

## **Ep #10: Smart Strategies for Getting New Clients**



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**Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris**

**[Dentist Freedom Blueprint](http://www.DentistFreedomBlueprint.com) with Dr. David Phelps and Evan Harris**

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You are listening to the *Dentist Freedom Blueprint* podcast, with David Phelps and Evan Harris. Navigating you through the uncharted waters of a turbulent economy with straight-forward advice to, transform your practice into a self-sufficient cash machine, compound your net worth assets, and multiply, multiply, multiply your passive cash flow streams.

David: Well, hey, everyone. This is David Phelps, along with my good friend and colleague, Evan Harris. Evan, how are you doing today?

Evan: David, I'm doing really, really well. Thank you for asking. How are you?

David: Super, and we're going to talk about something today that is so true to my heart, and that's the feeling that any of us as dentists feel – I know I did from time to time in my practice – and that's that we work so hard and invest and do all of the things in our practice that the industry and our mentors tell us to do, invest in clinical expertise. We invest in technology. We take all of that CE, done everything that people have told us to do, and still it seems like there is no light at the end of the tunnel. Evan, do you ever talk to any of your dentists that have that same feeling?

Evan: Oh, no, never. They always are just completely optimistic. That's in reality daily, daily, daily. It can be the doctor that's continually that way, or the practicing professional, or it could be the person whose schedule has just blown out. They had a really rich schedule, maybe a couple of big cases, and all of a sudden, boom, the calendar gets holes like Swiss cheese, and they are down, and they are really depressed about it.

David: It is really hard, because we put so much time and emphasis into what we do and who we are, and we both know so many dentists that really do great, great work, but it is a great downfall when these things seem to blow up, and it takes all of the air out of what we do

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sometimes. Evan, why don't more patients refer their friends to practices? What seems to be the problem there?

Evan: I was with a doctor recently, and the waiting room was really a lot of energy there. Each chair was full, and I just off-handedly asked the front desk, I said, "How many new patients do you get a month?" She said, "Well, last month we got 37." She gave me an actual number, David. And I said, "Wow, 37. That's impressive." And she said, "And the month before, we had 34, and the month before that," she had every single number. I walked to the back, and the doc was actually in between patients, and he had some questions for me, and I asked the doctor back. I said, "Doctor, how did you get 37 patients last month, when other practices are maybe getting half that or less than half that?" He said, "You mean other doctors aren't getting a lot of referrals?" I said, "No. Why do you think?" He said, "Evan, are they asking?" I said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "It's simple. We ask." I said, "You ask?" He said, "Oh, yeah, we all do, and we have our patients ask their friends, and we keep score. We make it a game, and we celebrate our patients that refer, and we celebrate our team members that ask." I said, "Huh, tell me more." He said, "Oh, it's easy. Each time one of our team members ask a patient, for example, they wait for a compliment from the patient. Wow, that was a great visit. That was much faster than I thought. Then the assistant, for example, can reply thank you for that compliment. By the way, who else do you know that might enjoy a kind of trip to the dentist like you just had? And they don't say anything after that. They just wait. And a lot of times the patient will come back with huh, you know, my husband goes to this other office that he doesn't really care for. Maybe he could come here. Huh. How can we best invite your husband? Then they have a whole program where they can send a card that says you've been referred by so and so. Here is a gift card. Come on in, have a complimentary whitening with a cleaning, or just a card that says we'd love to have you as part of our practice. You were referred by so and so, and we'd be honored if you would come and make us

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your dental home. We'll be following up with you to see how we can take care of your dental needs. And they make it really fun."

Now, of course, when that patient that may be a new patient comes in, then they have a reward to the patient that referred that new patient, and then the person who asked for the referral also gets a reward. Now, the rewards, are they huge? Well, \$20, but to an assistant, that was a big deal. What's the value of a new patient? David, I think you or anyone would know that value. The ADA says the value is over \$3,500 over the lifetime of a patient, just a new patient. Could leave in six months, could leave in six years, could leave in 30 years, but we know the average lifetime of a patient is \$30,000. So for them, they make it fun. They make it easy, and they ask.

