

PRACTICE ORGANISATION

Build relationships to improve profitability

PERSUADING PATIENTS TO ACCEPT TREATMENT IS ALL TO DO WITH THE ART OF SELLING, EXPLAINS ASHLEY LATTER. HERE, HE APPLIES TRADITIONAL SALES TECHNIQUES TO DENTISTRY

So what is the biggest mistake dentists make in the sales process? They try and sell the patients a solution, without first finding out what the patient's real needs are. In fact they reckon it's the biggest mistake most sales people make and they end up speaking a language that the patients don't understand and switches them off. So here is a process that can help you not only understand the sales process, but also find out why people make decisions and create more selling opportunities. This is the first of three articles to help dentists create more profitable sales.

Let's look at the first two areas: building a rapport and the first interview.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

People will always do business with people that they like and trust. You can have the best technical skills in the world, but if you haven't got good people skills, then patients will not want to buy from you, or recommend you. It means that you have to take time out to build a relationship with your patient, so lengthen the time of your appointments and then use the following 'relationship stack' to help you get to know your patient really well:

- Where do you live?
- What do you do for a living?
- Where do you work?
- How long have you been

there?

- What do you like about your job?
- Are you married?
- Have you children?
- Have you got kids?
- How old are they?
- What do you do for hobbies?
- Why do you do that?
- Why?

... and so on.

After recently completing the sales programme, Barry Oulton from Haslemere Dental Centre stated: 'By spending more time with each patient, I was able to learn so much more about them and also understand more about what they wanted. It enabled me to open up new opportunities.'

These are some suggestions. It shouldn't

complain

- Give honest, sincere appreciation
- Arouse in the other person an eager want
- Become genuinely interested in the other person
- Smile
- Remember that a person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language
- Be a good listener. Encourage others to talk about themselves
- Talk in terms of the other person's interests
- Make the other person feel important and do it sincerely.

These are proven techniques that have worked for over 50 years, so commit to using them with your patients and staff.

People will always do business with people that they like and trust

become a questionnaire, but you should be genuinely interested. If you think about it, what do most people like to talk about themselves, its everyone's favourite subject.

The following are the first nine human relations principles from the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People* that can help you become a friendlier person and build stronger relationships:

- Don't criticise, condemn, or

After you have built a rapport, you can then ask questions to find out what the patient requires. Are decisions made on logic or emotion? Most decisions are made on emotion. Here are some questions that can help you understand your patients' needs.

First, start off with the present:

- **Current situation**
- What do you like about your

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teeth?

- How did you hear about us?
- Why did you come to us?
- What challenges are you currently experiencing?

Then, go onto finding out your patient's goals

- **Ideal scenario**

- How will that help you?

You must try to become *genuinely interested* in your patient. Remember, it may mean spending time sitting down with them and having a consultation.

Try to understand the

You must try to become genuinely interested in your patient

- If I had a magic wand what would you like to see in your appearance?
- What would be your ideal situation?
- What would you like people to say about your smile?
- Why do you say that?

The next step in the questioning process is to find out what is stopping them reaching their goals. These are called:

• **Barrier questions**

- What impact is the problem having on you?
- What problems does this cause?
- What is the level of urgency to make the change?
- What stands in the way?

The last type of questions are called 'pay out', which discover the emotional reason why people make decisions:

• **Pay out**


- So if we could do this for you, what impact would it have on you?
- What would that mean to you?
- Please tell me more

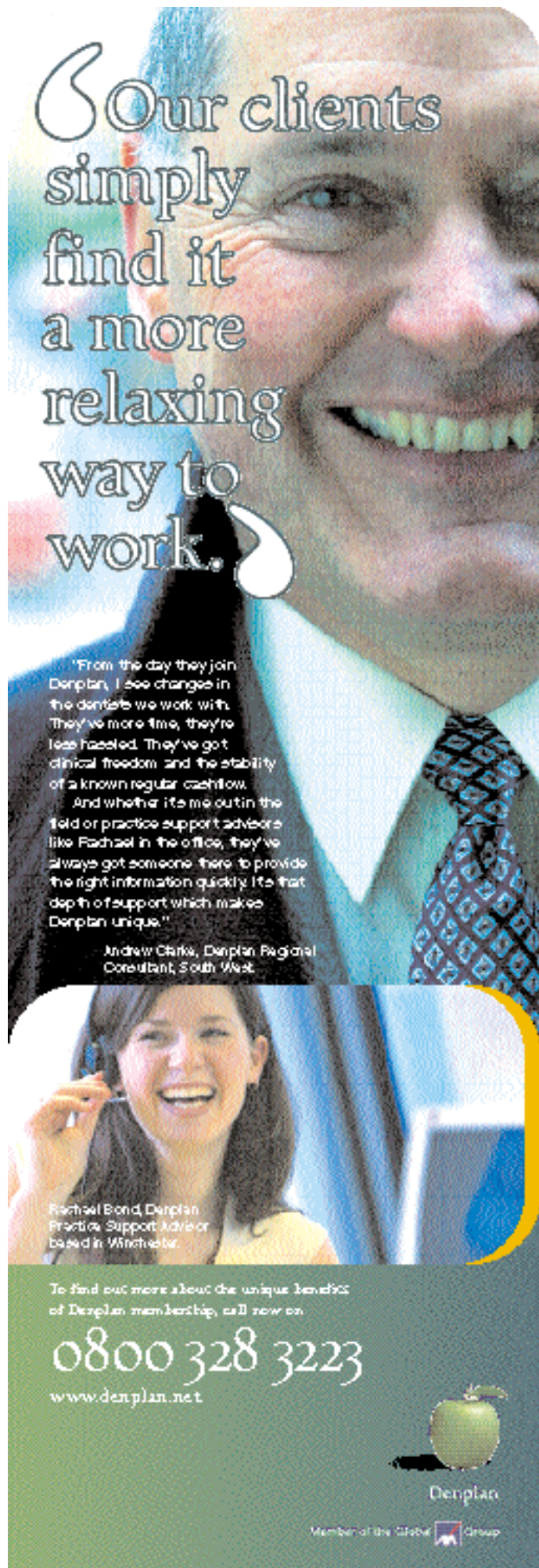
emotional reason why people make decisions. It could be:

- Survival - a fear of losing their job or relationship
- Importance - the desire to be perceived positively by others
- Self-actualisation - people need to buy to fulfil some need within them. It could be to feel good about himself or herself or to own something that they can show other friends
- Belonging - on a personal level many purchases are made so that they can relieve pain and so on.

Neal Sampson from Pall Mall Dental Practice stated: 'By asking these questions, I am able to find out why people makes decisions and it enabled me to recently sell a £12,000 treatment plan. I would have missed it before.'

So there you have it, some very easy techniques to help build relationships, open more opportunities and sell more services.

In the next article, I will show how to sell treatment plans on the patient's agenda and close the business. 



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Andrew Clark, Denplan Regional Consultant, South West

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