

## INTERNAL MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM

### Doctor's Notes

#### STEP-BY-STEP GUIDELINES TO ADDING 10 NEW PATIENTS A MONTH TO YOUR PRACTICE

Almost every doctor feels he or she could use more new patients. And almost universally they say that the best new patient they can receive comes from a referral from a current patient. However, very few practices ever really sit down and systematically structure a comprehensive internal marketing program to encourage new patient referrals from their current patient base.

When you consider that an average new patient generates from \$600 to \$1,100 in gross production, with a net contribution to overhead and administrative costs of about \$400 to \$800, you start to realize the true value of increasing your new patient flow.

Think of it this way. Let's say you are averaging 20 new patients a month. Let's assume that at this level of new patients, you are paying all your practice bills, salaries, etc. at the end of the month. The addition of just 4 more new patients a month (at \$500 net each) is worth \$2,000 a month or \$24,000 a year to the bottom line - your pocket.

We have developed these tested techniques into an integrated internal marketing program. Many of the individual elements have been contributed by our client practices. Others have been borrowed from the best practice management advisors in the country. We have refined and combined these with our own unique approach to develop a very powerful method for systematically acquiring new patients.

This program includes a combination of simple verbal skills, "Share-The-Care/Smile" Cards, patient letters, and patient thank-you gifts. While you may modify any element to meet your specific situation, the best results generally come from implementing the program exactly as we lay it out.

## PHASE I: THE NUMBER-ONE LOWEST-COST WAY TO ACQUIRE A NEW PATIENT

Suzanne and I have been teaching this technique in our seminars for more than eight years. It is so simple and cost-effective that I never cease to be amazed at how few practices actually implement the procedure.

The bottom line is very simple. Ask your current patients to refer other patients. We know that for some of you, asking for referrals is extremely difficult. You may even feel it denigrates your professional image. This is simply not true. It is easy to do and can immeasurably increase your professional image and standing with the patient.

### **Step 1. Ask for the referral**

Analyze this simple statement:

Doctor:       *"Mrs. Jones, I would like to thank you. I wish all of our patients were as nice as you. If you have any friends or family who are like you, please don't hesitate to send them to us. We will be sure to take good care of them."*

Let's break the statement down phrase-by-phrase:

*"Mrs. Jones, I would like to thank you."*

Address the patient by name. Thanking them gets their attention. Alternatively, you might say "Mrs. Jones, you are a great patient."

*"I wish all of our patients were as nice as you."*

You have complimented the patient. Every patient likes to be complimented, even if it is blatant or outrageous flattery.

*"If you have any friends or family who are like you,"*

"Friends" or "family" identifies the category of person you want them to refer and "like you" is both a compliment and tells the patient you are interested only in "nice" people like themselves.

*"Please don't hesitate to send them to us."*

This is the most important part. You are asking for the referral - "send them to us."

*"We will be sure to take good care of them."*

This reassures the patient that their referral will be well treated by the doctor and staff, which will reflect well on them.

Let's take the conversation one step further:

Doctor: *"Mrs. Jones, I would like to thank you. I wish all of our patients were as nice as you. If you have any friends or family who are like you, please don't hesitate to send them to us. We will be sure to take good care of them."*

Mrs. Jones: *"Why doctor, I didn't know you were accepting new patients."*

Most doctors are amazed when a patient responds like this, but it is not an uncommon reply. First you must understand that many of your patients probably think your practice is closed to new people. Each time they come in, they see all the other patients and a busy staff and they assume you have all the patients you can handle.

Your response is simple:

Doctor: *"Well, each year a number of patients move out of the area, and we like to replace them with quality referrals from our best patients."*

Statistically, 20% of the population moves each year. This means you lose 1 out of 5 of your patients each year. This makes it obvious to the patient that you need to replace patients who move with new "quality referrals" while you compliment them again, "from our best patients."

Let's review the pattern in total once again with one last final touch.

