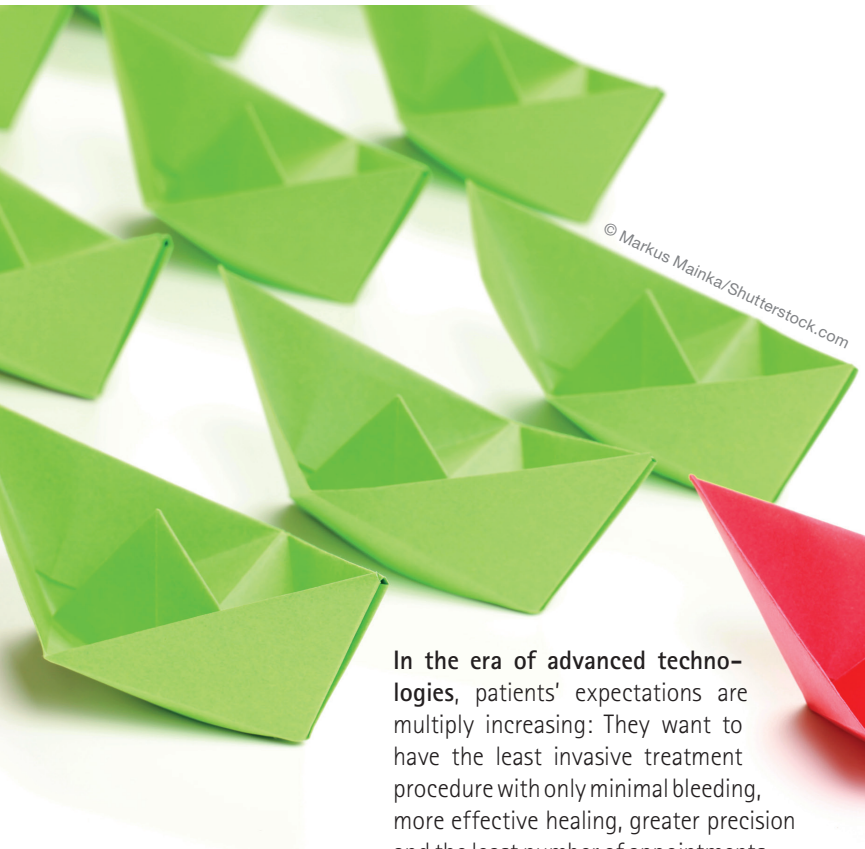
Lasers as an asset in both daily practice and marketing

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In the era of advanced technologies, patients' expectations are multiply increasing: They want to have the least invasive treatment procedure with only minimal bleeding, more effective healing, greater precision and the least number of appointments.

For many years now, lasers have been proven to be an effective device for a minimally invasive treatment. Nevertheless, any dental office that wants to implement lasers in its daily practice has to keep in mind several issues. These issues are:

- Safety
- Employee education
- Marketing
- Revenue channels
- Advantages.

Amongst the issues mentioned here, marketing is one that is very pivotal but in most cases not yet well prioritised. Although, current trends in practice do focus a lot on marketing. The winning edge of today's practice lies in a formula saying: "I project who I am." This philosophy brings forth the transparency of laser-based practice. Since the costs incurred to the patients are higher with laser treatments, the imperative as well as the benefits coming with lasers needed to be well known by the patients.

The Blue Ocean Strategy

Most corporations do smart things and also less smart things from time to time. In order to improve the quality of success, it is important to evaluate what has made the positive difference and understand how to replicate this in a systematic manner. It is also understood that the strategic move that matters centrally is to create blue oceans. The Blue Ocean Strategy challenges companies to break out of red oceans of conventional approaches and competition by creating uncontested market space that finally leaves any competition irrelevant.[1]

The Blue Ocean Strategy in Dentistry

As stated by Masahiro Fujita, President of Sony's System Technological Laboratories: "The risk of not innovating is greater than the risk of innovating."

The success of brands relies on cutting an edge in the existing market. The introduction of dental lasers

is the most practical application of the principles of Blue Ocean strategy in the dental business. Marketing and treatment protocols can be well shaped in lines of this principle. Even though laser can prove to be a high end investment, the success and uniqueness that follows has been well researched and documented by several practitioners around the globe.

Investment above investment

The investment in laser devices for a company is an extra mile. Combining both hard and soft tissue lasers could add up to about 100,000 US$ to the total cost of investment. Even though this amount sounds substantial in the initial stage, the return on investment with lasers can range between 280 to 600 per cent.[2] These kind of returns are possible when we successfully combine technological benefits with appropriate marketing strategies.

