



Balancing the Personal Touch With Technology

by **Carol Eaton**

Technology has infiltrated the orthodontic industry at amazing rates throughout the past 10 years.

Although technology continues to be in the forefront of our practice goals, it is important to remember that it is not the bells and whistles of technology that will bring or keep patients in your practice.

Implementing technology to your practice can enhance the overall practice image, streamline your daily protocols, as well as enhance your patient/parent communications. It is critical to remember the importance of balancing technology with consistent and sincere personal interaction with your patients and parents.

Benefits of Technology

- Increases overall value and enhances perception of your practice.
- Improves your existing communication with patients/parents and dental peers.
- Provides effective marketing in today's high-tech world.
- Streamlines the new patient process for greater efficiency.
- Connects patients with a clear understanding of their orthodontic needs.

Having a viable, visually-appealing, and informative website is a minimum standard of technology in today's market. Referring your patients to your website at different times during their orthodontic treatment is a great way to reinforce your high-tech message. It also begins or continues educating them about orthodontics and specifically the unique things about your practice.

If a new patient has been given more than one recommendation for an orthodontic office, the difference of a high-tech, educational website might be a strong indicator in choosing your practice over another. Providing

access to your website for filling out health history forms, patient motivational contests, and online payment options are a convenient way to show your patients how doing business with you is made quite easy.

It is estimated that 72 % of people use the Internet to research medical/dental needs and influence their decisions. Your website can often be the first visual introduction to your practice, setting the foundation of your practice standards: quality, precision, branding, service, experience, and reputation.

Benefits of a Well-designed Website

- Visual appeal and immediate connection with today's Internet-savvy generation.
- Added value to your practice image/reputation as high-tech and updated.
- Communicate more effectively with technology and visual tools.
- Begin building rapport/relationship with the new patient/parent.

With the use of digital images, patients can better understand their orthodontic problem and be more open to the solution by accepting treatment. You should certainly show the patient his or her own clinical images to illustrate the need for treatment.

To address the solution, you can also show other patients' clinical images to give the patient an idea of how the treatment might progress – and how lovely his or her smile will be when the treatment has run its course.

Orthodontic treatment is a service, which can seem intangible to patients. Digital imaging creates a tangible

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dimension your patients can understand. The bottom line: people are more likely to go forward with treatment if they can see the problem – and the solution.

In this way, digital images help persuade a remote decision-maker that orthodontic treatment, often regarded as simply cosmetic, has a measurable, noticeable impact on the patient's facial anatomy. This may help move decisions from the realm of added expenses into the realm of dental care, at least in the minds of some decision-makers.

Digital images also have a very important role as a promotional tool, and you should seriously consider using clinical images in your practice's marketing collateral. Your practice website presents an enticing, professional image that showcases your practice's experience and accomplishments.

Benefits of Digital Technology

- Provides immediate clinical tool for efficient treatment planning and streamlining multiple appointments in to one.
- Clear images, gathered quickly and comfortably shared with the patient/parent in reviewing and reinforcing the treatment recommendations. (A picture is worth a thousand words.)
- Digital images, X-rays, and models can be electronically stored and easily transmitted as well as merged in to a myriad of correspondence to patients, parents, and dental peers.

In his updated book on selling techniques, [Integrity Selling for the 21st Century](#), Ron Willingham, challenges the mind-set of traditional selling skills to focus more on relationship-selling. Here is the new suggested focus:

- Discover your customer's (patients/parents) needs, wants, and desires.
- Build trust and get people to want to do business with you.
- Listen rather than talk. Use the 80/20 rule.
- Increase confidence and achievement drive.
- Stand out above the crowd; customize who you are.
- Develop motivational intelligence.
- Empower yourself.
- Dealing with rejection – responding to no.

Willingham defines selling as, "A process of identifying and filling people's wants or needs that creates mutual value for customers, sales people, and their organization."

By combining newly-learned skills in building rapport and relationships with your patients/parents along with the use of available technology, a win-win situation is created for the patient, parent, referring doctor, and practice team.

An easy-to-follow sales formula tied in with the acronym of AID, Inc. from Ron Willingham's book, can easily relate to the flow of the new patient process.

6-Step System of Selling: AID, Inc. System

1. **Approach** – first step toward a successful sale
 - Gain rapport; build relationship foundation.
 - Get on their emotional wavelength.
 - Make each "moment of contact" memorable (start at the new patient phone call, new patient forms with pertinent information gathered, Fun-Fact Sheet, website visit/practice introduction, NP confirmation/welcome call, initial greeting, tour of office, TC/Records person role pre-doctor time frame).
2. **Interview** – identify specific needs (new patient call, TC "pre-selling phase")
 - Ask open-ended questions to begin this conversation.
 - Share pertinent information with the doctor.
 - Help people get what they want.
 - Questions leading the patient to satisfy their needs; probing for needs.
 - Establish Rapport
 - Establish Trust
 - Determined Behavior Style (watch body language)
3. **Demonstrate** – explain features/benefits to satisfy needs with passion (website, reception room monitor, tour of office, TC education/visual tools)
 - Acknowledge dominant wants and needs; tailor it to their specific situation.
 - Don't oversell or over talk about products and services.
4. **Validate** – to prove your claims (before and after cases, educational programs)

- Acknowledge that you understand their wants/needs (connects you with the prospect, makes them feel understood and accepted, creates common ground).
 - Talk about price/investment once value outweighs cost.
5. **Negotiate** – to work out any challenges, limitations, barriers, or stalls (leading the patient/parent)
- Ask open-ended questions.
 - Present scheduling opportunities.
 - Review financial comfort levels.
6. **Close** – to ask for a decision
- ASSUME ALL PATIENTS WANT TO GET STARTED NOW.

Continue your research on existing and new technologies available while gradually implementing these new practice tools. Take the time to invest in on-going training with your entire team on understanding human behaviors, enhanced communication, and exemplary customer service. These are the “tried and true” tools that will grow your practice.

Benefits of Balancing the Personal Touch

- Building rapport and relationships; it is the main area that will differentiate your practice.
- Customizing your communication to individual patients and parents.
- Customer service is not outdated; it should be your #1 Priority!
- Be the buzz that everyone is talking about...providing personal moments. ☺

About the Author



Carol Eaton is best known for her expertise in training new patient coordinators and streamlining the new patient process for efficiency and effectiveness and orthodontics. She is presenting a class at the Users Group Meeting in San Diego.