

“Why Almost 100% of Dental Advertising Is Worthless & What You Can Do About It”

Most advertising undertaken by dentists around the country is completely and utterly worthless. In fact, most would be better off simply sending a check to a local charity and issuing a press release about it. It'd have a bigger impact, without a doubt.

How do I know this? Every single week I speak to dentists from all over the country! Their comments about their results speak volumes.

Over the past 14 years, I've looked at thousands of practices' advertising. Almost daily it seems, even here in my hometown of Salem, Oregon, I see mistakes being made right and left – costing dentists *thousands* of dollars *monthly* in worthless, wasted advertising. Everything from mistakes in yellow pages to display ads in newspapers and even radio. It's becoming more and more rampant as more and more dentists hear the argument and call that to be a successful, busy dentist, “you must advertise.”

Many do what they do I believe because: 1) they don't know any different – after all, they haven't read the hundreds and hundreds of books on successful advertising like the good ad pros; 2) they aren't sure what to do; and 3) they are generally “talked” into running an ad by a savvy salesman who can *sell* them an ad but can't write an effective one to save their life.

The good news is this: **It doesn't have to be that way.**

And, still even more important folks: **it's NOT the dentists' fault!**

After all, I didn't go to another 4 years of professional training to receive a doctorate in dental medicine. So, how could I justify “diagnosing” a dental pt's case of *any* kind? I can't.

Advertising, believe it or not, is no different.

Take my good friend and colleague Mr. Howie Horrocks. Howie has studied advertising from the greatest ad men of all time – John Caples, Ted Nicholas, Joe Sugarman, Robert Collier, Dan Kennedy, Gary Halbert, Victor O. Schwab, Clyde Bedell, and so on. Many of these folks are no longer alive, but their greatest experiences and teachings are in the books sitting right on Howie's and my shelves – in fact, to the left of the computer monitor at which I sit right now.

Folks like Howie and I have spent years studying the great works – learning more about what motivates people to take action – the psychology of the average person – than even most psychologists know!

Copywriting, the art and science of putting words on paper to motivate someone to take action and DO what you want them to do (call a Dentist to make an appointment, respond to an ad for a hearing aid, send money in to a charity or election campaign and so on) is an extremely difficult art to master. In fact, just like dentistry – you can't just practice for 1, 2, 3, or even 10 years and know everything there is to know!

So, here are the top reasons most dental advertising is worthless:

#1. Far and away, the single biggest advertising mistake I see time and time again, on 1 out of 1,000 ads is a *Lousy Headline*. When I write ads for my own material or for my clients, I normally spend 75% of my time developing the headline. In fact, the headline may get changed a dozen or more times before the final version is even complete. I think my record of trying to craft the perfect headline for an ad has been close to 8 hours... Imagine that! Eight Hours spent on getting just the right words at the top of a sheet of paper. Geez, and you thought some of your colleagues were anal about their work! Listen close: the headline is the most important part of any ad (only the “list” or market match is as important). Its sole purpose is to grab the reader by the throat and COMMAND their attention to get them to read your ad. Here are BAD examples:

FYI Dental Group (actual headline from an ad in our local newspaper this past week!)

Dr. John Smith Family & Cosmetic Dentistry

We Offer Invisalign

If you would like to see more bad examples of headlines, open up your yellow pages and just read the first couple ads. You'll quickly get the drift. In fact, the “headline” I wrote as the “title” of this article is *exactly what I am talking about*. It arouses curiosity, begs to be read, and promises a benefit – *how to know if your ads stink!* A good headline must follow those rules!

A good examples might be...

FREE Whitening!

Dental Problem? Here's a Hundred Bucks to Solve it!

7 Questions You MUST Have Answers To Before Your Next Dental Exam

#2. A Lousy Offer or worse, NO Offer. Getting new patients into your practice is NOT an inexpensive undertaking. You have to know or have some idea WHY people seek you out. From experience, we know that PAIN and MONEY are two reasons folks stay away from the dentist. Can you overcome those two arguments in your offer? If you don't have an offer of some kind on your ad, people won't know what to do. It's like having a pt in for an exam and you tell them, “You've got the beginnings of a crack here

on your tooth,” and you never tell them they should be PROACTIVE rather than REACTIVE. They DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T TELL THEM! Further, if you don't make it *easy* for them to overcome their fears (remember, PAIN AND \$), they will never come in to see you. The FOCUS of an offer should be this: “Will an offer like this create a patient for life who will pay what I want them to, and finally, will it cause them to REFER?”

#3. No Deadline or a “Wimpy” Deadline. You and I both know we ALL put off doing today what maybe we'll never have to do or what we can do tomorrow. Unless you create such urgency and motivate them to respond NOW, they may not ever do it! The best ad in the world without a nice, tight deadline of 10 days or on the outset, 14 days (actual DATES work best) will command less of a response than the same ad with a deadline in place! One rule we live by for ourselves and our clients is to never offer more than a 2-week deadline. If they won't do it in 2-weeks, they might not EVER do it. AND, a tight deadline forces people to take action quickly, especially if your offer is tied to a “early response bonus” like “The First 10 Doctors Who Call Will Receive a FREE 200-Year Old Portuguese Bank Note Worth \$221.44!”