Doctor: *"Mrs. Jones, I would like to thank you. I wish all of our patients were as nice as you. If you have any friends or family who are like you, please don't hesitate to send them to us. We will be sure to take good care of them."*

Mrs. Jones: *"Why doctor, I didn't know you were accepting new patients."*

Doctor: *"Well, each year a number of patients move out of the area, and we like to replace them with quality referrals from our best patients."*

*"And Mrs. Jones, please be sure to have them mention your name when they call so we can thank you personally."*

Since you already automatically ask and note the source of each new patient, the operative words here are "*so we can thank you personally.*" Everyone likes to be thanked when they do a favor for someone else. Plus, as we move through this integrated strategy, you will see that how we thank referrers is extremely important!

## **Step 2. Staff training**

To be successful, not only the doctor, but each staff member must be trained in asking patients for referrals. The doctor may not always be available, so it is required that all staff members feel comfortable and be prepared to ask for the referral.

It is required that you block out a 30 minute period of time from your next staff meeting to facilitate this training. Download and photocopy the *Staff Notes* and give a copy to each staff member. Follow these steps:

- A. Have everyone, starting with yourself, take turns reading out loud the verbiage for asking for a referral. This may seem boring and repetitious. However, the more each staff member hears the phrasing, the more comfortable they will feel with it.

By now you may be saying to yourself,  
"This is not my thing.  
I don't want to read anything out loud.  
This is embarrassing, even stressful."

### **STOP THINKING LIKE THIS NOW!**

You are forgetting that this 30 minute exercise is going to put a minimum of \$24,000 a year more in your pocket. What other things can you do that will give you this kind of return on investment?  
Start thinking about how you are going to use that money!

- B. Next, as the doctor, take the lead in analyzing the structure of the phrasings. Take the time to explain the purpose of every aspect of the different elements. Open this part of the process up to the group for discussion.

If you like, restructure the phrasing in words you feel more comfortable with. Do this now. If you do it yourself, it will demonstrate to the rest of the staff how important this really is.

Use the format below:

Doctor: *"Mrs. Jones, I would like to thank you. I wish all of our patients were as nice as you. If you have any friends or family who are like you, please don't hesitate to send them to us. We will be sure to take good care of them."*

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Mrs. Jones: *"Why doctor, I didn't know you were accepting new patients."*

Doctor: *"Well, each year a number of patients move out of the area, and we like to replace them with quality referrals from our best patients."*

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*"And Mrs. Jones, please be sure to have them mention your name when they call so we can thank you personally."*

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- C. Now comes the fun part. Break the staff into teams of two. Have each team role-play the dialogue. One staff member is the patient. The other is the person asking for the referral. Each team member must do each part at least three (3) times.
- D. Switch team members and repeat the role-playing process. Again, each team member must do each part at least three (3) times.
- E. For the final test, each staff member must role-play the referral with the doctor playing the part of the patient.

- F. By now, everyone should have become comfortable with the process of asking for patient referrals. The key to ultimate success is to repeat Step E in your next two (2) staff meetings. It will only take five (5) minutes and it will demonstrate to the staff you are serious about the need to ask for referrals.

### **Step 3. Who should ask for the referral?**

There are two systems for determining who will ask for the referral and when. Choose the one that best fits your practice's operating procedures.

- A. The rapport system:

Every management consultant from the time of Adam has advised professional practices to hold a 5-minute morning meeting with all staff members to review the day's patients. As part of this meeting, note those patients who are completing treatment, both dental and hygiene, and assign a staff member to ask for the referral.

Choose the staff member who has the best rapport with that particular patient. That person is then assigned to ask for the referral. Try as best you can to spread these assignments among the different staff members and yourself.

If you should have a patient with whom no one has a rapport, the lead must be taken by the doctor. The important thing is to avoid having two or three staff members asking a single patient for referrals.

- B. The time-based system:

This system is very simple and assigns the referral request to the doctor or staff based upon the time of day and job title - two things everybody should be able to handle. Referral requests are assigned as follows:

For patients completing dental treatment:

Mornings, the doctor asks for the referral.  
Afternoons, the assistant asks for the referral.

