



# WAYS TO SAVE MONEY IN YOUR MARKETING BUDGET

**OVERLOOKED AREAS  
WHERE DENTAL PRACTICES  
WASTE THEIR MARKETING DOLLARS.**

# DISCLAIMER

The ideas I talk about here are time-tested, 100% real, and based on 16 years of dental-specific experience. They are also generalized to apply to a large audience.

While I can't make any specific claims about exactly how much money you can save without analyzing your practice's marketing budget, my hope is that I can at least save you \$1,500 in exchange for the time you spent reading this. I value your attention and it's worth at least that much. Ideally, I'd love to save you \$5,000 - \$20,000 a year. That would be amazing, wouldn't it?!

# INTRODUCTION

## **I save the average dental practice \$5,000 - \$30,000 per year.**

Honestly that number skyrockets really quickly when I'm consulting with group practices. I recently saved one \$96,000 in a casual conversation at a bar. Trust me, it has less to do with how smart I am and more to do with how most doctors/owners don't fully understand what's happening in their marketing budget. Here are the most common reasons why dental practices waste money in their marketing:

### **1 You have multiple companies involved.**

Most practices sign up for a service because it sounds like a good idea at the time. Fast forward three years – you're still paying for it and have no idea if it's working or not. You've got a website company, a different SEO company, you pay for a Facebook content subscription, you work with the local printer to design postcards and another company is collecting and posting reviews. While none of these may be a huge investment, they all add up. In the end, you could make things more efficient and cost-effective by working with a single company who understands your brand.

### **2 You're not entirely sure how much you're spending.**

If this is you, don't feel bad. It's rare to run into a doctor that knows exactly how much they're spending and where it's going. At the end of the day, marketing is an investment. You ought to know how much you're investing and where it's going.

### **3 You're not entirely sure what's working.**

The marketing industry has been shrouded in mystery for too long. Many companies leverage the excuse that marketing is "complicated" to take advantage of practices that don't ask enough questions. Walk away from any company that doesn't operate with transparency.

Now, let's look at seven ways you can save money in your marketing budget.

# 7 WAYS TO SAVE MONEY IN YOUR MARKETING BUDGET

1

## Cut your Yellow Pages budget

Super easy. Done.

In all seriousness, there is no reason to maintain that expense. (This holds true for 99% of practices I consult with, but on rare occasions, I've found a few rural practices where this is still working). The Yellow Pages (or any phone book) is a search product whose time has passed. That ship sailed somewhere around 2005. There's no reason to stand on the dock waiting for it to come back.

Before we jump from this: don't just reduce your cost by going down to a basic listing. Even if it's only \$250 a month. That adds up to \$3,000 a year. You will most likely get zero new patients for that investment. Reallocate those dollars to Google ads and get 15 - 20 new people walking through your door.

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## 2

### Increase Internal Referrals

The number one system I would have locked down in my practice BEFORE I spent any money on marketing would be internal referrals. I firmly believe this should be a system of the practice. It always happens. Every patient, every appointment. No matter what.

While there are varying ways to ask for referrals, there are some proven principles that work best:

- 1. Ask** - Existing patients must be asked to refer their family and friends. Since hygiene exams are the most systemized event in the practice, I prefer to ask patients here.
- 2. Invitation** - Existing patients need a tool to invite their friends and family. Some practices use business cards, but I prefer something that communicates more value. Think restaurant gift card.
- 3. Incentivize** - Offer \$50 - \$100 off the "New Patient Welcome Exam." Whatever you incentivize gets more attention. That's a universal law. The science behind this says anything less than \$50 isn't motivating enough and anything over \$100 diminishes as well because it feels too desperate.

Here's the whole program in a simple script: *"Mrs. Smith, of course I love seeing you. I'd love to see any of your family or friends. Here's a \$100 gift card for their first appointment. Just tell them to ask for me."* Then slip the card in their take-home bag.

The typical practice converts 3- 4% of the cards they give out. Give out 1000 and get 30 - 40 new patients. Hands down, it's the least expensive marketing you can do. Plus, these patients have the highest level of trust. While this doesn't necessarily "save" you money, it will probably allow you to cut other less effective marketing costs. I have one practice that gets a 9% return. That has allowed them to cut over \$25,000 in other marketing costs throughout the year.

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# 3

## **Delegate Facebook**

Probably my biggest frustration in dental marketing (outside of extracted teeth logos - don't get me started) is goofy jokes, comics and irrelevant facts that offices post to Facebook. I get it. You contracted with a company to provide content for your account. But is it really helping? I mean really? Most of these companies charge \$300 - \$750 a month to provide generic content that's getting reproduced in hundreds of practices across the country.