David: And I think, too, Evan, a lot of dentists forget that when you're talking about that lifetime value of that new patient, that new patient also becomes a referral source, so you have that exponential viral referral basis. So there's that additive effect. So I think it's easily \$30,000 lifetime, first time one-year value is for most practices that are doing better than average is \$1,500 or more. So again, like you said, it's a token amount to give that small reward. I think, as you said, as your doctor said, just ask, because that art of asking is something that we fail to do. We just assume that people know that we're always looking for new patients or clients or customers, but by asking embeds that subconscious act of reciprocity. You've done something good for that patient. You've given that great experience, and now they want to do something back particularly because you asked.

Evan: Yes, and I love how they keep score. If someone says, "Where did all of the new patients come from?" Well, they can now look back and see where did they come from. And in one practice, they had one assistant that had 20 asks, and another person that had 4. Well, that's going to be kind of a topic at a team meeting. How can

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we have that person feel even more confident to be able to ask more? And we've got the superstar that has 20 asks, and that was, I think in less than a single week, and be able to show that metric. We can all raise our value to be able to ask those questions, and we know we're only doing a favor. We're only bringing more people in to the practice to be served at the highest level. Of course, the practice does better. The patients get healthier. Everyone is winning, and they record it. If they don't measure it, a lot of times they have no idea what's working, from where they came, and how to replicate that success over and over again.

David: I think that's perfect. You're right. If you don't measure it, you can't improve on it. So in making a game out of it, keeping score, that's terrific. Evan, what about why didn't more practices not have more walk-in patients?

Evan: I was asked that question one time. I mean, that's a good question. Why don't we have anyone walk into our practice? And this doctor I had a pretty good relationship with, and I asked him back, I said, "Why would anyone walk into this practice?" It was kind of a shot between the eyes, but the question really was "Why would anyone walk into your practice? What beckons them? Is there a sign that they can see? Is it pleasant-looking outside? How is the parking? Is there foot traffic already? What are those feet doing? Are they just passing by quickly, or are they in maybe a shopping mall area where there's some browsing shopping? Is there driving traffic? What is going by that office, and why should someone stop?" People aren't really looking for things to do, in my experience, and most people are pretty busy. So we have to actually stop them. Give them a reason to look inside. I have one office that does a nice little window feature that explains what they do, and they have beautiful smiles on their window – not the hokey kind, but the ones that look quite classy. Then when it comes to holidays, they decorate them up with a really pretty scene, and they just kind of have fun. It gets the eye to look, and of course, above the office it

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says “dentist”, so they know exactly what’s going on inside. Then within the doors, it looks almost like a spa. It doesn’t look like a dental office. It looks like they could be going there to relax and have a facial, and it just welcomes them. From the moment they look in that window, it gives them reason already to walk in that door.

And in addition, who’s around the dental office? Who else can be able to share the benefits of walking in that office? What I mean by that is I had a dental office that was right next door to a hair salon, and the hair salon would carry information about the dentist, and the dentist had information about the hair salon. What they found was that people who wanted to look aesthetically better in their smile, oftentimes then wanted to look aesthetically better in their hair. So the hair salon offered a complimentary, some type of style. I’m not sure exactly what they call it, but like a blow out or a style for the afternoon so they could get their teeth done, come on in, get a hair style, and the hope is to earn a new client for their hair salon. And of course, the patient feels great, because they were given a gift card that gives them a free style, and then vice versa, anyone getting their hair taken care of gets a special offer at the dentist next door. It just had that collaboration where it was all aesthetic, and they could be able to work off of each other.

I had one other doctor that was next to a yogurt shop – he still is – and if they find that the appointment may run a little longer, and maybe someone is waiting for that person, maybe it’s a kid in the chair, and the parent is waiting, they give gift cards for free yogurt next door. The yogurt costs nothing to the doctor. The yogurt shop gives them the cards, because they’d love to have anyone new go in next door, and I think the yogurt probably costs 25 cents, but to the patient, it’s a nice little add-on of I’m sorry that the appointment took 30 more minutes. Here’s yogurt for you, for your kid. Please, on us, our apologies, and even in case, they give the yogurt cards



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just to say thank you for having your three crowns done. Love to be able to just say thank you for choosing us.