For patients completing hygiene treatment:

Mornings, the front desk asks for the referral.  
Afternoons, the hygienist asks for the referral.

If you have more than one assistant or front desk person, alternate days.

#### **Step 4.     *Rewarding staff for asking for referrals***

Each time a patient is asked for a referral, the person responsible marks an "R" next to the patient's name on the Day Sheet or Scheduling Book. Keep a running total of each staff member's referral requests - including the doctor's.

Now comes the fun part. Depending on the size of the staff, you can offer the following motivational rewards for the most referrals asked for the month and quarter. You should only need to play this game for three months. After that, the staff should have integrated this behavior into their daily procedures.

A staff member needs a minimum of 5 referral requests a month and 15 a quarter to qualify for an award.

Basic Monthly Referral Bonus - Each Month for 3 Months:

Highest requester	\$75.00
Second highest	\$50.00
Third highest	\$25.00

Super Bonus - For Highest 3 Month Total:

Highest requester	\$150.00
Second highest	\$ 75.00
Third highest	\$ 50.00

In the third month, a person might win \$75 for asking for the most referrals for that month and \$150 super bonus for the highest three month total.

You can change the reward amounts as you see fit. However, keep at least two levels of rewards to foster competition and bolster the encouragement of the rest of the staff if one person should jump way ahead of the rest. Remember to spread the referral assignments among the staff as evenly as possible.

The key to the whole process is to systematize asking for referrals.  
And remember....

**If you don't \_\_\_\_\_ you don't \_\_\_\_\_.**

## PHASE II: COMPLETION OF TREATMENT LETTERS

The next phase of your internal marking program is mandatory. Every patient who completes a treatment plan, soft tissue treatment program or even just a routine prophylaxis receives a completion-of-treatment letter.

### **Step 1.     *Get the right equipment***

To implement this phase, you must have a basic word processing system in your computer to handle letters and standard communications. If you do not have a computer system, go out and buy one. This is non-negotiable. You must have a minimal system to operate your business.

If you need to buy a system, you need only spend about \$1,200. If this seems a lot to you, remember three (3) additional new patients will pay for the system in the first month. If you're looking for the cheapest system possible, buy an AT-Class 486 33MHS IBM-Compatible Clone with an 80 megabyte hard drive, VGA color monitor. Most systems will come with a simple word processing software program preinstalled.

The key element in word processing equipment is the letter-quality printer. Letter quality looks like the printing on this page. If you can see the dots that make up the letters, the printer is unacceptable and you will appear unprofessional – or even worse, tacky – in the eyes of your patients.

If you are willing to make an investment in a laser printer, do so. Good ones costing around \$800 that print four pages a minute are available from Hewlett Packard. These will give you top-quality printing and are very quiet compared to dot matrix printers.

With your word processing system, you can enter the basic letters you need to send just once. Each time you want to send the letter again, you need only change the patient's name and address. You need not write the letter over again from scratch like you do on a typewriter. This saves a tremendous amount of time for your staff and will easily pay for the cost of the system within a year.

### **Step 2.     *Get the right envelopes***

Make your life easy. Buy two (2) boxes (500 envelopes each) of standard #10 window envelopes. You can have these inexpensively printed with your return address at any quick copy shop.

Print the patient's name and address on your stationery so that when you fold the letter, they are positioned to show through the window of your envelope. This eliminates the need to make an address label or type the address on the envelope – a big time saver.

In the future, when you reprint your regular stationery, have your printer make several boxes of window envelopes on paper stock matching your letterhead paper. In the short run, don't wait for fancy envelopes; they are not an important factor in the success of the strategy.

**Step 3. *Enter the following three letters into your word processing system***

1. Completion of Dental Treatment Letter

Send this letter every time you complete a dental treatment plan. If the patient's treatment plan is extended over a prolonged period of time, due to insurance requirements or financial reasons, send the letter after the completion of each phase.

