

Cathy Sundvall
Consulting Network
262 Marabella Loop
Kissimmee, Fl 32765
862-427-4346
csundval@earthlink.net

RECALL REDONE - MARKETING TO KIDS

The marketing industry realizes the importance of instilling brand loyalty at an early age, hoping it will carry through into adulthood. There are signs of organizations and businesses marketing to their future clients "children" everywhere. Shopping at your local grocery store you see "Kids Cookie Center" in front of the local church a sign reads, "Kids Bible Study" even your local bank has a sign that reads, "The Moola, Moola Kids Club". This type of marketing never ends.

These businesses are *building clients for the future*, their future. . Kids want to go to church, shop at the grocery store, go to the library because of special programs that are available only for kids. Kids also want to save their allowance so they can be a "grown-up" and have a bank account just like their parents.

All kids tend to influence their parents across a number of categories -- clothing, food, entertainment, non-traditional and larger ticket items. **Do you want your practice to be on the "Kids list" under Orthodontist when it is time to visit an orthodontist or start treatment?**

The orthodontic community can learn from these outside businesses and nurture the future orthodontic patient. In our orthodontic practices many of our future patients are the kids we place in our recall system or the brothers and sisters of kids we are currently treating. Would you say your practice is banking and investing in the future with your current recall

system? Do you enroll the kids in your practice, instill positive memorable experiences and create an environment for both patient and parents that keep kids and parents wanting to come back to your office? Or are you doing the following, just as you did 10 years ago.

- At the morning huddle, when reviewing the Initial Exams for the day we notice a patient age six or seven scheduled at 10:00. Instantly, based on the practices treatment philosophy and known tooth eruption sequence it is assumed this child will be placed in recall and the doctor and TC state, "This should be a quick one"!
- The Treatment Coordinator thinks to herself, I can catch up on my correspondence if I get done sooner. The clinical staff gives a sigh of relief because at 10:00 they need the doctor in the operatory as quickly as possible, they are overbooked.
- The six-year old arrives for the exam and the Treatment Coordinator shortens her process, getting the doctor in as soon as possible. The doctor exams and reviews the pan-o, stating he would like to wait for one year and re-evaluate the eruption and growth patterns.
- In one year a recall list and label is generated in our practice management software. The recall label is placed on a postcard and mailed to the patient. In some instances a telephone call is made in person or a pre-program automated system calls and reminds the patient to call for an appointment.

Most practices are lucky if they get 50% of the recall patients to show up in the month we recommended. So what happens with the other 50%? We send them another postcard and call to schedule a visit. It is an on-going continual process to keep track of these children and sometimes they just get lost in the shuffle.

What if we changed our recall process and marketed to the recall patient/parent. Our goal would be to build a relationship that keeps the patients and parents wanting to maintain contact and be a part of our practice?

2003 RECALL SCEANARIO

Develop a "Recall Membership Only Club" in your practice with the goal of enrolling all children not yet ready for braces.

Establishing a special "Membership Only Club" is appealing to Kids because they like the idea of belonging to. They love to get mail. It shows they are special and belong in their household -- and it can bring much amusement and the beginning of a lifelong relationship. This is potentially very powerful and very valuable to the orthodontist in retaining the recall patient's enthusiasm throughout the recall process with the end result being "starting treatment".

Your "Membership Only Club" should create an ongoing relationship with its members, giving them symbols of belonging (membership cards, news letters, stickers, tattoo's bookmarks, coupons) and participatory activities. Your club should promote good oral hygiene, regular dental and orthodontic evaluations along with opportunities for growth and fun.

Let's build an on-going relationship with the kids and their parents that keep them involved in our practice regardless of the outcome of the exam. Here are a few key factors for building this relationship through the exam and recall process:

- Build trust and confidence during the initial exam by listening and understanding the patient/parents needs and relaying to the patient/parent that the doctor and team members will do *what is in the best interest for the patient*.
- Educate both the patient/parent *education* on the importance of "When to start treatment" and "The benefits to the patient/parent" on waiting. Dr. Joe Mayes in Lubbock, Texas put together a great hand-out for his patients on his recall treatment philosophy. See attach #1.

- Create a bond through *enrollment in your Membership Only Club* with **on-going contacts quarterly** to both the patient/parent.
 - Membership packet could include:
 - .. Letter from the President (doctor) "Welcome to our Club"
 - .. Membership rules and guidelines
 - .. Membership card
 - .. Coupons for special rewards at their next visit
 - .. Pencils, stickers, tattoos and lapel pins
 - .. Calendar with their recall date circled
 - Invitation by mail to all internal contests and special events
 - Birthday card
 - Practice Newsletter
 - Articles on "children's" health, fitness, dental care and educational articles that can be sent to patient and parents.
 - Book Reading Contest for "Members Only" with bookmarkers

- *Deliver the services you promise, meet and exceed the patients/parents expectations. Exceed is the key word here.*

Example of contacts:

1st Visit - Initial Exam - Jan 1 2003

- Address the child and let them know you recommend waiting and why.
- Ask the child if they would like to join your "Members Only Club"?
- Tell the child they will receive "special" benefits by being a member and following the clubs guidelines.
- Inform the child you will be sending their "Members Only Packet" in the mail within the next month.

