

OFF THE CUSP

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COULD YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE BENEFIT FROM SCENT BRANDING?

By Patterson Dental

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When dental practices consider ways to elevate patient comfort, they often dive into practical options. Complimentary beverages. Relaxing playlists. New patient office tours to create familiarity.

But it's not too often a practice will consider how sense of smell could be directly related to the quality of an interaction and the possibility of creating a loyal patient.

For Dr. Ricky L. Farmer in Somerset, Ky., going all in on "scent branding" has been great for business.

"I walked into a resort once in Mexico and I don't think I'll ever forget the smell of it," Farmer recalled. "It blew me away. It was like background noise – it was there, but I couldn't really put my finger on it. It was just wonderful, and it made an impact, so much so that I eventually tracked down the gentleman who ran that chain of resorts and I asked him about it. He wouldn't tell me his 'secret sauce,' which I very well respected."

Scent branding research and development

Farmer spent about six months researching scent branding. "I know psychologically and physiologically that your sense of smell is your greatest sense tied to memory," he said. "Dental offices often have a very distinct smell – medicinal and sterile – and I wanted to avoid that as much as we could. So, I went to work on what I wanted the office to smell like."

He took his geographical area and calming effects of the scents into consideration. "The scent goes through our ventilation system," he said. "It's made specifically for us, and my team doesn't even know the formula. I'll tell you one ingredient, though: It has a little lavender in it. I wanted to tie that in, too, because we have a thriving lavender farm in our community. We also have lavender strategically planted around our exterior, as well as dried plants throughout (supplied by our local farmers). I just thought it would be a nice touch to highlight another local feature."

But what scent to use? Many leading retailers, hotels and other businesses have hired consultants to help them turn key marketing statements into scents. The Harvard Business Review published an article in April 2018 detailing smart steps for scent integration:

- **Understand your brand** – When you have a strong understanding of who you are, what you stand for, and what you want patients to experience, you’ll have a solid foundation for developing brand equities.
- **Translate your vision into a scent** – While you can do your own research to figure out the innerworkings of “scent science,” it can be useful to check in with a professional. From the Harvard Business Review: “You need the combination of a scent strategist’s skill to interpret a brand through the olfactory lens and the creativity of a specialized perfumer to create the right composition.”
- **Test it out** – Once you’ve narrowed down the scents to a few distinctive options that communicate the kind of community you want to develop, it’s time to give key people an opportunity to see if your options pass the smell test. Let your office staff, local colleagues and potentially even loyal customers weigh in.
- **Decide what role the scent should play** – Once you’ve determined the right scent, it’s imperative that you know when and how you want to use it. Maybe it’s perfect for your waiting room, but a poor choice for an operator.

When it’s done correctly, you and your team will love the way scents enhance what you’re already doing to help care for and appreciate the patients you have – and the patients you hope to attract. For Farmer, patient reactions have reinforced his decision to move forward on scent branding.

“It’s very validating to hear patients say, ‘This is the most relaxed I’ve been all week!’” he said. “That typically just doesn’t happen in a dental chair. But it does when you get the experience right.”

Looking for more ways to elevate patient comfort in your dental practice? Start here – good ideas await.

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From Patterson Dental’s blog, Off the Cusp. View the original blog post:

<https://www.offthecusp.com/could-your-dental-practice-benefit-from-scent-branding/>