Date

Patient Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear XX:

I would like to thank you for your time and cooperation in the completion of your recent dental treatment at our office. It gives us great satisfaction to provide quality dentistry to patients like yourself who have placed their confidence in us and appreciate our work. We are sure you will enjoy the results of both our efforts.

Time is precious for most people, and I know that the time you invested at our office will prove well spent. It is important to ensure that both your time and financial investment is well protected. We will help you do so by contacting you periodically for the preventive checkups and cleaning necessary to maintain your dental work and keep future treatment to a minimum.

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Sincerely,

Dr. Right Thinker

P.S. I have enclosed two Smile Cards that you can share with friends or family members who you feel may need our services.

P.P.S. Be sure to have your friends mention your name so that we can thank you personally with a token of our appreciation.

2. Completion of Soft Tissue Treatment Letter

Send this letter after the patient completes your Soft Tissue Management Program, even if you are now going to start dental treatment. This will give patients a sense of accomplishment that will prepare them for the next phase of treatment.

Date

Patient Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear XX:

The initiative you have shown in implementing your soft tissue management program deserves special mention. I feel it is important to recognize your efforts and encourage you to continue following through with your oral hygiene program and dental care.

As you know, it is your continued commitment to excellent preventive care that will allow you to enjoy healthy teeth and gums for the rest of your life. And we are here to help you in any way to keep achieving that goal. Your recent treatment program was another step toward that ongoing effort.

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Sincerely,

Dr. Right Thinker

P.S. I have enclosed two Smile Cards for any friends or relatives who you feel would benefit from our preventive approach to maintaining healthy gums and teeth.

P.P.S. Be sure to have your friends mention your name so that we can thank you personally with a token of our appreciation.

3. Completion of Standard Prophylaxis Letter

Since most of the patients who go through your office are on continuing care recall, it is very important that you send this letter to each of them after **every** standard prophylaxis.

Date

Patient Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear XX:

The initiative you have shown in coming in for your dental cleaning deserves special note. I feel it is important to recognize your efforts and encourage you to continue following through with your oral hygiene program.

As you know, it is your continued commitment to excellent preventive care that will allow you to enjoy healthy teeth and gums for the rest of your life. And we are here to help you in any way to keep achieving that goal. Your recent cleaning was another step toward that ongoing effort.

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Sincerely,

Dr. Right Thinker

P.S. I have enclosed two Smile Cards for any friends or relatives who you feel would benefit from our preventive approach to health gums and teeth.

P.P.S. Be sure to have your friends mention your name so that we can thank you personally with a token of our appreciation.

#### **Step 4.     **Ordering Share-The-Care/Smile Cards****

Share-The-Care or Smile Cards, as they are called, contain a special introductory offer to new patients that is printed on a business card. These cards and their design are absolutely critical to the success of your integrated internal marketing program.

Smile Cards are extremely successful because they appeal to one's sense of greed. But, as in most things, it must be done tastefully.

First, the person who is receiving the card from your patient is getting a valuable gift from your patient worth X dollars. This is a good deal for the person receiving the card. Plus, it enhances the image and prestige of the giver, your patient, by allowing him/her to do a friend a favor.

Second, your patient will be receiving a "*token of our appreciation.*" We will discuss this *token* in more detail later. At this point, the *token* rewards the referrer and counters any possible question that may arise when you first start using Smile Cards about "Why didn't I (the referring patient) get this deal?".

The answer is three-fold. One, you only use the Smile Cards as part of your mailing program and will most likely never have to answer this question directly. Two, if you should be asked, just explain that the Smile Card offer is only available to new patients who are referred by other current patients. Finally, if they persist in pressing for a deal (which I've never heard a case of) explain that when they refer a new patient, they too will benefit with "*a token of our appreciation.*"

The following are the two primary examples of different Smile Card approaches:

### **SMILE CARD**

In order to acquaint you with our office, we are offering all our new patients:

- \* A Complete Oral Exam
- \* X-rays as needed, and
- \* Routine Cleaning

all for \$\_\_\_\_\_ (normal cost \$\_\_\_\_\_). Take advantage of this opportunity to safeguard your smile. Make an appointment for yourself or the entire family today.

