Want to make a million dollars?

By Louis Malcmacher, DDS, MAGD

Every day that I get to the office, I find on my desk a pile of mail, as do you. For some reason, I always feel that going through the pile of mail is the first thing that I need to do before I can do anything else. In this day of instant messaging and e-mail, where anything really important will be sent to me immediately, the good old snail mail still holds some kind of magical attraction even though it has probably taken two days or up to a week to actually land on my desk.

Allow me to share what my dental office mail looks like and I’m sure that it is very similar to yours. I finger the pile and think, “Ah, here is one that looks attractive.” The outside says, “If you ignore this opportunity, you’ll be losing money!”

I open this letter to read that some new “marketing genius” is going to help me and many other dentists get new patients with his “secrets.” Then I read that those secrets are going to cost me $1,500 down and an additional $40,000 over the next year. I’ll pass on that, thank you very much.

Well, let’s open the next envelope then. Once again, it’s another “marketing genius,” but this one is actually a dentist. Reading further I learn that he used to be a dentist. He explains how he started practicing at age 25 and he made so much money in dentistry that he retired at age 29.

I can buy his secrets for $1,995 and then pay him an additional $2,500 each month for the rest of his natural life to get some monthly reports about how to make gobs of money. I’m not upset by the price as much as I am upset by the fact that I am 20 years past his retirement.

You know, I really have to go see patients, but I can’t help but open up another envelope that is screaming at me with a line on the outside that says, “This one trick will increase your production by $90,000 each month.” I better read this before I see today’s patients because I am always looking for ways in increase production. This one has to be good.

I open the letter and read about how a dentist once sent a mug filled with flowers to a patient, and the patient subsequently had $50,000 worth of dentistry with that very same dentist.

The letter’s logic claims that if you send three mugs with flowers, you’ll end up doing $90,000 worth of dentistry with those three patients. For other tricks of the trade, I can sign up for a special report that shares other ways to (trick) my patients into doing more dentistry.

These examples of come-ons are becoming very commonplace in dentistry and, unbelievably, dentists are falling for them.

When I lecture to hundreds of dentists each month, they tell me how they wasted their time and money trying to find the silver bullet through some of these ridiculous offers and outrageous claims.

Every dentist wants to know what is the one thing he or she can say, do or give away that will attract new patients and make the patients sign on for big treatment plans.

Here is my advice: Stop wasting your money. Live by the old adage, “If it’s too good to be true, then it probably is.” The time and money that you waste in some of these silly schemes is money that can be invested into your practice, for example, by purchasing a soft- and hard-tissue laser.

If you want to make more money in dentistry, then offer your patients what they want such as you learning how to do beautiful minimally-invasive veneers.

Do you use CareCredit to get patients to pay for it all? These are just some of the technologies that will let you do faster, easier and better dentistry.

Do you offer oral cancer screenings using Vizilite Plus or Veloscope in addition to your oral cancer examinations? Speaking of oral cancer, do you teach your patients how to do a self-examination for oral cancer? (If not, go to www.oralcancerselfexam.com and get listed.)

Patients will look at you differently when they know you care about them as people and they perceive their dentist as a real health care provider who cares about their total health.

In addition, it is time to enter the field of total facial esthetics by adding Botox and dermal filler procedures to your practice. There are many uses for Botox therapeutically for facial pain; TMD/trism treatment; and orthodontic, periodontic and cosmetic uses in the oral and maxillofacial areas to complement cosmetic dentistry cases. Get trained today (www.commonsensedentistry.com for more information) in what is now the fastest growing area of dentistry.

Here’s the secret you’ve all been waiting for: There is no fast track, get-rich-quick way to make money in dentistry. You will not find the secrets of success in dentistry in an envelope sitting on your desk or in an e-mail.

Like any business, it requires hard work, putting the time into your practice, and the learning the business of dentistry.

I have a confession to make. Because I speak so often to so many dental professionals, people assume that I know it all. I will be the first to tell you that I am always learning things, especially in business.

I have a business consultant to help guide me. A good consultant will pay for himself or herself many times over.

How do you learn the business of dentistry? Going to courses helps, but I will give you a much better way: get a great consultant for your practice. You don’t know what you don’t know.

I find so many dentists trapped in their own little world and they have no idea that the avenue of opportunity is much broader than the narrow way they are looking at their practices.

For example, Sally McKenzie of McKenzie Management, a member of The Dentists Network, is an outstanding consulting group that can break you out of your slumber and kick you up to the next level.

The McKenzie Management team can teach you what you don’t know and help guide your practice to new heights as they have done with so many other dental practices for the last 50 years.

You will be successful by refining your clinical skills, learning what patients want and giving it to them, adding new services to your office and being an excellent communicator so that you can talk to...