



ORTHO2

# Budget Marketing

Ideas to market your practice on a budget

by **Pat Rosenzweig**

**W**e currently find ourselves in an interesting position in orthodontic offices. It's never been more important to market and it's rarely been more difficult to find the dollars needed to do so.

Like the rest of the country, orthodontists are feeling the financial pinch of the recession. And, like the rest of the country, we need to find creative ways to get lots of punch from little investments. Let's look at some ideas to get our office name out there without creating a financial shortfall for the practice.

The first thing most offices should consider is either signing on as a preferred provider for one or two insurances, or adding a new insurance company to the mix. I realize the reluctance of doctors to join insurance plans when they have been strictly "fee for service," but are empty chairs really a better option? Also, every patient who comes to you as an insurance referral has cousins, neighbors, and friends who can be influenced by hearing about the great practice in the neighborhood. Some practices are also adding Medicaid to their roster... and really liking the feeling they get from helping to create smiles for youngsters who might have fewer opportunities than the majority of their patients.

Insurance plans, however, are by no means the only way to get the word out about the office in a thrifty fashion. We're in the summer months when fairs, festivals, and farmers markets are plentiful. For the price of a booth, some simple giveaways, and a few hours of doctor and staff time, you can get in front of hundreds of families who can be influenced to come in for a consultation just by meeting you and your staff. And don't forget a simple drawing for a quality electric toothbrush or small basket of goodies. Be sure to add "Would you be interested in being called to set up a complementary orthodontic consultation?" as the last question on the ticket.

Even our old tried and true marketing plans can be pared down without being watered down. Do you usually send gift baskets to referring offices for holidays and at strategic times in the year? If so, be more creative

while saving money in the process. If you want to remind referring offices you'd still love to see more of their patients in the summer, purchase inexpensive baskets and stuff them with chips and salsa... lots of fun for the staff at minimal expense. Instead of expensive baskets of goodies for Christmas, fill a basket with enough holiday cookbooks for the entire staff. These are a real fun conversation piece and can be very affordable from discount bookstores.

As a final thought, don't forget the benefit of word of mouth marketing from current patients. Keep games and contests going every month, but get more creative than you have been in the past. One good example of this is instead of counting turkey feathers in November, make the contest one for moms. We appreciate all they do in being the drivers and schedulers for their families, so we have a drawing that the moms enter at the appointments for a gift of a Thanksgiving turkey or ham. You might want to call it the "Great Thanksgiving Gobble" or "Oink Appreciation Event."

Remember, whatever you call it, or how you slice it, you don't need or want to stop marketing... you just need to start thinking outside the box to get more patients in the door. ◊

## About the Author



Pat Rosenzweig is co-founder of Mosaic Management Professionals providing management and business consulting for orthodontic offices. Her commitment to creating an individual plan for each client has been a hallmark of her consulting.

Reprinted from  
**The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2**  
July 2010 - Volume 28 Issue 3