Referred by \_\_\_\_\_. This offer good through 2004 and only valid when services are paid in full by cash, check or credit card on the day of treatment and the patient has not missed a previously scheduled appointment. Alternatively, your insurance may pay.

### **SMILE CARD**

In order to acquaint you with our office, we are offering all our new patients \$25.00 off on their first:

- \* Complete Oral Exam
- \* X-rays, and
- \* Routine Cleaning

Take advantage of this opportunity to safeguard your smile. Make an appointment for yourself or the entire family today.

Referred by \_\_\_\_\_. This offer good though 2004 and only valid when services are paid in full by cash, check or credit card on the day of treatment and the patient has not missed a previously scheduled appointment. Alternatively, your insurance may pay.

My personal choice is to make an offer of \$25.00 off the total cost of the patient's first exam, x-rays and cleaning. This allows you to make a profit and keeps the bottom-fishers who are just looking for a cheap cleaning from wasting your time.

Your Smile Card should be the same size as a normal business card. This way it will fit into your patient's standard business card filing system. Do not use an oversized card. Make sure the entire message, including your name, address, and phone number are all on one side of the card. This way your message will not be lost on the back side of your card.

Over the years, we have tested dozens of Smile Card designs. And, as often happens, we stumbled, or I should say one of our clients stumbled, onto a card design that doubles the number of new patients generated by the system.

His card design included a graphic element, not his logo – suppress your ego here, doctor – that attracted immediate attention and literally forced the card's recipient to read the card. The graphic element was a set of "BIG PINK LIPS." These BIG PINK LIPS were embossed (raised) on the surface of the card and kind of both funny and friendly at the same time.

We have studied these BIG PINK LIPS for more than six years now. We still can't quite pin down why they almost double the number of new patients generated by the program. They just do. Working under the assumption that you would have to be "Brain Dead" not to want to double your response to the program, we now incorporate these lips into all of our Smile Cards.

To order your BIG PINK LIP Smile Cards, call **Hycomb Communications** at **1-800-523-6961** and tell them you are a client of ours. This may save you some money when you proceed to Phase III of this program. Worst case they will just laugh when you mention our name.

These kind folks will lay out and print your cards with your name, address, phone number and BIG PINK LIPS. They have invested over \$2,228 to develop a special embossing dye that literally pops your BIG PINK LIPS off the card. Purchasing your cards through Hycomb will save you the cost of making this expensive embossing dye. See the enclosed sample cards.

We strongly recommend you order at least 10,000 Smile Cards at a time. Current pricing as of January 2004 are as follows:

Set-up fee	\$65	waived for Dental Letter Plan subscribers
2,500 cards	\$545	.218 each
5,000 cards	\$620	.124 each
10,000 cards	\$770	.077 each

Focus on your internal marketing program as we have laid it out here and as part of your overall Master Plan. Follow the plan. If you have questions, call us.

After you have been using your Smile Cards for at least 12 months you may want to use an alternate card to add variety to your marketing. The following card was developed for this purpose. It should not, under any circumstances, replace your primary card. I would use this alternate approach for no more than 6 months, then move back to the primary card again.

Hycomb will lay this card out to include the BIG PINK LIPS along with your name and address. It should be obvious that this approach is limited to certain markets. Don't try this in a blue collar or farming market.

**FULL SERVICE DENTAL SALON**

**Smile Prep for Photography and Public Image**

- \* Whitening teeth discolored from smoking, age, stains, medication
- \* Closing gaps and spaces
- \* Correcting uneven, missing, chipped or broken teeth
- \* Complete mouth restoration

For today's men and women  
whose careers demand great looking smiles.

**Complimentary cosmetic consultation (\$95 value)**  
Take this opportunity to enhance your smile.  
Make an appointment TODAY.