Changing patients' trends

The patients walking into the practice these days are "Drone Patients". Prior to their consultation, they like to read about possible procedures, optional treatments and latest advances. Since patients are partly aware of the technology, stating further benefits enhances their knowledge. Hence, decisions are made more easily and naturally in favour of lasers.

Benefits of lasers

The usage of laser in the daily dental practice is undoubted. From a practitioners point of view there are several benefits which basically can be divided into intangible and tangible benefits. Intangible benefits refer to the high technological status of lasers and the subsequent referrals that its reputation generates. Lasers do make the procedure easier and more comfortable for the patient. Almost all hard tissue procedures can be done without using anaesthesia. This certainly reduces the stress for the patient who normally relates dentistry with needles and drills. The most important factor in private practice is "Time Management", which ranks amongst tangible benefits. With lasers, multiple restorations can be performed in the same appointment as there is no numbness involved. Additional procedures like hygienist appointment and exam schedule with specialists can be also accommodated at the same time. This directly adds on to saving time and increasing profitability.[3]

More benefits of laser usage in the dental practice are:

Fear factor control

Most patients walking into the practice have dental fears or phobias for various underlying reasons. Their fears could be caused by negative past experiences, a shared experience from someone close or just the anticipation of needles and drills. With lasers, the approach to dentistry becomes different. The need for anaesthesia is either completely ruled out or substituted by only a few drops of intergingival infiltration.

More certain prognosis

When it comes to the treatment of endodontically compromised teeth, lasers work quite accurate in combination with conventional treatment approaches. A recent approach of combining Diode and Erbium lasers has given vast success rates in grossly decayed teeth with peri-apical infections.

No drill dentistry

Since laser is a non-contact procedure, there is no pressure or touch sensation involved; this increases the patients' acceptance of the treatment.

No antibiotics after minor procedures

It has been a common trend to prescribe antibiotics after any kind of surgical intervention or in endodontically compromised teeth. With laser there is no scar formation, tissue healing is faster, site of interventions is more sterile; hence the need of antibiotics has decreased.

Marketing Fundamentals

Dr Philip Kotler defines marketing as "the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires."[4]

Marketing, in simple terms, is a management process through which goods and services move from concept to customer. It includes the coordination of four elements called the four P's of marketing:

1. Identification, selection and development of a product,
2. Determination of its price,
3. Selection of a distribution channel to reach the customer's place, and
4. Development and implementation of a promotional strategy.

Changing trends

Over the years, marketing has evolved through three stages: Marketing 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0.

Marketing 1.0 was selling the factory's output of products to all who wanted to buy them. The products were quite basic and designed to serve a mass market. The goal was to standardise productions' costs so that goods could be priced lower and made be more affordable to buyers. This marketing strategy was part of the product-centric era.



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Marketing 2.0 is the principle attached to marketing in current times which is information age where the core is information technology. Thereby, the job of marketing no longer stays simple. The golden rule of marketing 2.0 is: "Customer is King." Customers are better off as their needs and desires are prioritised.

Marketing 3.0 denotes a "Value Driven" era. This concept of marketing uplifts into the arena of human aspirations, values and spirits. It believes that consumers are complete human beings whose complete needs and hopes should never be neglected. Therefore, this principle complements emotional and human spirit marketing.

Lasers as a tool for Marketing 3.0

Marketing 3.0 incorporates lasers pretty well as it keeps in consideration the benefits to the patients, the producers credentials, and the high end technological status. The current age also follows the new Wave technology which enables connectivity and interactivity of individuals and groups. This enables the customers and the dentists to be well aware of the advances in lasers availability.

FDA approval for dental laser marketing

Applications for and research on lasers in dentistry continues to expand since their introduction to the dental profession. Dental laser systems are cleared for marketing in the United States via the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Premarket Notification [510(k)] process. The review team determines whether the product under review meets relevant criteria for "substantial equivalence" to a predicate device (the term "predicate" is used to describe any device that is marketed for the same use as the new device, even if the actual technologies are not the same).[5]

There are three key points in the marketing of dental lasers:

1. Efficiency: In a dental practice, efficiency is one of the key factors that draw the thin line between growth and failure. Efficiency is based on the application of technology. The more we succeed in incorporating the latest advances, the more we ensure that our practice is increasing revenues, enhancing patient experiences and expanding referrals. Efficiency in a practice accounts to increase the happiness quotient of both patient and dentist.
2. Reduced chair time: Speed is another major variable to consider when choosing the dental laser. Lasers are certainly a bit slower than the conventional drill, but this lapse of time does get well compensated with the fact that there is no waiting period of numbing involved.
3. Improved patient experience: Drill-free and no anaesthetic procedures are always more welcoming to the patients. Dental lasers create a virtually pain-free experience, which is a definite game-changer for the vast majority of patients.

