Home from home
In part two of this three-part series, Dr Solanki asks you to consider your practice image and what message it’s giving to your patients

Many factors contribute to a successful marketing plan, but if we were to start at the very beginning there are a few things that firstly need to be addressed in order to establish that you are ready to start marketing and pushing your services. Remember that you only have one chance to make a good impression.

How do you feel when you walk into your practice? Have you taken the time to sit in your waiting room and just look around? Possibly one of the most important things to consider is not only getting new patients, but also keeping them.

You won’t be judged on your dental expertise, patients do not know about this; instead they judge you on the presentation of your practice. A significant sum of money will need to be spent so that your practice décor matches up to your aspirations. It is also worth noting that due to the Department of Health’s HTM 01-05 Decontamination guidelines, infection control must also be considered. Compliance will soon be mandatory and a disorderly practice atmosphere will compromise and this will need to be addressed.

The extra mile
Either mandatory or self motivated, going the extra mile and putting on the fine touches will have patients feeling like a trip to your practice is like a visit to the health spa. Is the carpet new or old and grim? Is the seating comfortable and what year do the magazines date back to? Can patients get a cup of tea or a cold drink, and what about their other half? Do they have to sit in the car? The list goes on.

Your practice environment is what will have the most impact in the eyes of your patients and this does not only include the aesthetic appearance, this also includes how your patients are treated by your staff. Training your staff and spending time with all of the team will help you to ensure that they are working toward the same goal as you. Without one vision and one common goal that you and your team share, it is likely that it will fail.

How do your team currently answer the telephone? Do they listen attentively to all patient enquiries? Do they know enough about the treatments on offer to answer a patients’ question?

Once you have invested your time and money in making your practice the kind of place that potential patients wish to visit, it is then the perfect time to investigate a marketing strategy and explore your future possibilities by encouraging growth for your practice and a steady flow of business for you and your team.

In the next part of this series, we will look at what kind of marketing options you have available, highlight the pros and cons of marketing and how to ensure that your budget is used as an investment back into your practice.

About the author
Dr Solanki studied medicine at the University of Oxford followed by a PhD, having come from a business-orientated 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 dedicated cosmetic dentistry website www.cosmeticdentistryguide.co.uk. Dr Solanki now offers dedicated marketing strategies for dental practices on a referral only basis.