Relationship marketing

By Bridget Conway, BA, RDH

I bet when you first glanced at the title of this article, you might think… “Hygiene, relationship marketing? Help me connect the dots.” Especially in our profession, developing a relationship — a rapport — is critical to our success and our patients. Think about the definition below and extrapolate it to the operatory. The emphasis is on the connection, not the production.

“Relationship marketing was first defined as a form of marketing developed from direct response marketing campaigns, which emphasized customer retention and satisfaction, rather than a primary focus on sales transactions.”

In general, this type of marketing differs from other forms in that it recognizes the longitudinal value of customer relationships and extends communication beyond interruptive advertising and sales promotional messages. If you’re good at this, your patients will come back again and again and ask for you. Practiced correctly, relationship marketing creates an emotional bond, generates a memorable experience and increases customer engagement and loyalty.

In the dental office this might mean the extra time it takes to settle the nervous patient or help a mom distract her children so she can get an exam. Make an effort to maintain good notes that are not only clinically correct, but have some personal detail that can demonstrate your interest and jog your memory so you can continue the conversation from the previous appointment. People want to matter and they want to be remembered. The genuine interest in your client/patient will help facilitate success on both your part and theirs.

If your interaction stems from a place of curiosity and kindness, your day tends to go much faster and you feel more effectively energized. On the contrary, if you approach a patient with much anticipated dread or inactiveness, it wears everyone down. In essence, if you practice relationship marketing in your operatory, for example, when you have a mishap or are running behind, you are able to overcome these obstacles with a minimum of feather smoothing because you have established a positive connection. This scenario is applicable from the moment a patient sits down in your chair. If all you do is proceed with the “robot prophy” and make no effort to talk to the patient and ask open-ended questions, you lose the opportunity to open the door to relationship marketing.

When a patient does not understand a procedure or has a question regarding a specific product, you are the expert. This affords you a huge opportunity to be of service and also a source of information. This is an example of a moment where trust and rapport are established. Connection is a verb. Action is required.

Dentist: “I urge you to do that with genuine authenticity. Create positive relationships to get permission”

Let’s explore another example of relationship marketing in action outside of the operatory. Maybe you can relate to the following scenario.

One of the most dreaded things for any sales representative is to enter an office and see people scatter like mice when the lights have been turned on. Wouldn’t it be nice if instead they came out from every nook and cranny to see you just because you were there? It is possible that people will seek you out for information; however you need permission. Is there any representative that you are really happy to see when he or she comes into your office? If so, step back a bit and reflect on why that might be.

My guess is that this person connects and enjoys it, and as a consequence of that effort, you feel appreciated and happy when you encounter him or her. This connection gives you the “permission.”

CREST ORAL-B announces second year of ‘Pros in the Profession’ awards

Crest® Oral-B® continues to recognize Registered Dental Hygienists who go above and beyond the call of duty every day with the second annual “Pros in the Profession” awards program.

The awards distributed through this program acknowledge the essential role of dental hygienists and the important part they play in their patients’ lives. In fact, many of the practicing dental hygienists in the United States serve on the front line of oral care at the dental office, providing patients with recommendations and advice that promote good oral health.

“With the success last year when we launched Pros in the Profession, we recognized the need not only to extend, but to expand our commitment to honor dental hygienists for their dedication to improving oral health care for the public,” said Wendy Bebey, RDH, BS, P&G Dental Hygienist Relations Manager. “In year two of the program, we will continue to honor distinguished professionals whose passion and commitment to making a difference in patients’ lives inspires us all.”

Throughout the year, Crest Oral-B® will reward six deserving professionals as nominated by their peers, who truly make an impact on patients and for the oral-health cause.

