



## The Seven Steps to Implementing a Successful Direct Mail Strategy

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*Seven tasks must be completed correctly for your direct mail campaign to be a success.*

### Step 1

The first of these is to Identify Your Objectives. There are two general categories of objectives that are appropriate for the dental office. The first category is to increase the volume of new patients. For example, if your office is presently generating an average of 40 new patients per month and, based on your available capacity and other considerations, you could comfortably absorb an additional 50% per month, your objective would be: "Increase the number of new patients by an average of 20 per month." The actual increase will probably vary from month to month; it is the average increase over time that should be the relevant measure.

### Step 2

The second category of objective is a change in the composition of your patient base. For instance, you may want to change the patient mix from 60% fee-for-service and 40% insurance-based to 40% and 60% respectively. Or, you may want to attract more patients desiring a specific procedure, such as cosmetic, implants, etc. Whatever objective you choose, make it as specific as possible, and commit it to writing. Remember: when you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there.

## Step 3

Once you have agreed on your objective, you'll next want to **Determine Your Budget**. This involves calculating how many mailers are necessary to achieve your objective, then determining your cost per mailer.

Let's say you want to add 10 new patients per month to your practice. A reasonable expected response rate to a mailing for new patients is about .0025 to .3%. Therefore, (choosing the conservative response rate) the number of mailers per month you will need to send is  $10 / .0025$  or 4,000. Of course, this assumes your team possess the requisite skills to convert 100% of new patient inquiries. A more realistic figure is 90%. Accordingly, you may want to increase your mailing quantity as a function of the actual 'conversion ratio' that is, percentage of new patient inquiries your team are currently converting into kept appointments.

Let's assume for this example a mailing quantity of 5,000.

## Step 4

Next, you'll want calculate your cost per mailing. To calculate it, determine the cost of your mailing list, design, printing, fulfillment (letter shop), postage, and any tracking technology such as unique telephone numbers, website landing pages, etc.. Depending on what, how, and how much you mail, your cost per mailing can range anywhere from \$.25 to well over \$1. Let's assume it's \$.50. In this example then, your monthly budget is \$2,500 (5,000 mailers X \$.50).

## Step 5

Armed with your budget, you can next **Perform Your Benefit/Cost Calculation**. This is perhaps the most often overlooked step, which is unfortunate, because this exercise can show you what you can reasonably expect by way of return on investment from any tactic you may be considering. Briefly, the exercise involves determining the value to your practice of a typical patient. Dividing your Program Cost by your Patient Value yields your Breakeven Quantity.

### Select Your Mailing Target & Frequency

Now that you have a clear picture of your Objectives and Budget, and have chosen, based upon the results of your benefit/cost analysis, to proceed with the program, it's time to choose who will receive your mailings, and how often to send them (frequency).

Search for individuals and households which, based on experience, are most likely to respond to the invitation being sent.

## Step 6

The next step in the process of implementing a successful direct mail strategy is to **Select Mailer Design and Content**. This is perhaps the most important step, as what you send will, more than anything else, determine the response to your mailer. A number of factors need to be considered including: use of color, images and photographs; degree of personalization; mailer type (envelope, post card, brochure); offer(s); and of course, cost.

Once you've chosen your design, the next step is to **Have Your Mailers Printed**. More than one dentist has experienced the "nightmare scenario" of having thousands of mailers produced, only to learn that some aspect of their mailer violates one or more postal regulations, rendering the entire stock of mailings worthless! Be sure, therefore that whoever you choose to perform your design and print functions is familiar with postal regulations. As a general rule, you should request references (ideally dentists) of all parties involved in performing your direct mail program.

## Step 7

The final step in the process of implementing a winning direct mail campaign is **Effective and Ongoing Program Tracking and Evaluation**.

Remember, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Be sure, therefore, that every link in your direct mail service chain is solid!

Do not hesitate to call on us at 1-800-760-2419 if we can help with calculations and implementation.

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