

## Succeeding in Denturism in This Economy – Denturists in Recession Economy

Not everything does poorly in a bad economy. In fact, many products and services do better in a recessed or depressed economy. *Kraft Dinner, Wal-Mart, Costco, Healthcare, and the Movies* all do better during recessions and depressions.

In times of recession people tend to tighten their belts. But people will always want to feel good and this is particularly true during a recession or depression. Movies historically do better because people are looking for comforts and escapism. Factory outlet stores do well during this time because people look for value over boutique.

Make no mistake though, in times of recession “Self-image matters”, according to a recent article in Forbes Magazine entitled “Tuning Into The Recession Mind-Set”. The article explained, “People who are struggling don’t want it to show. They will make trade-offs, so they can afford to keep up appearances.”

So, we are now aware of two things about people in a down turned economy:

- 1) People want to feel good
- 2) People will hunt for value.

Denturists are in an enviable position of being able to market themselves as both a boutique specialist AND a factory outlet offering value! A downturn in the economy will turn the population into value hunters. They will change their patterns. They can no longer rationalize shopping for handbags in the boutique and people, rightly so, prioritize health care. People want to feel good and they still even want to “shop” and health is a lot easier to rationalize.

Denturists Can:

- 1) Bring people that ordinarily ignore their oral health into your clinic to improve the way they feel and function.
- 2) Draw edentulous people from dentists to your clinic through greater value and specialized service

### Step 1) Figure out your Value Proposition!

Accomplishing these objectives may require you to re-think your marketing strategies.

As people search for ways to find comfort and **FEEL GOOD** this is perfect time to stress the importance of a proper fitting denture for stomatognathic function and health.

That some edentulous patients are still getting dentures from a dentist is a matter of education. What is the greater **VALUE** that you offer to the patient?

Your value proposition should be short, direct, succinct and designed to intrigue your target and instill confidence. Include at least one technical word or phrase from your profession that will instill confidence. Explain to your target that they will be dealing **DIRECTLY** with the denture specialists. Using

a word like “direct” will inform your value searching patients that they are bypassing additional costs and receiving value directly from the source! In this economy, focus your value proposition less on luxury and more on value and how you can help edentulous people feel better and be healthier!

## **Step 2) Communicate your Value Proposition**

**"The medium is the message"**. This phrase was originally coined by Marshall McLuhan and it is a very important concept. Your message is to instill the confidence that you can service an edentulous patient with superior value than a dentist. The actual words of your carefully crafted Value Proposition is only a small part of that communication. If, for example, you print your intended message on a brochure that you designed yourself on regular office paper, then you may be doing a disservice to that message in comparison to the professionally prepared glossy brochures of the neighbouring dentist.

I've worked with many clinics and the ones with more professional advertising campaigns seem to do better than clinics with little or no advertising campaigns. So when you are putting together your Value Proposition I would not recommend presenting it cheaply.

The medium of the message is not just the brochure or the advertisement. It is also your clinic. Your work space does not have to be fancy or glamorous to be an effective medium. In fact, as people transition from luxury seeking to value seeking this will be particularly true. But your clinic does have to be very clean, professional and presentable to complement your Value Proposition. Visit the dental offices near you and then visit your office, as if you were a patient. Consider fresh paint, clean floors, decent waiting chairs and current magazines.

Consider everything your patient experiences as the medium. Everything must fit your Value Proposition - the advertisement, your clinic, your staff, and yourself, as you give the initial exam. Personally, when I go to my dentist, I like the fact he does a full exam and he verbalizes it. He vocalizes the exam to himself in dental vernacular, then he explains his findings to me in layman's terms. Other dentists I've been to do a silent exam and then they tell me everything looks good. The self vocalized exam, even though I do not understand it, instills confidence in me that my dentist is thorough, smart, and that I'm getting good value from his expertise. It makes me feel good.

The final part of your Value Proposition is the treatment plan. You need to paint a picture in your patient's mind of how they are going to feel and function after your treatment. They need to understand that they came DIRECTLY to the denture expert. The value seeking patient is going to want to leave with a professionally printed treatment plan with any special particulars neatly noted in type set font. Hand written treatment plans (or worse not giving treatment plans) are not going to support your Value Proposition.

## **Step 3) Deliver the Value**

People are coming into your clinic to feel good, so make them feel good. I am not talking about delivering a good denture – that's obvious. I mean make them feel good. Make it your clinic's mission to ensure that everyone leaves your office much happier than when they walked in. Talk about it with your staff. Review the schedule at the end of the day and discuss if there was a noticeable difference in Mrs. X's disposition when she left your clinic today. It's very easy to slip into mediocre patterns at work. Personally, when I want to become more positive and inspired I write down the following words on my desk: Invigorated; Confident; Challenged; Joyful; Connected. “Challenged” is often the keyword for me if

I'm having a busy day. Then I write down words like: Exhausted; Burned out; Anxious; Defensive. I proceed to draw a big line through each of those words in the latter list. Just the act of doing this changes my outlook for the day.

As people come into your office be sensitive that they may be losing a large part of their life savings in the stock market. Be empathetic but do not join in on the doom and gloom with your comments. Instead help them to feel better. The easiest way for you to do that is concentrate on making your patient look and feel good. Ensure you tell them how good they look or will look. Feeling good and being healthy is priceless, so be proud of your contribution.

#### **Step 4) Follow Up**

Have a look at your patient files. Each and every one of those patients is relying on you for their oral health. It is arguably your professional responsibility to ensure each person in those files understand that they need regular maintenance on their dentures. Your patients need to know that poor fitting dentures can lead to bite problems, speech impediments and tissue irritation and leaving this condition unchecked can lead to complicated situations in the future.

#### **Step 5) Measure and Assess**

As is the case with anything you want to improve, you need clearly defined goals and a system in place to constantly measure and re-evaluate. Achievers - whether in business, sports, or the arts - are committed to continual improvement. I believe denturists are uniquely positioned to thrive in a downturned economy. A denturist is both boutique and wholesale – it's time to revisit your Value Proposition and inform/remind the public of the extraordinary value you can provide and how you can make edentulous people feel better and be healthier. Value and the ability to make someone feel good is how to succeed in a poor economy.

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