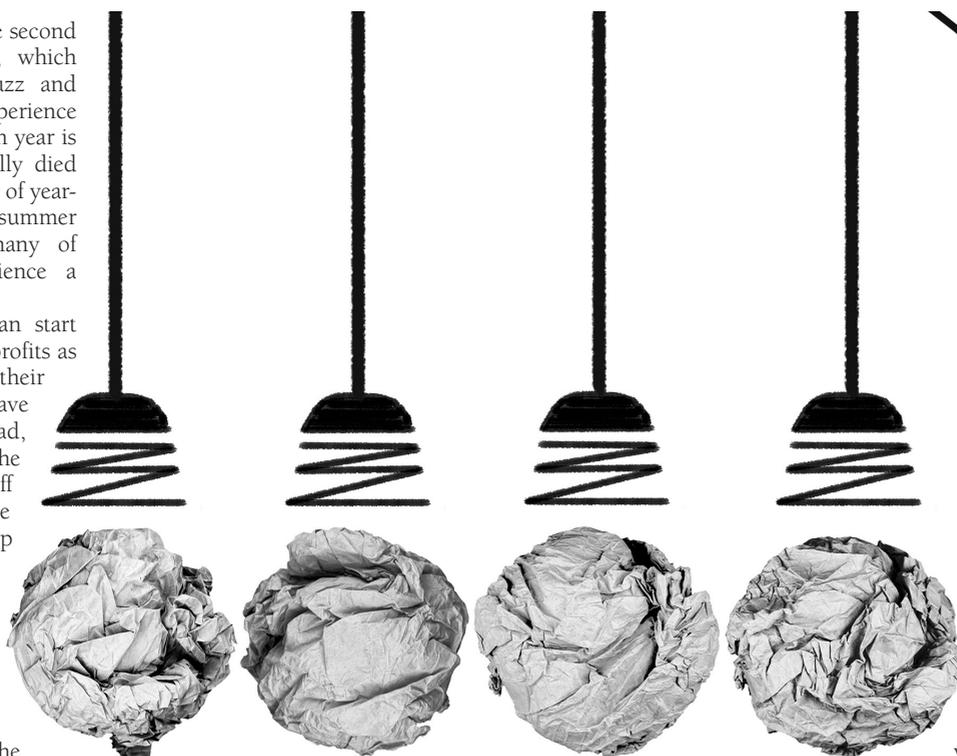


# Keeping up your momentum

There are certain times throughout the year where we naturally experience a lull. **Janice Charlton** looks at how you can boost your business all year round

We're already into the second quarter of the year, which often means the buzz and excitement that we experience in January as the fresh year is at our feet has usually died down. With the stress of year-end over and the summer fast approaching, many of us begin to experience a business lull.

Dental practices can start to see a dip in their profits as patients scale back on their spending in order to save for holidays abroad, or for entertaining the kids while they're off school. One of the first areas people stop spending money is on their dental health, placing this as a low priority. With that in mind, how can we keep business momentum going throughout the year, even during these notoriously quiet periods?



## Revisit your goals

One of the first things to do is to revisit your motivational mindset. If you made some goals at the beginning of the year, refer back to them regularly, at least every quarter, to assess your progress and give yourself the reminder of what you're all working towards. If you haven't done this since deciding on these aims, then now is a great time to sit down as a team to discuss whether the practice is on target to reach these and what needs to be done in order to get there.

## How can we keep business momentum going throughout the year, even during notoriously quiet periods?

Getting everyone involved not only makes you more accountable for achieving these goals, it also means you have more hands on deck to help your business reach its potential. A great idea is to make these aims visible on your staff noticeboard and write monthly updates as to how things are looking. This will help to get your team on board and give your dental business the extra push it needs.

On the subject of your team, no one knows your patients and their buying habits like you and your staff, so get everyone thinking of business boosting ideas through regular brainstorming sessions.

## Kids' clinics

As mentioned earlier, summer is often a quiet period with people jetting off on holiday and spending their spare cash on entertaining the little ones while they're off school. If your appointment book is looking sparse, you could use this to your advantage by running dedicated clinics just for children during the school holidays.

This offers the perfect opportunity to address the specific dental needs of children, such as fluoride varnishing and teaching toothbrushing and flossing skills. It is also a great way of getting them to feel comfortable and accustomed

to the surroundings of your dental practice, so ensure that these clinics are child friendly by not taking adult bookings at these times, and providing fun things to do in the waiting area, such as colouring or puzzle sheets.

Not only will this help to fill up your appointment book during quiet times, it will also resonate well with parents, and hopefully provide you with generations of loyal patients for years to come. Start talking about this now through in-practice posters, discussions at the chairside, and promotional emails to your patients in order to take bookings early on.

## Make patients think ahead

Making people think ahead can often be a great way to help boost business during quiet times. For example, promoting treatments like short-term orthodontics that will give your patients the gift of a straight smile in time for Christmas, can provide an excellent incentive for treatment uptake. Offering free, no-obligation consultations gives patients a chance to discover more about these types of treatments, or others that may be more suitable for them, without feeling under pressure to commit there and then.

Think about things that we all naturally look forward to, like Christmas and the summer, and try to tap into these through your special offers; for example, promoting tooth whitening for a 'sparkling summer smile'. People like to have something to aim towards and look good for, and you can use this to your business advantage.

## Make it affordable

As I mentioned at the beginning of this article, one of the first things people will delay in order to save money is dental appointments, so addressing how your patients prioritise their dental health can really help your business keep up momentum.

This, of course, boils down to the consistent educational messages about the importance of oral health and its links to overall health that you and your team provide at each and every appointment. However, as we're all aware, this is sometimes just not enough.

If you are noticing that cost seems to be a sticking point for some patients, try introducing a patient payment plan. This creates a much more affordable way of paying for dental care through low monthly payments, meaning

you can continue to provide timely care to help keep their oral health in tip top condition, while benefitting from a consistent monthly income that can provide your bottom line with an added boost.

## Dental practices can start to see a dip in their profits as patients scale back on their spending in order to save for holidays abroad

If you already have a plan in place, think about reviewing it in order to make sure it is working well for your business. Firstly, think about whether your plan is right for your patient base: does it offer them what they need at a price they can't refuse? If not, it might be worth checking the market to see if other plan providers can offer a more tailored approach.

If you choose to switch, make sure you double check the administration fees before you take the leap, as these can make a serious dent in your profits if you're paying too much. At Patient Plan Direct, our administration fees are just £1.20 per patient per month, and we offer a high level of customer support to go alongside it. Visit our Cost Saving Clinic on stand B70 at The Dentistry Show to discover how much you could save. **D**



Janice Charlton fully understands the challenges of running a modern dental practice; she has vast practice management experience and is also a qualified dental therapist. She has supported hundreds of dentists and their teams across the UK in successfully establishing dental plans within their practices, whether offering a plan as an option to private fee per item, or considering a move out of the NHS.

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