Here's a better solution: Find someone on your team that loves Facebook. Or find a team member's daughter or friend that loves social media. Ask them to oversee the account. Tell them your expectation is they post three to four times a week. You'd like them to stop by the practice every now and then to capture some photos and videos as well. Here's the key to the whole thing: pay them \$250 a month to oversee it.

Too many practices have tried to delegate this to team members without compensation. Just add it to their job description. The problem is that everyone gets busy and then nothing gets posted. \$250 a month saves you money and makes your page infinitely better.

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# 4

## Stop paying for SEO

This will be the most controversial of all the ideas, but here's why I say this: SEO doesn't work if the website is broken. Period. It doesn't matter how much money you throw at it.

I routinely run into practices spending \$500 - \$2,500 a month with an SEO company to increase their Google ranking. 90% of the time it never works. They take your money and disappear behind a veil of mystery only to leave you wondering what's really happening.

Nine times out of ten, SEO will not work because the site is broken at its core. If your site was built in 2013 before the mobile revolution, you could find the best SEO company in the country and spend \$50K a year and they would still be ineffective. Why? It doesn't meet Google's best practice for how a site should be built.

Honestly, the two biggest factors I see on search ranking in the dental industry right now are custom built websites (because every other practice builds theirs on a template) and video. If you do those two things, you could solve 90% of your SEO problems. Google is rewarding those types of websites and most practices don't do them. It's an instant way to stand out.

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## 5

### Cut traditional advertising

I recently sat down with a practice that was coming to the end of their \$10,000 a month television contract. "How'd that go?" I asked.

*"We're not real sure," they said. "I don't know that we got much out of it."*

Not trying to be Captain Obvious here, but if you're going to invest \$120,000 into marketing, you ought to be head-over-heels with its results. Right?!?! However, this is the typical story I hear when it comes to traditional advertising. Whether it's television, radio, newspapers, magazines or direct mail, the results have been declining for years. I can confidently tell you that we can take half your traditional advertising budget, invest it in digital and get better results. If it were me, I'd cut those from the budget and re-allocate a portion to digital.

Side note: The only time traditional advertising usually makes sense for a dental practice is when their budget is big enough and it supports the overall brand. For example, the marketing budget for a high-end cosmetic practice is \$96,000/year and we invest \$24,000 into the area's well-known magazine. It still leaves plenty of room for digital strategies.



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## 6

### **Don't let the Yellow Pages handle your pay-per-click ads.**

Track with me for a moment: Yellow Pages is an outdated business search tool whose innovation was to list business alphabetically. They began to lose business to online search engines who innovated a more effective way to search. As sales declined they decided to jump into a space they didn't understand and sell digital ads so they didn't go completely bankrupt. Now... let's talk about why those Pay-per-Click ads aren't working.

It's not just Yellow Pages. This goes for radio, television and direct mail companies that sell Pay-Per-Click. The approach is broken from the start. Traditional advertising is built around different strategies and values for capturing attention. Selling digital ad space is the last revenue stream they have left before throwing in the towel. That's not where I want my investment going.

Side note: this is why I still see so much direct mail in dentistry. Many of the largest dental marketing firms started out with direct mail when it was in its heyday. They built an entire company from it and still view marketing through that lens. Of course they offer digital solutions now because they have to, but their core values are built around mail.

If you currently find yourself in this situation, I would encourage you to end your contract and find an agency who focuses exclusively on digital ads. Your investment will be much more productive.

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## 7

### Focus your donations and community support

One thing you can bet on as a dental practice owner is the amount of solicitation you'll receive for community support and donations. It never stops. While generous support and donations are an amazing thing, this is an area I see get out of control all the time.

I have two guides that will give some structure for saying "yes."

**1. Set a budget at the start of the year.** Maybe you want to give \$1,500. Maybe it's \$10,000. Regardless, set the budget at the start of the year. As long as there's money left you can say "yes." Once it's gone, it gives you permission to say "no." *"I'm so sorry. We've spent our budget for the year. Please reach out to me next year, we'd love to donate."*

**2. Focus your support.** Instead of giving \$100 to every organization and event that asks, focus your giving for maximum impact. Do you want to support the local sports programs? Great! Be the practice that is visible at every school sporting event. Do you have a passion for the local arts? Great! Sponsor the museum, philharmonic and theater productions. Do you have a strong connection to a non-profit? Great! Give larger donations and consider planning a fundraising event for them.

# BEFORE YOU GO

First, let me say “Thank you!” for taking the time to read this resource. I sincerely hope I was able to save you money, but more importantly I hope your marketing becomes more effective. If I was able to save you money, hit me up at Instagram ([@joshuascott](#)) or Facebook ([facebook.com/joshuascottpro](#)) and let me know.

Second, if I can ever help you analyze your current marketing and put together a customized plan, please let me know. Visit [joshuascott.com](#) to discover how I work with practices. Drop me a quick note and I’ll make sure to get in touch with you right away.

I look forward to hearing from you!