Winners will receive a $1,000 monetary prize, a plaque, an all-expense-paid trip and recognition

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Year one Pros in the Profession winners, from left, Trudy Meinberg, Ann Benson, Mary Lynne Murray-Ryder, Sharon Stall and Linda Maciel (Photo/Provided by P&G)
Permission marketing

“Permission marketing is the privi-
lege (not the right) of delivering
your message to someone personal and relevant
to the people who actually want to get them. You’ll be
amazed at how much easier and
more enjoyable it is to talk with someone who
is ‘warmly interested.’ You won’t con-
vert anyone and you don’t need everyone.

Why not cultivate real relationships
with your would-be and exist-
ing patients? Build your tribe and make an effort to genuinly connect
to your patients.

As this applies to the dental office,
be genuine, you won’t convert everyone to be a life-long flosser,
how will those patients who will be
receptive to your message.

This is the recognition of the
new power of the best consumers
to influence marketing. It realizes that
treating people with respect is the
best way to earn their attention.
You can convert previously disinterested patients by coming to them from a
unique perspective

You can use marketing to cul-
tivate and grow relationships, but
there are some important guidelines to follow. Electronically, don’t send
out “spam” because it won’t be read,
and don’t info dump because it won’t
be digested.

In order to get permission, you
make a promise. You say, “I will do
X, Y and Z. I hope you will give me
permission by listening.” Next is the
hard part: that’s all you do. You don’t
assume you can do more. An exam-
in to the dental office is sharing
interesting enough that someone is
likely going to be eager to share
with friends and family for the discounted
ticket and vote on it, many may
be genuinely marking you about this. This
is the best kind of marketing, word of
mouth. In a positive light it is effec-
tive and free.

For example, how about giving
every patient who visits your prac-
tice three referral coupons to give to
friends and family for a discounted examines. It’s about treating your
patients as you’d want to be treated.

Reference

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Plackers and Oral Health America team up to fight oral disease

Providing access to care, education and dental products to underserved children and treatment partners

Tooth decay is one of the most common yet preventable chronic childhood diseases in the United States, and according to the reports from the U.S. Surgeon General, children from low-income families are twice as likely to suffer from this disease. If left untreated, oral diseases in children may lead to serious general health problems and significant pain, interference with eating, overuse of emergency rooms and lost school time.

To help combat the negative effects of tooth decay among America’s underserved children, Plackers — maker of the first disposable dental flosser and a leading brand of consumer oral care products — announced on Aug. 23 its continued partnership with Oral Health America (OHA), a national, charitable, non-profit dedicated to increasing access to oral health care for vulnerable Americans.

Through their partnership in 2010, the two organizations were able to help provide access to dental care, services and products for thousands of children across the United States. This year, they plan to help even more children in underserved communities through OHA’s nationally renowned oral disease prevention initiatives, Smiles Across America (SAA) and Fall for Smiles.

“Plackers’ contributions allow OHA to provide essential community programs that help provide uninsured and underserved children with greater access to oral disease prevention services, oral health products and education,” said Beth Truett, Oral Health America’s president and CEO. “We look forward to another great year with Plackers, and we are grateful for their continued support in helping us reach further into underserved communities and school oral health programs across the country.”

This year, Plackers is also sponsoring the first Smiles Across America Innovation Grants, an SAA-affiliated program that awards monetary grants to five community partners in recognition of their innovative methods for delivering oral health preventative services to children at increased risk of oral disease.

“Plackers is thrilled to continue supporting Oral Health America’s Smiles Across America and Fall for Smiles programs,” said Tom Harman, director of marketing for Plackers. “Partnering with OHA is a natural opportunity for us to get involved and help support community outreach programs that help broaden and raise awareness of dental health issues in the United States.”

In addition to providing financial support for OHA’s Smiles Across America and Fall for Smiles programs, Plackers will donate more than 100,000 Plackers Micro Mint dental flossers to help support OHA’s programs and community partners.

Plackers Micro Mint flosser features its patented Super Tuffloss, which is engineered not to stretch, shred or break during use, and has been clinically proven to remove more plaque than nylon and PFPE-based floss.

