this two-part series on digital marketing.

“What would it look like?”

Customizing a patient presentation

Use digital imaging programs to create customized treatment presentations.

Here a doctor tells a patient sitting in an operator chair that she needs crowns on her two front teeth (Fig. 1).

“What would it look like?” the patient asks. To help explain the treatment, the doctor brings up on the screen an image of a patient with a similar problem (Fig. 2).

Then the dentist shows a close up (Fig. 3) and a full mouth view (Fig. 4) of how the previous patient's problem was treated.

Finally, the doctor sends the patient home with a printed version of these images for her reference. The dentist also can add text prior to printing out the printed version.

Another advantage is that technology—such as Web site, e-mails, and mobile messaging—allows us to communicate with patients 24/7. These tools are the subject of Part 2, which will appear in DPR's September issue.

In-office marketing

Here is more information about using customized in-office case-presentations to market your practice effectively.

Once you have created some digital patient information on your office computer—a basic photo, an x-ray, an advanced occlusal scan—it is a simple process to paste that information into an application for a digital case presentation.

Then, rather than just telling patients about their crooked smile, worn biting surfaces, cracked fillings, or bone loss, you can show them a picture of these conditions.

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A visual image is a much more effective way to win patient acceptance of a treatment than simply a verbal explanation.

Digital slide-show programs, like Microsoft PowerPoint, make digital presentations fast and easy. To learn the basics of PowerPoint, check out the many courses

offered by local computer stores as well as at many of the larger dental meetings. Some dental image-management programs also have slide-show capabilities.

Creating a digital slide show

The process of creating a digital slide show begins with a template. Here are five steps

to take to create and customize slide-show templates using Microsoft PowerPoint or other image-management programs.

1. Create a slide for the template that has your office name, colors, and logo.
2. Create some slides for the template that you can customize and use in almost every presentation. These slides might in-

Building a high-tech office: A 10-article series

How do you build a high-tech office? To find out, we asked Dr. Larry Emmott, DPR's technology editor, to present a 10-article series to guide you through the process of choosing and using high-tech systems, from imaging software to diagnostic devices (see topics below). This issue and the next takes a look at the marketing and educational benefits of computerized case presentations, practice Web sites, and customized e-mails.

- **Management software:** charting (February), scheduling (March), and finances (April)
- **Hardware in the operatory** (May)
- **Digital photography** (June)
- **Q&A on building a digital practice** (July)
- **Digital marketing: Part 1 (August)**
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clude a patient's name and some standard photos, such as a smile or occlusal images. Other standard slides might include educational information on various conditions and treatments.

3. Once you have a basic template for a patient presentation, it simply takes a few minutes to customize it for a particular patient. Just paste the appropriate images from a patient's digital file into the slide-show template.

SoftDent, a product of PracticeWorks, a Kodak Co., offers an add-on application called PowerCase. This program, which works with Microsoft PowerPoint, uses the information recorded in an electronic patient record to automatically create a PowerPoint slide show. PowerCase allows practices to integrate clinical images, procedure codes, specific patient education, and financial information into an attractive, personalized case presentation.

4. When appropriate, include cosmetic imaging in your slide show. To do this, use a cosmetic imaging program that allows you to alter a smile to show a patient what might be possible with proper treatment. PowerPoint by itself is not capable of cosmetic imaging; for this, you need one of the many imaging programs available.

5. The next step would be to transfer the images and information from the slide show to a printed document. You could print just the slides, or you could create a separate word-processing document and add text to explain the slides.

Adstra Imaging software from Adstra Systems, for example, allows you to create templates for a customized digital patient presentation, which can include digital images. You can also print the customized presentation.

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Benefits of computerized presentations

For GPs, one of the main benefits of computerized slide shows is that each patient can see a professional, high-tech case presentation showing what actually is hap-



High-tech marketing

In-office digital marketing can include explaining treatment plans to patients on a computer monitor while they are seated in the operatory, taking and printing digital photos, and adding a patient's digital photos to a take-home CD.

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pening in their mouth. And a print-out of the presentation helps reinforce your treatment message.

Dental specialists can use digital case presentation software to create both a take-home document for the patient and a report-back document for the referring dentist, complete with photos and x-rays. The specialist's report could be printed or, better yet, e-mailed.

Computerized slide shows can also be used in the office for new patient interviews and as educational loops.

There are many excellent computerized educational programs on the market.

The newest innovation from CAESY Education Systems, a developer of high-tech patient-education programs, is called "CAESY at home." This program allows the dental office to create customized CDs with CAESY content and images to send home with a patient. A practice also can add a patient's own digital photos to the CD.

Finally, just having and using high-tech systems in the office sends a marketing message. It tells the patients the office is up to date and using the most modern methods.

When computers first arrived, we couldn't even have imagined the future we now have with instant, personalized, worldwide digital communications. And who knows what's next, for the future is coming and it will be amazing! **DPR**

Dr. Larry Emmott, a recognized authority on dental technology in America, is a practicing general dentist in Phoenix. He also is an award-winning speaker who has addressed hundred of professional groups. He is a featured instructor at the Las Vegas Institute and a member of the American Academy of Dental Practice Administration. He has written hundreds of articles on dentistry, computer use, and management. He also writes a monthly electronic newsletter, "Emmott on Technology," which shows dentists how to minimize costs and maximize profits through the effective use of technology. Dr. Emmott also offers hands-on technology seminars to dentists in his Phoenix office.

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- Photo of the A-dec 500 patient chair with monitor mount on page XX, courtesy of A-dec Inc.
- Photo of the Dine Digital Instant Print Solution stand-alone digital photo printer on page XX, courtesy of Lester A. Dine Inc.