



ACQUISITIONS

6 Steps to a First Meeting with the Dentist

Secure a first meeting with a potential client

You've got an amazing product and service—now all you need is a meeting with the dentist to demonstrate it. As you know, dentists are not the most accessible professionals. To get through to them, you must take a planned and proactive approach. Below are some of the most critical steps to take in order to get the sales meeting.

The Officer Manager Is Your Ally

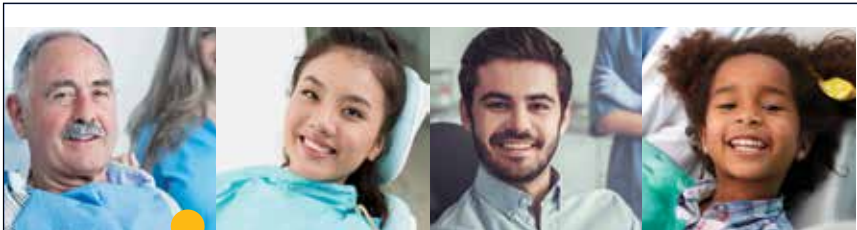
The nature of a dentist's job—with back-to-back patient visits—makes it especially difficult to get hold of them, and on top of that, some very protective front-line folks guard them. Because of this, to secure a meeting with a dentist, we often must rely on the office manager. Office managers typically hold enough responsibility at the practice to schedule meetings. The office staff has access to the dentist's calendar, and of course you want to

ensure that the dentist is present for the meeting. Meeting with only the office staff can result in, "Thanks for the information. We'll take this to the dentist." Still, when you call into the dental practice, you should treat the office manager as if they are the decision-maker since they hold the keys to the appointment book. Discuss your laboratory's features and benefits with them and convince the office manager that you are worthy of an appointment with the dentist.

Create a Script Guideline

There are three critical elements of a prospecting call: confidence, a proper needs analysis, and knowing your features and benefits. Using a script will significantly reduce the pauses and "ums" we often employ in conversation. Fill your script with probing questions and impending benefits, starting with a friendly introduction that focuses on your strengths. Ask questions such as, "Would you say that a major part of your crown and bridge cases

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are PFM or all-ceramic, like zirconia or lithium disilicate?” Then be prepared to have a great response to either answer. If the strength of your service is in chairside assistance, ask if they get that benefit from their current laboratory. Questions and reactive benefit statements keep the conversation going, make the office manager or dentist think, and lead them to consider you an expert with something to offer.

In addition to a solid needs analysis and expertly delivered benefit statements, consider possible objections (like “just send me something”) and your rebuttals to them (“We have such a wide variety of services available, it would be difficult to send you literature without knowing your needs”).

Be natural and conversational—a salesperson who sounds like they are a well-wound script-spewing machine is a turn-off. Each customer must feel as if they are the only prospect on your calling list. But starting with a guideline allows for better control over where you want the conversation to go.

Develop a Multi-Channel Marketing Approach

“Send me something” is probably the statement you will hear most often from office managers. Sometimes it is meant to be dismissive, but at other times it is a sincere request for more information for those who prefer tangible materials. A third reason for a request for literature is when the office manager is unable to schedule vendor meetings on the dentist’s calendar but still wants something to put in front of the dentist. While the main objective is to get a meeting from that phone call, you can also utilize fax, snail mail, voice mail, and email. It may take longer to get the appointment, but following a protocol preference is one way to show that you’re serious, legitimate, and diligent. If you send something, be sure to say, “I will be happy to send you something, and then I would like to follow up in a couple of days to see what you think.” If they agree, you will now have permission to call them back. Once you do, you have a good chance of getting that meeting with the dentist.

Measure Your Productivity and Discipline

Construct a realistic time frame in which to make your calls. Whether 2 hours per week or 20 calls per week, strict self-accountability will bring faster results on a more consistent basis. Imagine what a couple thousand calls per year could do for your business. What could you do with that revenue from all those meetings-turned-acquisitions?

Be Exceptional at Record-Keeping and Follow-Up

Effective telephone marketing, like most facets of your business, requires discipline and precise record keeping. If an investment into a contact management system is out of reach, use a spreadsheet to keep your prospects listed, and create columns such as “Notes” and “Last Results” where you can keep brief nuggets of information or next steps on each record. You can also use a different color font on the records that require callbacks to set them apart from the others. Be sure to maintain accurate notes, denote callbacks, and follow up on the day you say you will. On many occasions, your prospect will advise you to call back next week, next month, or in 4 months. If you call them back as requested, you will be branded as a company that’s worthy of respect and credibility. Even when you’ve finally nailed the meeting and the dentist agrees to send you a test case, it may be weeks before you receive it. So proper record-keeping of all steps in the lifecycle of prospects and clients is important to keep a pulse on next steps and be in the right place at the right time to get the work.

Be Persistent

With enough phone calls, you will set appointments and close business. All it takes is a little persistence and patience, along with the talent in prospecting. Ponder what it would mean for the growth of your business if you were able to set three to six new business appointments each month and close one of them every month. New business awaits, regardless of this difficult economy or the challenges in acquiring new clients. Are you committed to going after it?

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