**Step 5. *What types of token gift do you give the referrer?***

The referrer's reward is a very important part of the strategy. First, it formally recognizes the person for the favor they performed in sending a new patient to your office. Secondly, it gives them tangible evidence of your appreciation. Third, it encourages them to continue to refer more new patients to receive more rewards.

As a reward, we suggest a \$25 Gift Certificate to one of the finer local stores, like Nordstrom's. All department stores have gift certificates.

Alternatively, you can make up your own gift certificate or gift letter from your office which is good for several different stores in your town or area. This approach works extremely well in smaller towns and rural areas and has several advantages.

First, you or your staff visit several different local merchants explaining to them that you want to give your patients the option of using your gift certificates in their store. At the end of each month, the merchant sends you all the certificates he has collected from your patients for redemption. The advantage is that your patients can select the merchant or service they want from a wide variety of choices.

You don't need to make up a big fancy gift certificate. A simple statement on your letterhead is just fine saying:

_____ (Patient's Name) _____	
This gift certificate is worth \$25 when presented for goods or services at any of the following establishments and is valid through December 31, 200X.	
List of qualifying businesses:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
_____	_____
Patient's Signature	Right Thinker, D.D.S.

As a thank you for each merchant who participates, invite them and their families into your office for a **complimentary** cleaning and exam. After you complete the exam, give the merchant a Smile Card for each of their employees.

And remember to send the merchant a gift certificate for each employee he/she refers to your practice.

If a patient-of-record refers an immediate family member (spouse, child or in-law living at the *same address*) with a Smile Card, take it – even if it is a child. Remember, each new patient is worth a net contribution to overhead of about \$500. Some will be worth more, some less. If they send in the rest of the family – four , five, or six people – that’s just fine. Each new patient gets \$25 off their total initial treatment.

However, just send one (1) Thank You Gift Certificate to the referrer for each adult family member referred. Do not send a gift certificate for each child in the same family.

## PHASE III: QUARTERLY COMMUNICATIONS

The final, and **most important**, phase of your internal marketing strategy is four separate letters sent to patients, one every three months. We prefer simple one page letters addressing a single topic to the standard newsletters most doctors send out.

First, each letter is designed to draw the patient's attention to a specific issue that will generate production now! Second, because we use an envelope we **always enclose two Smile Cards**.

### ***Step 1. Sort your patient data base for family units.***

You want to send letters to the primary paying party, not each family member.

### ***Step 2. Print the letters.***

If you have a laser printer and have fewer than 400 letters to send, you may want to personalize the letters. Remember to position the address so that it will show through a window in your #10 envelopes.

If the number of letters is larger than 400, you will probably want to address the letter to "Dear Patient" and have it printed at your local quick print. Don't worry about the letter not being personalized. It will not have a negative effect.

In either case, **do not use expensive letterhead paper**. Have your local quick printer make up several reams of simple low-cost letterhead and envelopes exclusively for these quarterly mass mailings.

If you decide to do a standard preprinted "Dear Patient" letter, print your labels "one up" on **peel-off** label stock.

### ***Step 3. Send the printed letters, envelopes, Smile Cards and labels to a direct mail processing house for bulk mailing.***

Finally, if you're mailing more than 400, think about using a mailing house to stuff, seal, label and mail at bulk rates. **Do not, under any circumstances, try to process large mailings in your office.**

**IMPORTANT:** It is extremely important that you send letters to your patients every quarter – like clock work. We strongly recommend that you use Hycomb Communications at 1-800-523-6961. They will print your Smile Cards, Quarterly Letters, Envelopes, plus stuff and mail them automatically each quarter. They will even provide you with ten sample letters you can use verbatim or rewrite to meet your needs.  
Failure to follow through on your quarterly mailings is the number one reason your internal marketing program will fail.