The above mentioned points can be easily used as key markers in promoting dental lasers. Since there are umpteen amounts of data supporting these facts, patients can also be encouraged to search around online before booking in their appointments. Relevant information can be communicated by different forms of media:

- Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram
- Advertisements through Radio or TV Channels
- School Screenings: information leaflets on lasers can be included along with the school dental reports. This makes information reach home and triggers the first step of curiosity to get to know more and use the service if or when required.

Laser marketing and practice

Dental lasers add a lot on the functioning of dental practices. They not only boost up the revenues, primarily due to the cost differences between laser and conventional treatments, but also improve the actual functioning of the practice in several manners.

Significant decrease in missed appointments

Pain is certainly an abstract phenomenon and its perception changes from one patient to another.

Having lasers in the dental practice with their added advantages certainly decreases the perception of pain to a large extent. Patients are no longer afraid to sit in the chair and receive the care they need. This helps decreasing the number of missed appointments.

Increased new patient volume

Satisfied patients add a lot to any practice. Dental lasers give dentists the opportunity to increase new patient referrals because of the unique experience lasers enable for existing patients. Patients feel so positively motivated that they talk about their experience to family and friends, thereby spreading the name of practice by word of mouth.

More referrals

Being unique projects the practice as a cut above the rest. This helps increasing the referrals from other practices and also from colleagues in the same practice. When the practice comes to be known as laser specialty practice, it becomes a known referral base for specific procedures and also for those who are technology-friendly.[6]

New procedures

Laser equips the dentist to perform a wide variety of procedures that could not be handled otherwise. The lack of anaesthesia, blood, sutures and minimal post-operative discomfort enables dentists to perform procedures such as labial and lingual frenectomies, fibroma removals to exposures, crown lengthening and much more. New procedures get added to a dentist's repertoire that would previously have been referred out or untreated. Many of these procedures can be performed during the same visit; thereby, increasing revenue growth without having to add a second appointment.

Conclusion

There has been a long road between the times when lasers were taken as the adjunct only for high end practices and procedures, to the current times, where laser is used as a regular armamentarium. In the world of marketing, lasers have brought dentistry to Blue Ocean. The frequent use of a laser by offices has resulted in a higher level of patient comfort, increased case acceptance for routine care, larger cases, and improved doctor productivity.[7]

Following the principles of the Blue Ocean Strategy, practices that offer compassionate care using advanced technologies such as lasers will be the offices that experience the largest influx of new patients in the future._

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Kurz & bündig

Patient und Behandler profitieren gleichermaßen von den positiven Eigenschaften einer Lasertherapie, auch wenn der Laser in der Anschaffung teuer und die Behandlung für den Patienten mit höheren Kosten verbunden ist. Umso wichtiger ist es daher, den Patienten umfassend über die Notwendigkeit und die Vorteile einer Laserbehandlung zu informieren. Hier hilft ein gut durchdachtes Marketing-Konzept.

Im Artikel stellt die Autorin die Blue-Ocean-Strategie vor. Diese soll Unternehmen dazu anregen, gewohntes Terrain zu verlassen und neue, innovative Wege in der Vermarktung ihrer Leistungen zu gehen. Der Dentallaser lässt sich dabei gut mit den Prinzipien der Blue-Ocean-Strategie verbinden. Für ein gewinnbringendes Laser-Marketing sind dabei vor allem drei Aspekte wichtig: die Herausstellung der Effizienz einer Lasertherapie, die verkürzte Behandlungszeit sowie das verbesserte Patientenerlebnis. Diese drei Aspekte lassen sich weiter ausbauen und anhand von Fakten belegen. Über verschiedenste Kanäle wie soziale Medien und Werbung in Radio oder TV werden die Informationen an den Patienten herangetragen. Unter Verwendung der Blue-Ocean-Strategie werden Zahnarztpraxen, die fortschrittliche Technologien wie den Laser in ihrem Praxisalltag selbstverständlich einsetzen, in Zukunft den größten Zulauf an Patienten haben.

Literature