

Want New Patients?

*How to Welcome Your New Patients, Make Them Want More Dentistry and Get Them to Keep Their First Appointment*

*by William Howard Horrocks*

Most practices send out welcome letters to their new patients before their first visit. This is a good and necessary thing to do. But did you ever wonder why? What exactly is the purpose and can we improve them? As you will see, it's not just a nice thing to do, it's a marketing thing to do.

### **Removing Buyer's Remorse**

There are two purposes to a welcome letter. Here's the first. Have you ever purchased an item like a book or perhaps even a car and then several days or a week later received a mailing from the bookstore or car company? Those letters (if they're done correctly) will thank the customer for the purchase or the order; but they also remind the customer of all the good reasons they had for making the decision to buy in the first place. In other words, they reinforce and validate the customer for making the purchase. The main purpose is to alleviate "buyer's remorse" (that's the feeling buyers sometimes get after they make the purchase, take it home and maybe get the feeling they shouldn't have bought it).

When they receive the letter, it says to them, in effect, "You were right, you made the right choice because our product or service will do this for you. And not only that, you're sure to appreciate that it also does this and this for you." It makes the customer right, sells them all over again on the product, and removes any buyer's remorse.

If you bought my first book, *Unlimited New Patients*, you may have noticed when you opened it to the very first page it said, "Important: Read This First." I then went on to detail why your purchase was good for you. I told you that the book delivers on every promise I made in my advertising. I told you that it more than delivers. I said if you apply the information in the book, you will reap very substantial benefits and so on.

I also invited you to continue your association with me by making an offer for a free marketing consultation to see if I could help you further with your

marketing. I communicated very clearly that I'm interested in helping you however I can. I made you right for the purchase, reminded you why you wanted it, let you know I'm here to help and to answer any questions, and invited you to do further business with me. Your "welcome to the practice" letters should do the same thing.

### **Getting Them To Arrive**

The second purpose of a welcome letter is to ensure they keep the first appointment. How many times has a prospective patient called, made an appointment, and then flaked out and didn't show up? More than once, right? So your letter should also contain an appointment card that says something like "Your first appointment with us is on October 5th at 3:00. We anxiously await your arrival."

### **Making Your Welcome More Effective**

Now that we know what the welcoming letter should do, can we make this presentation even more effective? Absolutely! By turning this welcome letter into a welcome package. And information about the benefits of choosing you, and a gift for them that will ultimately benefit you.

First of all, make the customer right for choosing you. You do that with the letter.

Next, include your practice brochure but also include information about sealants, tooth whitening, anti-halitosis treatment or any other aspect of your practice you want to promote. What you're doing is inviting them to do further business with you by giving them important information about other services they may want to take advantage of - if not now, perhaps in the future.

Maybe they know nothing about sealants. Maybe they don't know about all the money they could save if their children had sealants on their teeth. Maybe they've never realized that tooth whitening is really easy and that you do this procedure. Your brochures will tell them. Or it could be that you're too far away, or your office will be too hard to find or it will be too hard to park when they get there. So include a map (usually this is on your

practice brochure) and tell them how easy it is to get to your practice and that they can park right in front. You get the idea. You're selling them more dentistry and at the same time eliminating any reason they might have for not showing up.

### **Give A Gift That Gives Back**

Next, give them a gift. People love gifts. Only make it one that benefits you as well, such as a "free dental health kit." It could contain toothbrushes (with your name and phone number, of course), dental floss, perhaps fluoride, or whatever you want. This kit also includes "Dental Health Certificates" that offer a "free cosmetic evaluation," or "20 percent off tooth whitening," or offers 10 percent off sealants to new patients like themselves that month. They could decide right then and there they want to do more than just get their toothache fixed. They could call you back and make an appointment to have their kids get sealants since they now know they can save 10 percent.

You're inviting the customer to do further business with you and making it easy for them to do so. In marketing, this is called "up-selling." You've sold them once, now sell them something else or more of what they bought in the first place. Some will buy, some won't. But what are the chances they'll buy if you never invite them to? Zip.

Also include a refrigerator magnet (yes, those ubiquitous little things). I know you've heard this before, but believe me, people will use it. If they have kids, they'll use it to post the school calendar or anything else from school on their refrigerator. Understand that all across America there are millions of magnets holding up tons of children's school work, reminders, grocery lists and so on. Your magnet may as well be the one they use. You should make it as easy as possible for people to contact you. This means a magnet or at least a phone sticker.

I hope these tips are helpful to you!