

WHY MANNERS MAKE THE MARKETING

Written by Shaz Memon



What have 'pleases' and 'thank yous' to do with business success? Digital dental marketing expert Shaz Memon reveals the importance of small gestures and social media etiquette



In an increasingly fast-paced world and one in which we often feel overwhelmed by a mountain of business demands, it is easy to forget the simple basics – such as manners, for example.

As was drilled into many of us as small children, 'pleases' and 'thank yous' are a big

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deal. Without them, the fabric of society is wrenched apart. Whilst emphasis may differ across various cultures, generations and environments, good interpersonal communication skills in any relationship, business or otherwise, should always play a key role. And in this scenario, manners demand more than just a 'walk on' part.

In any competitive marketplace, manners go a long way, of course. But the need to be polite, courteous and well mannered is as important in a virtual world as it is face to face. This will ensure a complete patient experience whilst also encouraging referred business.

For anyone looking to develop long-lasting relationships and establish a loyal patient

base, it is worth remembering that goodwill and repeat custom are as much to do with service with a smile and pleasantries, as they are clinical compliance and perfect protocols.

NOT JUST CLINICAL SKILLS

Indeed, patients are much more likely to be judging you and your team by these non-quantifiable soft skills than your ability to carry out root-canal treatment, fix a crown, take an X-ray and so on.

Showcasing proper business etiquette in a general and modern culture of rushed rudeness and poor manners says a lot about you as a leader and is an excellent marketable commodity – but how does



PRACTICE ORGANISATION

this translate to the digital world?

Communicating using technology is an art all of its own, so explicitly codify your business values across all platforms in any literature about your company philosophy. Staff should understand what is expected of them as well as what is not.

Additionally, create an identity for the company that distinguishes it in the marketplace by using buzz words such as 'well considered', 'thoughtful', 'empathetic' and 'compassionate' when describing your team on the practice website's About Us page.

If you have an online enquiry form, be sure that you have a 'thank you for getting in touch' in your sign off that appears once the email has been sent.

Thank patients promptly but offer gratitude at other times, too. A 'please share the knowledge' in the footer of e-newsletters or online blogs alongside buttons for Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus and so on encourages engagement in a friendly and polite way.

Most practices say 'thank you' to patients at the end of a complex course of dental treatment, usually in a telephone follow-up conversation or perhaps by letter or email, but why not consider other conversational and personal greetings beyond the boundaries of a dental care sign-off?

Use birthdays and public holidays to reach out to patients. A practice that appears approachable, grateful and personable is one long remembered. By factoring in good manners into your dental marketing, you highlight a more human side to your brand. Invite feedback and build upon it; acknowledge the bad as well as the good with gratitude – after all, this will shape your future success.

If you use social media to share key messages, how often do you truly engage with your audience? Retweets and reposts, follows and likes are the very foundation of good dental marketing and social media helps disseminate your messages, thanks largely to active patient engagement. It raises your profile, too.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

It's also rather rude to constantly sell services and products. People switch off quickly and there needs to be a 'buy in' beyond service sales if you are to pique interest. In a nutshell, people turn to social media to be entertained, educated or both. If all your dental marketing messages only even extol the virtues of attending your practice, you need to rethink your strategy. Digital marketing is a relationship builder and should aim to add value to the in-surgery experience, not cheapen it.



'INVITE FEEDBACK AND BUILD UPON IT; ACKNOWLEDGE THE BAD AS WELL AS THE GOOD WITH GRATITUDE – AFTER ALL, THIS WILL SHAPE YOUR FUTURE SUCCESS'

Introduce team members, explain who you are, what you do and how. Be as human in the virtual world as you are in the real one so potential patients get a feel for what they can expect when they walk through your door.

Conversely, it's bad manners to withhold important information from patients. Make sure you signpost them to the solutions to their problems without promising the world.

The GDC's *Standards for the dental team* states that, 'You must justify the trust that patients, the public and your colleagues place in you by always acting honestly and fairly in your dealings with them. This applies to any business or education activities in which you are involved as well as to your professional dealings.'

Additionally, there is a duty to keep information confidential – such as photographs, videos or audio recordings, including those made on a mobile phone. It is not only rude to make any recordings

or images without the patient's permission, it also goes against regulations and you risk censure should you do so.

Additionally, be aware that it is rude to overshare online. To protect against it, separate your personal and business internet presence by setting up separate social media accounts.

Resist the temptation for one to spill over into the other. As is often quoted, it takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. Posting endless images of new cars, countless boozy parties and silly memes on your business account does little to support your desire to create a face of respectable professionalism.

Gratitude is a basic requirement of any interaction; but it is also an important marketing tool and provides a human face to any business. This is hugely important in dentistry where patients often arrive at your door with trepidation at best and fear at worst. Any demonstration of appreciation can cement leads and establish long-term relationships. So, celebrate milestones, thank your audience for their support and be gracious. Small gestures can make a big difference to your profits. ●

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