About Plackers
Plackers, a leading brand of consumer oral care products is a pioneer in dental flossers and other consumer oral care products. Having patented the first disposable dental flosser, Plackers is committed to developing high-quality, affordable oral care products with innovative features that include a comprehensive line of dental flossers, dental accessories and dental night protectors, including the Grind No More Dental Night Protector.
Plackers holds more than 20 patents and is sold in major retailers worldwide. For more information, visit www.plackers.com.

About OHA
Oral Health America is a national, charitable non-profit dedicated to community outreach programs that help increase access to oral health care, education and advocacy for all Americans, especially those most vulnerable. For more information, visit www.oralhealthamerica.org.

An Orange County-based charity that puts smiles back on the faces of underprivileged kids in need of major orthodontic care is the first charitable organization featured as part of a unique social media campaign designed to inspire people to get involved with nonprofits.

A documentary-style video profile featuring Share A Smile co-founders Mike and Kim Robertson and a few of the participating local dentists and orthodontists who volunteer their time and talents to repair youthful smiles, free of charge can now be seen on YouTube, at www.shareasmile.com and at www.agendabe.com.

The Share A Smile video is the first of dozens of video “webisodes” scheduled to be produced and distributed online by amateurs as they reach out to their community partners in recognition of their innovative methods for delivering oral health preventative services to children at increased risk of oral disease.

“Every charity has a voice, but not every charity has a stage,” says Benton. “By providing people like Mike and Kim Robertson and organizations like Share A Smile with a platform to tell their story and then sharing that message with people around the world using social media, we hope to plant a seed that ignites a movement.”

“Smiles are infectious — unless it is painful or embarrassing to have one,” says Mike Robertson, founder and CEO of Ocean Media, an independent media planning and buying agency based in Huntington Beach, Calif., with an office in Los Angeles.

“Adam’s ‘Inspire Good Tour’ provides a global stage from which we can talk about the good things Share A Smile does for kids and hopefully inspire people to get involved in our effort, learn about other charities, or share the story of their own favorite cause.”

‘Share A Smile’ founders, volunteer dentists featured in inaugural ‘webisode’

at a special award cocktail reception at RDH Under One Roof 2012 in Las Vegas, tribute in dental trade media news announcements, and an exclusivity trip to RDH headquarters.

So those who know worthy “pros” should help give them the recognition they deserve by nominating them today!

From July 2011 to April 2012, nominations can be submitted via www.prosintheprofession.com or at the Crest Oral-B booth at upcoming dental conventions. In order to be considered for the program, nominees must meet the following criteria:

• Registered Dental Hygienists

with two-plus years of practice experience after graduation from dental hygiene school.

• Registered Dental Hygienists with community service involvement.

• General volunteer/non-oral-health-specific examples are welcome, but oral-health-related volunteer experience is preferred.

• Registered Dental Hygienists with examples of work that go above and beyond the call of duty.

Examples include: excellent patient relations/special care/retainment; involvement in research and/or clinical experience; published work(s); and the ability to generate additional business for their practice.

“uting the contributions of dental hygienists across the country, and bring much-needed visibility to our profession,” said Sharon C. Stull, BSDH, MS, one of five award winners during last year’s inaugural program.

“Having been chosen as one of the ‘Pros in the Profession,’ I am thrilled that Crest Oral-B understands that dental hygienists are an integral part of the dental health care team and the positive health outcomes for each patient we treat.”

Through the Pros in the Profession program, Crest Oral-B already recognized five extraordinary Registered Dental Hygienists who have each made a positive impact for their community and profession.

The year-one winners — Ann Benson, Trudy Meinberg, Mary Lynne Murray-Ryder, Linda Maciel and Sharon Stull — were rewarded with a special award cocktail reception at this year’s ADHA Annual Meeting in Nashville, among other prizes.

Read her stories at www.prosintheprofession.com. Here you can also learn more about Pros in the Profession, including how to nominate a “Pro” for consideration and for rules and regulations.

For information about Crest Oral-B products and resources, visit the newly revised and updated www.dentalcare.com website.