2nd contact - Post Exam - within 2-3 days of exam - Jan 5th 2003

The Treatment Coordinator sends a personalized note to the child reminding them to start watching the mail for their "membership packet"

3rd contact - One month after the initial exam - Feb 1st 2003

The "Members Only Club Packet" arrives at the patient's home.

4th contact - Two months later - April 1, 2003

Patients receives a packet with

- A flyer to participate in the practices "Mother's Day Contest"
- A coupon to "Spin the wheel" and win a prize at their visit next

5th contact - Two months later - June 1st 2003

- Patient receives a letter announcing the "Summer Book Reading Contest" with bookmarkers and rules.
- Parents received an article on "Summer Safety"

6th contact - One month later - July 15th, 2003

- Patient receives a personalized Birthday card

7th contact - Two months later - September 1, 2003

- Patient receives stickers, tattoo's and pencils.
- A story on the Tooth Fairy
- Flyer for your internal contest, "Back to School"

8th contact - Three months later - December 1, 2003

- Patient receives a special invitation and phone call to their first Recall Visit reminding them to bring in any coupons they have earned.

Your patients/parents will be impressed by your attention to their pre-orthodontic needs. They will feel especially confident when it comes time to start treatment, because you have been monitoring and guiding them to this day.

Attachment 1

LET'S TIME IT RIGHT!

THE QUESTION

When is the best time to begin orthodontic treatment? This is a question that is often asked of me by parents, especially as they see other young children in orthodontic appliances. My specialty training in orthodontics

placed emphasis both on early treatment (7-10 years old) as well as treatment occurring later with all of the permanent teeth present.

MY ANSWER

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to treat numerous patients with both techniques and then review them in the following areas: finished results, duration of treatment, number of appointments, loose appliances, cooperation and patient motivation/enthusiasm. Combining this information with new wire and appliance technology, I have concluded that for the vast majority (approximately 80 percent) of young patients, it is best to delay treatment until most, if not all, the permanent teeth are in.

THE REASON

The five major advantages and benefits of waiting:

1. Decreased time in braces and fewer appointments, resulting in:
 - Less chance of enamel decalcification and root shortening.
 - Less time absent from school or work.
 - Less opportunity for broken braces.
2. Bone growth is occurring more rapidly during the adolescent years, increasing treatment effectiveness
3. Understanding and cooperation are better when a child is mature.
4. Completing treatment in one phase is less costly than prolonged two-phase program
5. More stable results.

The most optimal time to realize these benefits will vary somewhat with the individual child, but for most children, it is usually between the ages of 11 and 12. Orthodontic treatment begun during this window of opportunity will usually result in braces being on for 18-24 months instead of 3 to 4 years or more.

EXCEPTIONS

There are a few orthodontic conditions that do warrant a brief period of early treatment. These include:

1. Cross bites causing the lower jaw to shift.
2. Severe jaw imbalances (such as an upper jaw that is too far back).

3. Space maintenance for early loss of primary (baby) tooth.
4. Excessive crowding causing damage to teeth bones and/or gums.
5. Airway problems.

Additionally, if a young patient is suffering psychologically or socially from crooked upper front teeth, a brief period of partial braces can improve both the smile and self-image dramatically. Though braces will typically still be needed when all the teeth erupt, I do feel this is a valid treatment indication for some youngsters.

PARTING WORDS

Needless to say, the timing of orthodontic treatment is an important issue than can make orthodontics either a rewarding and enjoyable experience or one that is prolonged and tedious. Our observation program I set up to allow us to evaluate the patient's dental and overall development on a regular basis in order to begin orthodontic therapy at the appropriate time.

I hope that this information has given you both a better understanding of our practice and a positive introduction to orthodontics. Additionally, I hope you can see that waiting is sometimes the best "treatment".

Please feel free to contact our office if we can assist you with any questions you may have.

Author: Dr. Joe Mayes, Lubbock, Texas

Thanks to Dr. Hom and Sue Tournie for the recall club concept, Dr. Joe Mayes for his letter, Dr. Bob Smith, for his recall process and the many other orthodontic practices whose ideas have been shared to maintain relationships with our practices future, the recall patient.