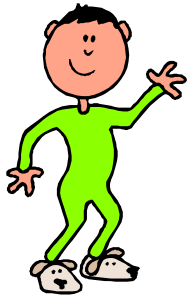


It has been generally known and accepted for many years that it costs less to take care of your patients than to spend money on outside sources to market your practice to new patients. A majority of potential patients prefer to come to an office that they have heard their friends and neighbors brag about and typically are willing to pay a bit more to do so. This type of relationship built and maintained over time translates into long-term growth and success of a practice through a steady flow of internal patient referrals. Progressive practices continuously look for new ways to improve internal patient relationships, how to deliver better value, how to create greater patient loyalty, *and how to get to know our patients better.*

Internal patient contests or events are one element that can help build patient relationships and allow the patients to become involved in the practice beyond their wire adjustments.

KEY INGREDIENTS FOR ALL CONTEST OR EVENTS

Patient Centered



Sincere



Show appreciation for referrals and current patients

Customer Service oriented: *Constantly ask, "What can we do better?"*

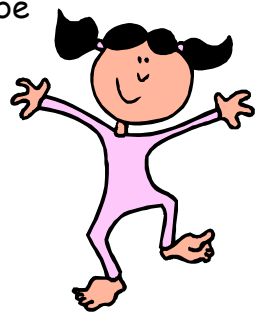
Always be consistent in your message and delivery of service, be able to *live up* to your promises

Make sure your activities always relate to your practice positioning

Remember for the patients and parents: *Perception is Reality*

Marketing is the responsibility of all staff members

The Orthodontist *must play a central role* in creating and sustaining any relationship



In general, all your contests or events will follow the same structure in planning and implementation. Below are the steps to consider along the way!

1. Decide on a budget. Commonly \$250.00 to \$350.00 per quarter is a good average.
2. Ask for volunteers to form an internal marketing committee. Typically, 2-3 staff are needed to plan and implement the programs.
3. Select the type of contest you plan on playing based on the season, current events, school year, holiday or special annual event. All contests can be modified to work with patients and referring dental practices.
4. Create posters, fliers and entry slips. Take the posters to your local "Kinko's" or copy center and enlarge to 11" x 17" minimum. Laminate the posters or purchase "acrylic frames" and display (very professional).
5. Decide on your prizes - cash and gift certificates work well and are easy to have available. Plus if a child or an adult wins you don't have to worry if the prize fits. Consider your theme, if it has to do with "Guess How Many Yards of Floss". Your prizes maybe a new electric toothbrush or a basket full of Oral Hygiene Products. Just be *CREATIVE AND OFF THE WALL.....Remember, YOU create the contest and make the rules!*

OR

- Ask patients what types of gifts they would like to win
- Ask yourself what would be a cool prize
- Use gift certificates from local malls, music stores, movie theaters, video arcades and restaurants
- Everyone loves a "bag of cash"



6. Set a time frame for the contest to run. Typically, a contest should run for 10-12 weeks allowing all your patients to participate at least once, *maybe twice*.

7. Create fliers to post throughout the practice, reminding patients to participate.
 - Use your computer to create fliers
 - Learn to use a "Print Master" Art CD program
 - Allocate a computer to work on marketing projects
 - Laminate or frame your fliers to post throughout the office. Nothing looks worse than a piece of paper taped or thumb tacked to your wall with tattered edges and smudges. You're a professional office delivering high quality service; *don't scrimp on the small details*

8. Add a message about your contest on your appointment slips if possible.

9. Add a message on your *check-in screen* or *marquee* in the office announcing the contest.

10. Create an entry slip and hand the slip to each patient.

- Check-in
- In the operatory
- Check-out



11. If using a confirmation system add a message announcing the contest.

12. Are you Web Site "savvy"? Post your contest on your web page.

13. Do you send statements? If so, add a message or separate flier announcing your contest and prizes.

14. How about your "Recall" patients, they would love to win a "great prize". What a "grand" way to keep in touch, send them a flier. *"Everyone wants to be invited to the party and then they have the option of attending"*. The recall patient may not be due for another 6 months, but they drive by the office everyday on the way to the grocery store or school. Let them stop by and play!

15. It is your **choice** on "Retention". These patients are your "word-of-mouth" referral base. Keeping these "loyal" patients thinking about your practice is "free" marketing. Send them fliers, if you feel frivolous.

16. Any chance you get, take photographs of your patients, parents or referring dentists participating in your events. Take the photographs and a brief write up to your local newspaper or community bulletins, they love human interest stories.

17. Create an office policy/standard and/ or agreement that states, "All team members and doctor(s) will actively participate and promote the agreed by contest, event or established incentive programs."

"The success or failure of any program is a by-product of the enthusiasm of the team members and doctor."

CONTEST IDEA

THE "SHARE A BASKET WITH A PET" EVENT

This is a great idea to institute because everyone loves animals. You should get an overwhelming response from your patients!



4	large	baskets
4-6	large	posters to display
lots	small	announcements on the event
lots	small	entry slips to WIN a prize
3	great	Prizes

Modify your ingredients

The goal of this event is to fill four large baskets with "dog" and "cat" food, blankets, kitty liter and toys to delivery to the local animal shelter. For each item a patient brings in they are entitled to fill out an entry slip to win your GREAT PRIZE! *That means if I brought in six cans of dog food, I can fill out 6 entry slips.*

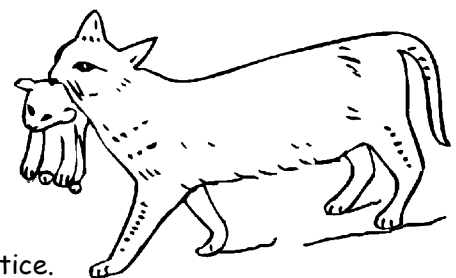
You may want to consider using a "large laundry basket" to hold the supplies. Each basket needs to be label with the following:

- ❖ Little Kittens
- ❖ Big Kittens
- ❖ Puppies
- ❖ Doggies

By labeling each basket we are hoping to make sure we have food and supplies that will fill the needs of the younger and older animals and their special diets.

Stir into the pot

Create your posters and fliers placing them throughout the practice. If you are using statements, place a "stuffer" that announces the event and ask for donations. Also, be sure to add a note on your walk-out-appointment slips.



Decorate your bulletin board with cute, adorable, funny pictures of cats and dogs. You may even want to put fake braces on some of the pictures. Or how about some stuffed animals with braces to place around the practice reminding patients to participate.

Add some spice

1. Call your referring dental practices and ask them if you could drop off a poster and basket for their patient participation. The dental practices could have their own drawing and give out prizes to their patients. You are *just* going to give them the tools they need to have this event in their office.
2. Once the contest is over take the baskets to your local animal shelter. You may consider having the 3 winners of the contest go with you to present the baskets.
3. This event is "news worthy", call your local paper and let them know what you are up to and the day you are delivering the baskets.
4. Take pictures at the office and at the animal shelter.

Cost \$150.00 including baskets and prizes

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