Hycomb's prices are very reasonable for this service. You just send them your labels and a check each quarter and your new patients show up at your door automatically. Remember, each new patient is worth about \$500. By the end of your first year, you should be getting from 8 to 10 additional new patients a month. That totals up to \$5,000 additional to your bottom line each month – \$60,000 a year! The cost of your quarterly mailings is insignificant relative to the gain.

Prices for subscribing for one year (four consecutive, quarterly issues) to the Dental Letter Plan as of March 1, 2004 are as follows:

There is a one-time set-up fee of \$95 which will be waived if you tell Hycomb Communications that you are a Dental Marketing Alliance client. Call them at 800-523-6961.

<u>Letter Packages</u>	<u>Cost per Quarter</u>
500	\$1,223
750	\$1,348
1000	\$1,472
1250	\$1,602
1500	\$1,721
1750	\$1,845
2000	\$1,970

Price includes: typesetting, scanning your signature and letterhead, printing letters, envelopes and Smile Cards, mail preparation, and bulk rate postage.

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call Hycomb.

**Step 4.    *Select or write your letters.***

Periodically we will be sending you letters for quarterly mailings. The classic example, and a good place to start, is an insurance letter. I have enclosed two versions, both ideal for boosting practice production. Use one early in the year and the second between June and September. Also check the CD for links to Internal Marketing Letters for additional ideas.

Use this letter in January after your patient's insurance benefit has been renewed.

Patient Name  
Mailing Address  
City, State, Zip

**Re:   Possible Loss of Insurance Benefits**

Dear Patient:

I would like to update you regarding your dental insurance benefits.

Almost all insurance companies renew your dental benefits with the new year. This means that you can now take advantage of possibly \$1,000 or more of benefits for yourself or your family.

These benefits are part of your employer's insurance program. They are part of your total employee compensation package. Do not let your benefits fade away unused.

Please do not wait for the end of the year, when our congested schedule may make it difficult to accommodate you at a convenient time.

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Our staff is ready to receive you now. Use your benefits wisely.

Sincerely,

Right Thinker, D.D.S.

P.S. I have enclosed two business cards, one for your files and one that you can share with a friend or family member who you feel may need our services.

P.P.S. Be sure to have your friends mention your name so that we can thank you personally.

Use this letter in August or September to get your patients to focus on their insurance benefits before they expire.

Patient Name  
Mailing Address  
City, State, Zip

**Re: Possible Loss of Insurance Benefits**

Dear Patient:

I would like to update you regarding your dental insurance benefits.

The end of the year is drawing near. We want to remind you that if you have not used your insurance benefits to their maximum, only a few months are left.

If you have already met your deductible, take advantage of your benefits this year. Do not let your benefits fade away unused.

Please do not wait for the end of the year, when our congested schedule may make it difficult to accommodate you at a convenient time.

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Our staff is ready to receive you now. Use your benefits wisely.

Sincerely,

Right Thinker, D.D.S.

P.S. I have enclosed two business cards, one for your files and one that you can share with a friend or family member who you feel may need our services.

P.P.S. Be sure to have your friends mention your name so that we can thank you personally.

Other possible letters include:

- \* *Announcing your new hygiene program.*
- \* *Announcing a new piece of equipment - laser, intra-oral camera, etc.*
- \* *Promoting new treatments - teeth whitening, different cosmetic treatments, etc.*

In each case, always include 2 smile cards with this standard copy:

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Sincerely,

Dr. Right Thinker

P.S. I have enclosed two Smile Cards for any friends or relatives who you feel would benefit from our preventive approach to health gums and teeth.

P.P.S. Be sure to have your friends mention your name so that we can thank you personally with a token of our appreciation.

#### **PHASE IV: THANKING THE PATIENT FOR REFERRING A NEW PATIENT**

The final step in this phase of the strategy is the thank-you letter. Be sure to enclose the gift certificate *and* four Smile Cards. It's hard to believe but some people actually screw up this part of the program. It is important to remember to:

1. Send your thank you letters, gift certificates and Smile Cards the first time a person refers a new patient. Reinforce good behavior immediately and positively. Do not wait until they have referred three patients to say thank you.