David: You know the cross-promotion you talked about is such smart marketing, because it's essentially no-cost marketing. You're just using those strategic alliances that you have with other businesses in your community that your current patients already utilize. You're not in competition with those other businesses, as you mentioned, but it's a great way to cross-pollinate and help each other out. So it's just something that takes a little effort on the front end to set up, and just thinking through the process, we did that in our practice, and it worked very, very well, Evan, very, very well.

Evan: Yes, and other examples are tan salons are big. Gyms, people are already working out, wedding planners. People that are getting married, they want to improve typically everything, including their teeth. I have a doctor that specializes in going to these bridal bazaars, and they'll do they'll whiten the whole party, or the groomsmen, they'll do the whole thing. And some of them have ended up doing veneers, not just whitening. They come in and have got their whole smile done before the wedding. They're very motivated, and they have a deadline to make a decision. There's lots of ways that we can connect that we do in dentistry to the full aesthetic package and really helping patients be able to have motivation to come in, and then measuring it, being able to say where do these people come from. If they came from the bridal bazaar, how many came? What did we invest to be there? Or if we have a cross-collaboration with a gym, for example, how many people have come from the gym? How many people do we think we've sent to the gym? And let's just make sure that gym is talking about us like we're talking about them and be able to have a really healthy exchange.

David: Perfect, perfect. I love it. Let's go to the internet. There's obviously sites where anybody can do searches on different kinds of

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businesses. There's one site that I think most people are aware of called Yelp. Do people look on Yelp for dentists, Evan?

Evan: Good God, yes. The answer is yes. We could do a whole podcast on Yelp, and I think we probably will. Whether we like it or not, it's here to stay. I was telling him about Yelp, and he says, "Yeah, no one uses Yelp. My patients, they all find me by word-of-mouth. Nobody uses Yelp." And over my shoulder, a patient in the waiting room said, "Well, doctor, with all due respect, I found you on Yelp." And with that, the doctor's eyes got huge, and the doctor is probably like 67 years old and just not really into the internet type stuff. And he said, "My God, I had no idea."

And in the reality when we study the behaviors of people's buying habits, a lot of people don't find the dentists on Yelp, from what I've been studying. They affirm their decision on Yelp. They're at a dinner party. They're talking about things. Someone happens to mention they need to find a dentist, they're new to town. They say, "You know what, you've got to go see Dr. Phelps. He's the best in town." Quickly, someone either pulls out their phone, or they make a note to look at it later, and they go to Yelp, and they type "Dr. Phelps." They want to see number one, people are fear-based, so they want to make sure is this guy a schmuck? Or is he legit? Let's just see if he has any people really angry at him. Then two, what do they look like? People are very visual. They want to see what the doctor looks like. Is he older than 23, and is he younger than 83? We want to make sure that he's not on his way out, and we're not the first patient in the practice.

So they like to see who they are, because we can study all of these analytics by what people click on, and there's countless studies on how long people actually stay on a page like Yelp, and we can see if they click on photos. We can see if they click on the phone number, because people don't dial numbers any more. They just hit "call office" like from Yelp, so we can measure that as well. We don't

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know who is clicking, but we can see what the behaviors are, and it's fascinating. People go right to the stars. They want to make sure that the guy is not a creep or the gal is good, and they go to photos, and they go to call, and it's done, or they abandon the page all together. They most often times don't even read the reviews. They just want to make sure they're all high-star contents, and then they move forward. So in reality, a patient may not find a doctor on Yelp, but they affirm their decision. And we can do a whole podcast on how to optimize Yelp, how to be able to have patients find the dentists better, what photos to put on, how to be able to tag the photos so they are more Google-optimized. We can get super-nerdy about Yelp and be able to add massive value if people are willing to just put in – I would say if they're willing to put in four hours of work, they could absolutely crush Yelp.

David: I like it. I think it would be a good idea to do a podcast just on Yelp. There's a lot of things that could be done there to optimize that, as you said. Evan, what about an office website? What role does that play?

Evan: In my experience with websites, they're validating to professionalism of the office. A lot of times what we know, studies show the number one search engine people use, patients use is Google. They start with Google or Safari on their phone if they're using an iPhone. The first thing that comes up typically is the Yelp, and they oftentimes go to Yelp first, and then if they want to dig deeper, they go to the website, and oftentimes they go to the website from Yelp, because you put your details on there. You put your phone number, your address, as well as the website. They just check out the website, and they typically land there, I'm going to say less than 60 seconds. They just want to make sure it's professional, presentable, there's photos.

