



# Keep Marketing Communication Contagious

**W**ith the popularity of the paperless office, advances in technology, and the ubiquity of e-mail and social media, orthodontic practices have access to cost-effective options for reaching a multitude of their current and potential patients. Yet while they may be cost-effective, are they marketing-effective?

At the 2012 Users Group Meeting, I discussed making the most out of your marketing dollars by creating a tipping point that would lead to a marketing epidemic, and I'm revisiting this topic in the Cutting Edge Webinar Series. However this article is about what happens when an epidemic you've started loses effectiveness – otherwise known as immunity.

If you currently have more than ten unread e-mails in your inbox, or have already forgotten the Facebook status updates you read two minutes ago, this is a glimpse into the communicative immunity affecting our society. This concept of immunity is best illustrated with something we all know and love – telemarketing. While telemarketing calls used to be a cost-effective way to sell everything, they are now a cost-effective way to sell nothing.

Consumers no longer respond to telemarketing because of its prevalence and frequency. This is the inevitable future of text message marketing and e-mail blasts. Consumers will begin to ignore this communication to the point where they will no longer be a viable marketing option. And without continuous improvements and examinations of your marketing communication strategy, your practice will get lost in the sea of e-communication.

## **Marketing is Not a Paperless Activity**

Although an e-mail or a text may be quick and easy, or even automatic, a successful marketing plan should include concrete physical evidence, conveying the image of your practice. If your New Patient Welcome is sent via e-mail, you are missing a key opportunity to make a first impression. Without a New Patient Walkout Packet, you are not providing potential patients with an essential

*by Kayla Hoorelbeke*

decision-making tool, keeping your practice fresh in their mind.

Physical evidence is important with existing patients too. There are several convenient options for practices to provide their patients with prizes and rewards via an online account and a website. They're generally more cost-effective and efficient, but if the practice could still be part of the equation by providing certain rewards or prizes on-site, you will create opportunities your patients will remember.

## **Vary Forms of Communication and the Message**

Traditional print communication is necessary, but it is equally important to keep up with technology and relate to your target market. Effectiveness comes in variety. Utilizing e-mail, text, phone, and traditional mail is necessary to keep the attention of your patients. Even if you're a paperless office, the patient should always have the choice of how they'd like to receive communication from your office; ask for their preferences during their first appointment.

Within your communication, the message should also be varied. Facebook pages and Twitter feeds should include links to other articles, announcements of news in the practice, humorous posts, community interest stories, thought-provoking posts, and posts that solicit feedback and interaction. Social media connoisseur Shaquille O'Neal has developed a formula with his social media coach – 60% of his posts are funny, 30% are inspiring, and 10% are "selling" or acting as a spokesperson. If he wasn't following a formula like this, would he have as many followers? Would his followers trust his opinion? And

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therefore would he get paid large sums of money to speak on behalf of companies? Probably not.

### **Word-of-Mouth: Back and Better Than Ever**

The age of e-communication has actually placed an even greater importance on traditional word-of-mouth communication. When consumers are bombarded with information on a daily basis, they need a filter, and that's where word-of-mouth comes in. Consumers are seeking the opinions of friends, family members, and co-workers more than ever to determine what is worthy of their attention and which decisions they should make. This means that more resources should be allocated towards strengthening personal relationships with your patients and community rather than putting everything into your online image. Having a strong following in the virtual world is absolutely necessary, but without a strong following in the real world your online presence will not have an ongoing impact.

Striking a balance between traditional, personal, and online forms of communication will help your practice's message have a greater reach and impact. While it may require a greater investment, it will also produce a greater return on your investment. Focusing all of your efforts on technology and social media alone eliminates the opportunity for those moments and connections that will keep your practice infectious and contagious for years to come. ☺

## **About the Author**

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Kayla Hoorelbeke, founder of Informed Image, LLC, will be presenting at the Users Group Meeting in Las Vegas. Catch her Ortho2 webinar, Turning Your Marketing Plan into a Marketing Epidemic, on October 1.