Rules of attraction

To bring in more business and increase your income, you need to either become a rainmaker or acquire one. Dr Bhavna Doshi explains...

A rainmaker is someone who brings more business to any organisation and provides an opportunity to increase their income. They come in many guises including the principal, the manager, and the nurse and even better the entire team. And be under no misconception that it is impossible to have the entire team be rainmakers. It is a tried-and-tested fact that using certain motivational strategies can convert all your team into rainmakers. In reality, it should be the responsibility of any person within the business who comes into contact with patients to identify, attract and keep the patients.

A shared concept

In his book *How to become a Rainmaker*, Jeffrey Fox discusses at great length how people in business can grow at substantial rates using these sound principles effectively. Dental practice owners can also benefit from this shared concept since they too are business owners and need to develop these skills. Creating rainmakers is a most important task, which will directly help to take the business further.

We would have no business, if we were not able to attract patients. We would not even have the opportunity to provide the kind of care we wished to, be that cosmetic dentistry or any other differential. Keeping this in mind, you may say that your advertisement in the Yellow Pages is doing well, but have you considered how you were going to entice these new and interested patients to become patients of the practice for keeps? For this extremely important job you need a rainmaker. The rainmaker is the person who is going to make the money spent on any form of marketing actually worthwhile!

Making a rainmaker

The good news is that rainmakers are not born, they are made. And there are certain strategies you can use to create rainmakers and make sure you are maximising your money, if you want patients to rain on you:

1. Make sure you have a well-resourced marketing plan in place. But more important, make sure you have a prioritisation list of how you are going to execute that plan. This will not only make efficient use of your marketing budget but will also maximise your exposure to the population in the most efficient way that is possible for you. For example, why would you want to conduct a marketing activity in a holiday period, when there aren’t many people around to notice it?

2. Consider all types of market, not just advertisements in various directories. Most of these aren’t working efficiently because the actual message is hidden by the cosmetic appeal of the piece; your message is cluttered up by too much competition or the target audience is dilated. Considerable forethought needs to be applied to this concept. You need to make sure you are actually sending your message and that you are not obscured from patient visibility. Take a look at a directory and look up for example plumbers. Which one would you choose and why? The exact same principle would apply to your business. So set yourself up with dynamic criteria for advertising. For example, is your advertisement an eye-catcher? Explore other avenues to put your message or your USP (Unique Selling Proposition) in. This is your unique services which would compel patients to come to you over other businesses in the same industry as you i.e. other dentists. Why should they come to you? Once you have discovered your USP you can then decide what methods or what marketing activities best suit your target audience. These can include social networking, direct mail, media or even participatory efforts, one good idea is to simply STOP for a moment and take a step back and review your situation. Sometimes when we are so focused on achieving something, we become very tunnel-visioned and subsequently miss opportunities which lie under our very noses. So sometimes it is better to simply recalibrate your action plan.

5. Once you have given direction to your entire force into acquiring new patients it is extremely crucial to monitor your efforts. Otherwise you may find you are running around in circles not actually getting anywhere. Another facet of this skill is to have someone with excellent communication skills, correctly training the telephone when new enquiring patients call. Do not underestimate the power of an initial telephone conversation.

7. Time spent training and gearing up the entire team to meet with patient expectations is definitely not wasted effort. It will save you a lot of money in the long run, because you can make sure your marketing plan is actually being met at the end of the line.

8. Build yourself up with a good reputation. This can be for your expertise and knowledge and skill of work or it can be for providing an exceptional experience for your patients. Create talking points for your patients so that they can see you and rave about you to other people—other potential patients. A referral by word-of-mouth is often the best kind of marketing strategy you can invest in—in it is more likely to work and is very cheap!

9. Patients often have no real idea of how good you may be as a dentist. When they come to see you and agree to be seen by you, often they only understand how good your work has been. This is what they use to build an expectation level in their minds. For this reason you not only must deliver what you have promised in your marketing, but also if you exceed that expectation level then you will really create raving fans of your patients and they will refer their family and friends. Hence new patients will rain on you!

10. Finally take note of how many of these new patients are actually going ahead with treatment or are they leaving after they have had time to consider what your practice is all about. If the number of new patients leaving, to those going ahead with care is significantly different then you need to take a closer look at what your rainmakers are doing. Rainmakers can also make money rain.

The rainmaker ethos

- Listen to patients and discover their needs
- Seek first to understand then be understood
- Teach patients what they need
- Provide your patients with a little above expectation
- Thank each patient sincerely and often
- Help patients to pay you so they won’t be embarrassed and go elsewhere
- Learn how to continuously make patients feel at ease and comfortable
- Talk to them about their life and build a friendship
- Understand personality types
- Give more than you get—provide excellent service no matter what
- Treat patients as you would yourself—give high value.

These techniques discussed are the main differences of what we do to differentiate an ordinary practice from an excellent practice. All dentists are well trained in the science and most do reason- able dentistry, but the differentiating factor in today’s world, is the ability to understand marketing, and ultimately to understand how to provide the *service of den- tistry*. Once this concept has been acknowledged you can then cre- ate rainmakers to convert all potential patients to long-stand- ing loyal patients of your prac- tice.

To receive a free information leaflet on how you can maximise your existing patient base and attract more new patients to your practice, email your name and address to bhavna@theperfectsmile.co.uk

About the author

Dr Bhavna Doshi is a Senior Dentist at The Perfect Smile Studios. She has a spe- cial interest in Smile Design Den- tistry and Case Presentations. She focuses on Practice Productivity, Management and Growth Strategies.