The importance of the USP

With more and more practices offering a huge variety of treatments, it is vital your practice can offer potential patients something a little bit different. You need to find your practice’s USP, urges Dr Solanki.

A unique selling point (USP) is a marketing concept that defines a product’s competitive advantage, and can often sway a potential patient into choosing one practice over another. A simple, attractive USP is one way to make your practice shine through, and its goal is to create an undeniable reason for the patient to choose you.

No two practices are the same. Even if you have identical equipment, techniques, and even identical chairs in the waiting room, there will be elements that differ between you, and the surgery down the road. The key is to track down what makes your practice different and maintain it – this is your USP. It may be new technology that is not available anywhere else, a fantastic team who are able to put even the most nervous patient at ease, even down to the choice of beverages available in the waiting room - all could mark your practice stand out as different, and attractive to potential patients.

**Anaylse your patient list**
Before deciding on your USP, it is important to look at the patients you already have. Are they making use of all the services your practice has to offer? Can you offer something to maintain their loyalty? Increase their interest in your services?

When considering a USP for your practice, it is vital not to alienate existing patients, so make sure you ask your current patients what they find positive about the surgery. Ask customers to sign a visitor book and comment about their experience or even gather customer testimonials. The word-of-mouth approach to marketing is incredibly effective and you will get an excellent insight into what patients find to be the best features, and services, of your practice. After all, if you provide something specific that they find attractive, it stands to reason that other patients may be looking for the same service!

That said, you are marketing with a view to encourage interest from new patients, in the areas that you want to be doing more work in, so you will need to research these markets thoroughly as well. Find out what is important to your target audience. It may be your ability to offer tailored treatment plans for nervous patients, for others it may be the use of the most cutting edge technologies, and for some it may be as simple as being able to enjoy a decent cup of coffee and an up-to-date magazine whilst in the waiting room.

**Market yourself well**
Once you have decided upon your USP, it is important to market it correctly. You know the client base you are aiming for, so some simple research into how they would like to find a practice will be beneficial. How do they research their treatment options, do they rely on their general practitioner, or ask friends and family? The answers to these questions can help you decide on the best way to reach your target market. After all, you don’t want to offer your USP to the wrong market.

It is important to find out what your competitors are offering. After all, a USP is not unique if it is the same as the practice down the road. Re-search what other local surgeries are offering, even pay them a visit to see what they have done to their practices – and then do something completely different. People are expecting a bespoke service from you, a completely original smile; they do not want to achieve it in an identical surgery.

The final key thing to remember is that it is vital to maintain your marketing plan; patients chose to have their procedure carried out at your surgery for a reason after all. Flash-in-the-pan marketing can work in the short term, but in order to sustain any longevity it is important to focus on a USP that is not going to change regularly.

Your patients may be excited to hear that your receptionist made it through to boot camp on The X Factor, but this is not a USP that will withstand the test of time. Patients want to be confident that they will find a familiar and welcoming environment on consultation, treatment, aftercare and even their yearly check-ups. Madonna may be able to reinvent herself every year with impunity, but your USP needs to remain stable.

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**About the author**

Dr Solanki started his dental career at the University of Oxford followed by a PhD, having come from a business-oriented family. He followed his passion of starting up a dental marketing company with its strengths in online search marketing in early 2007. Since then, he has undertaken extensive search engine optimisation (SEO) training from some of the world’s leading experts in this field and continues to do so. He offers advice on SEO, business consultancy and strategic marketing campaigns for his clients. He is also the founder of the world’s most visited dental reference site: www.cosmeticdentalguide.co.uk. Dr Solanki now offers dedicated marketing strategies for dental practices on a referral only basis.

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