#4. Lack of Testimonials. This is probably the most frustrating part of writing ads, free standing inserts, postcards and yellow pages for clients...the almost ALWAYS lack testimonials. One of the very first exercises I take my private clients through is the importance of testimonials and how to gather them efficiently and effectively. Here's WHY: What your existing patients say about YOU and YOUR STAFF (That's key! Both are important!) is 10 to 20 times MORE believable and effective in ads than anything you could ever say about yourselves. A third party comment is incredibly valuable, especially in a society of skeptics. It's best to include the patient's full name and this phrase in parenthesis below their name “(actual patient of record)” and be sure to ALWAYS get your patient's permission. How many should your ad contain? As many as you can possibly fit. My thoughts: “Offer up social proof beyond a shadow of doubt so your patients believe in what you and your staff do!”

#5. Lack of a Guarantee or “Wimpy” Guarantee. This is such a simple way to overcome the fear and trepidation new patients may have about embarking on an expensive cosmetic case or even a smaller case. Study after study in *every* industry out there shows that the better the guarantee the more people will buy. Simply stated, I believe that if you DO NOT guarantee or warranty your work, you shouldn't do it. Plain and simple. There should also NOT be a host of weasel conditions for your escape either. People see through that. However, putting SOME responsibility on a patient is good. I like “We warranty ALL of the restorations we provide to you for your entire life. Should you EVER have any problem with any restoration and you've made your regular re-care appointments every year within a 30-day window, we'll replace the restoration at no cost to you,” or some variation of that. Few people will take advantage of your guarantee anyway, but when they do, it gives you and your staff an opportunity to SHINE and an opportunity to generate a referral from that patient. “Mary, can you believe that 12 years ago I had a filling done on this tooth here and the other day, I bit down on an apple and it fell out. Dr. Johnson replaced it at no charge! It saved me \$680!”

#6. Me-Too Appearance. Often referred to as “incestuous marketing,” patients and non-patients alike begin to see the same type of marketing and ads from all the dentists in the same town. It’s like no one can think or GO outside the box and create an ad or marketing campaign that DOES NOT look like someone else’s or worse, like an ad! You’ve all seen the dental ads with the extracted tooth and the “fancy” logo with “Now Accepting New Patients.” Give me a Break! One of the most successful ads I’ve ever written for a client was a testimonial postcard about her practice. In fact, it’s probably been responsible for more than \$250,000 worth of dentistry over the years for her. Why? It doesn’t LOOK LIKE AN AD!

7. Focus on the Doctor or Practice Instead of the Patient’s Self-Interest (WIIFM). How many times do you see an ad for a dentist and all it does is tell you how great he or his staff is or how gentle they are or how they follow “strict” disinfection guidelines. WHO CARES! I don’t. And neither do patients. They won’t care about you until they know you care about them! Focus on what patients TELL you they want. Customers, as my friend Bill Glazer puts it, “only want to know one thing – WIIFM (What’s In It For Me)?”

8. Trying to Accomplish Too Much at Once. Many of the ads new clients want us to create for them are the kind that talk about “Invisalign,” Implants, and Cosmetic Dentistry all in the same ad! You see, there’s no focus to those kinds of ads. They just tell me you are trying to be all things to everyone all in one ad. Can’t do that! People don’t KNOW what they need – they may THINK they do, but it’s the job of your advertising and of your staff to “get them in first” and then determine what they need and help them GET to where you need them to be to accept the tx. The BEST ads have just one objective. NOT multiple ones. All you’ll achieve with multi-purpose ads is to confuse the prospect. They don’t know the difference between traditional ortho and Invisalign. They just know they want their darn teeth straightened!

9. Failure to Tell Your Story. People like a story. Stories sell better than anything else! They want to know why you are doing what you’re doing in your ad – why the offer is what it is. It adds credibility and when they believe you, they respond better. Plus, take the opportunity to tell patients everything you can about your practice and don’t take anything for granted. What you think to be insignificant may be really crucial to their final decision. Hours, location, payment methods, staff, your training, special tx you provide to your pts when they come in, and so on. Leave nothing to chance and tell it all! I believe it was John Caples who said, “The more you tell the more you sell.” However, don’t confuse that with “talking” too much and *unselling* your patient.

10. Trying to be “Cute.” Cute advertising wins awards and it helps ad agencies “sell” to new clients, but the bottom line is, unless the advertising puts a solid ROI in the bank, Cute is pointless and costly. In professional practice advertising, there’s no room to be cute. Ad agencies also like “cute” because they think it makes an impression in the mind of the reader. That couldn’t be further from the truth. The best example I can think of is that darn bunny rabbit that tries to sell batteries. Is it Duracell or Energizer? If you

KNOW the answer to that it's because you've seen the ad 10,000 times and can't help but know it. But, a small business/practice doesn't have the kind of money it takes to bank on 10,000 impressions getting someone motivated to call you. It may be remembered as being cute, but cute doesn't create desire or urgency to call your office. Study after study shows that emotional, direct response advertising is STILL the most effective method to generate new business, regardless of what's being sold, regardless of the "sophistication" of the audience.

I know that's a lot to digest in a short period of time, but if you run each and every ad you have through this "10 Mistakes" filter, your own advertising's effectiveness will increase, without a doubt.

Keep in mind, this list applies even to the internal advertising you do...be it newsletters, postcards or posters in your office.

Good luck with your dental marketing and feel free to pass this Special Report along to your colleagues.

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