Sometimes they surf around a little bit, take a look at the team a little more, look at photos of the office, if they didn't see it on Yelp,

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but most oftentimes, they're not looking at the articles. What the articles on a website can do, can be able to better get the ranking on Google improved. So if a doctor wants to be known as the implant specialist, then there needs to be a lot of articles on implants and have links to implant sites that are talking and linking back about the doctor. There's lots of intricacies when it comes to that, but in my experience, a website is typically used to validate the professionalism, show their niche. Are they a family dentist? Are they a cosmetic doctor? Are they an implantologist? What is their specialty, and how do they want to convey it? And lots of pictures, lots of smiles, show the team, and be able to help a patient, give them a reason why in 60 seconds or less. In reality, probably 15 seconds or less of why they should call, and make the phone number big. We could have a whole podcast on website as well, but please, whatever you do on your website, make sure it looks great on a smart phone, and have the phone number be give and active. When I say active, they can put their thumb right on it, and it will dial your number.

David: I like to see some social proof, Evan, and I know that every state has their own statutes regarding patient testimonials, but in states that allow it, or you can do that, do you see many dentists that are using testimonials on their sites?

Evan: I do. I do, and they can be able to link them from Yelp. They can just cut and paste them. That's totally fine. They can be able to, if a patient says something while they're in the practice, "Wow, that was a great visit. I really appreciated that." You can even ask, "Hey, by the way, can we use that as a testimonial?" They don't have to type it in. You can just say Julie of Spring Valley said, and just type the information, and have a whole listing of them. If they're okay to have a photo taken, they can even sign a little talent waiver for fun. Take a photo. If they're a patient that you would like to show an example of your website, take a photo. Most of the time, the patients are happy to pose. From my experience, if they've gotten

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new teeth, they are really excited about it, and a lot of times they – oh, one moment, they go to the bathroom, they fix their hair, whatever they do, put some lipstick on if they're ladies, and they come out, and they're ready to go. So in a lot of offices, I see them have an ability to pull down like a white board or a blue board, whatever kind of the backdrop is in one of the treatment rooms or one of the side hallways, and that's their photo wall. Real easy. Don't have to have a photo studio, but at least the backdrop is consistent all of the time. You don't have things like pillars or people behind the patient, but it just gives that backdrop that looks professional, and it can be right next to the testimonial so people can link that guy had a great experience and said that. I feel like that guy. I'll probably have a good experience, too.

David: Perfect. So Evan, we have been talking about a lot of nonclinical parts of the practice today. Kind of give us a summary or recap as to why these issues are important and why a lot of doctors don't put enough emphasis on them.

Evan: Sure. I believe doctors are artists, really. They're sculptors. They're fixing the body in whatever form they're doing so, in either dentistry or chiropractic, or MD, and so many times the clinician focuses on just improving their margins or their restorations, and they don't see there's people that want to see their business and see what the experience is like, not just the clinical intricacies. So my encouragement to the practice professionals, don't be the best kept secret. Really help people see what you do. If you were a restaurant, you'd want to show people the beautiful surroundings, your exquisite food. You'd want to show them what the dining experience is going to be like. Just imagine yourself as a customer. I know you all go to restaurants. Imagine yourself the same way, walking into your practice. Doctors, if you're walking in the back door every day, please walk in the front door. Park in your parking lot in the front. What's it like at lunch? What's it like in the morning? What's it like in the afternoon? How do the walls look at the front

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desk? Sit in your waiting room seats. I know I'm going on a massive tangent, but I really encourage doctors to be the patient just for a quick moment, and be able to experience what they experience, and then create what you would want them to experience at the highest level and share that with your team so they can be able to mirror what you do as well.

David: Evan, great stuff today. Folks, you have been listening to another episode of the Dentist Freedom Blueprint Podcast with David Phelps and Evan Harris, the place to be to create your freedom lifestyle with more time off, security, and peace of mind. Please subscribe, download this podcast and share with others who want to create real freedom in their lives and their practices.

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