2. Send your thank you letters, etc., to all persons referring new patients, not just to people who are referred by "Smile Cards."

Date

Patient Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip

Dear XX:

Again, I was reminded of your generous support of our practice when Mrs. X came in for her appointment. We truly appreciate your confidence in our services.

As a token of our appreciation, I have enclosed a gift certificate which can be redeemed at (store X or your choice of a number of local merchants).

As always, if you have any questions or need any assistance, please don't hesitate to call (Office Manager's Name), (Assistant Manager's Name) or myself.

Sincerely,

Dr. Right Thinker

P.S. I have enclosed four Smile Cards for any additional friends or relatives who you feel would benefit from our preventive approach to healthy gums and teeth.

\* **For dentists practicing in California:**

According to CDA Legal Counsel Raoul Renaud, any gift, no matter how small, given in recognition of a specific referral, is prohibited by Section 650 of the Business and Professional Code. The law "prohibits the giving of anything of value as compensation or inducement for referring patients."

So California dentists should say, "Again, I was reminded of your generous support of our practice. We truly appreciate your confidence in our services."

## WHY THIS PROGRAM MAY FAIL IN YOUR PRACTICE

1. You don't use a Smile Card. If you don't use a Smile Card, you will cut your response by 70%. Your Smile Card is a response vehicle which directs the potential patient back to your office and gives him an incentive to call. Your business card, by itself, will not work.
2. Lazy staff. Many times staff complain that it is too much trouble to send out completion of treatment letters and quarterly mailings. They just don't have enough time. Bull S...! They will have plenty of time while standing in line at the unemployment office.

Marketing is just as important as creating a patient's chart. Make it a systematic part of your everyday procedures. Make it a rule that all completion of treatment letters must be prepared and on the doctor's desk for signature by Tuesday morning for all patients who completed treatment the previous week. Failure to meet this deadline twice in any quarter will be grounds for termination. Put that statement in writing in your personnel policy manual. They will get the message.

3. Lazy staff. Many times staff complain that sending the same completion of treatment letters to patients is boring and a waste of the patient's time. They may even tell you that some patients complained about receiving the letter.

My answer to this B.S. is very simple. Give the complaining staff member one week to come up with two alternative completion-of-treatment letters. If they can't come up with two alternatives, they aren't talented enough to be working in your office.

Even if someone did complain, so what? I'll guarantee that 99.8% of your patients didn't complain. For \$60,000 a year more in your pocket, just say "Next."

4. Failure to send out quarterly communication letters. Just do it! You really have no excuse. If your staff can't handle it, send it to Hycomb Communications. Call 1-800-523-6961.

## HOW TO GUARANTEE A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

1. You and your staff personally hand out two Smile Cards to each patient as you ask them for a referral. This is the most effective time to use a Smile Card. The patient goes off to their next appointment or to meet a friend with your Smile Card in their pocket. Nine out of ten people will tell the next three people they meet that they have just come back from the dentist – they are looking for sympathy.

The acquaintance will ask, "Did it hurt?" And hopefully your patient will reply, "No. My doctor and his staff are relatively painless. Here is his card. Mention my name and you can save some money."

We had one doctor who generated 14 new patients in the first 45 days of the program by mandating that each referral request be accompanied by two Smile Cards. That was \$7,000 in his pocket in 45 days.

Remember, to be successful the doctor must lead the way by example.

2. Bury your patients in Smile Cards. If you follow this program, each of your patients should receive 14 to 20 Smile Cards a year. Smile Cards are just like any other form of advertising. To be effective, it must be repeated over and over again before they will have an impact on your patient's psyche.

Think of how many Tide detergent commercials you have seen or heard since you were a kid. Ten, 15, maybe 25 a year since you were old enough to sit in front of the TV. This is what it takes to make an impact. Internal Marketing and Smile Cards are the least expensive way to acquire a new patient, make more money, live a better life, and save America from tooth decay!