

From

PANIC

to

PROFIT

"Panic Room" part three

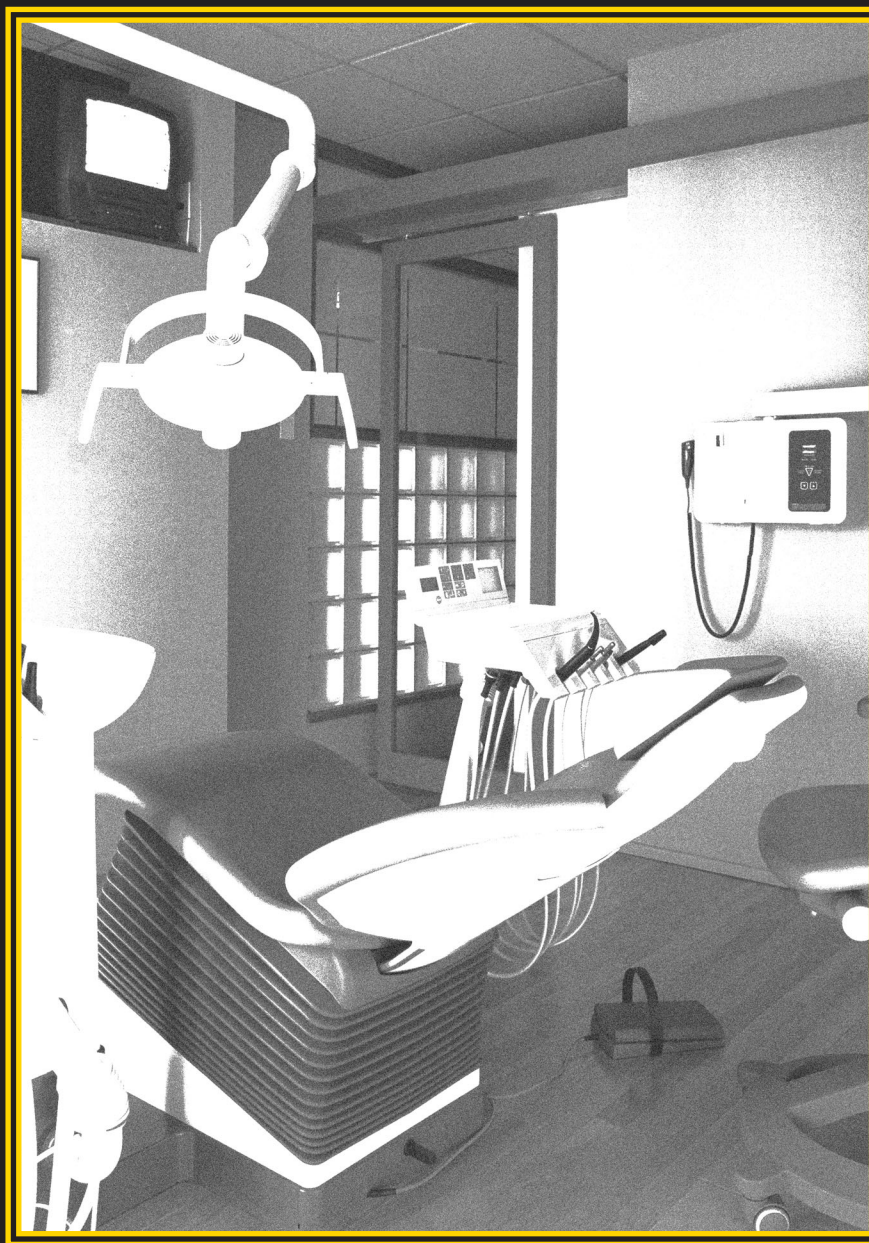
One of my favorite examples of the positive results that oral conscious sedation and anxiolysis produce is Shervin Erfani.

If you harbor even a mild curiosity about how oral sedation dentistry (OSD) might impact your patients and practice, you have to read Erfani's story.

More than most well-educated professionals, Erfani knew he shouldn't neglect his oral health. Yet, like a large percentage of the general public, he was an apprehensive dental patient, making excuses and putting off much needed oral health treatment. He shared with me how he required a full-mouth rehabilitation due to chronic Temporo-Mandibular Joint (TMJ) dysfunction.

Many Americans who suffer from TMJ dysfunction don't realize the root cause of their problems. Those who do often fear the cure more than the disease. This patient's TMJ disorder required intense and invasive corrective measures. He dreaded the prospect of having to sit through multiple prolonged procedures, both for the anxiety each one was sure to provoke, as well as the repetitive disruptions to his professional life.

Then, Erfani discovered sedation dentistry and its anxiety-free



Getty Images

by Michael Silverman, DMD

In the third and final installment of his series, the author highlights marketing techniques that will help general dentists successfully incorporate Oral Sedation Dentistry (OSD) into their practices.

attributes. One of the more practical benefits that OSD provides for busy professionals is that the method typically allows the dentist to perform complex dental treatment in fewer visits, or even in one stress-free session. "I am just so glad that I went through it because all my TMJ symptoms are gone," Erfani reports.

I also want to introduce Allan Ringard and recount his experience with OSD. He is a good-humored fellow who enjoys the outdoors, especially fishing. Like Erfani, he spent long hours in the dental office. Anxiety was his constant companion.

Complicating Ringard's life was the fact that his business was deep in debt. Although he was working harder than ever - cramming more and more work into each overflowing day — the departure of a key associate, the loss of an important business contract, and the economic downturn left him awash in red ink. Though it might sound like some far-fetched television infomercial for a miracle weight-loss pill, OSD actually cured Erfani of his TMJ symptoms and Ringard of his debt burden.

You see, these two men are themselves practicing dentists who are among the more than 2,500 general dentists nationally who have received their training in OSD from the Dental Organization for Conscious Sedation (DOCS.)

This is the final installment in a three-part series examining the benefits and practical applications of OSD, a safe, market-tested, consumer-endorsed method of treating anxious patients. Thousands of general dentists have already embraced

OSD and reclaimed hundreds of lapsed patients who previously avoided much-needed dental care.

The truly amazing aspect of OSD is that it has not only transformed the quality of life for patients, it also has revolutionized the lives of the trained dentists who provide the service.

I've personally witnessed this professional enrichment hundreds of times. Not only do the vast majority of dentists who use OSD discover they enjoy their work more than ever, virtually all of them *make more money* than at any point in their careers.

For example, due entirely to OSD methods as taught by DOCS, Dr. Erfani has boosted his income by \$25,000 a month - that is \$300,000 annually! More importantly, he has had the privilege of changing his patient's lives.

As for Dr. Ringard, well, the anxiety he once felt was not as a dental patient, but as a dental provider who had no choice but to meet with a bankruptcy attorney in January 2002 to explore ways of discharging his \$100,000 debt. Rather than chapter 7, however, he chose to enroll in a DOCS course. By July 2002, Dr. Ringard and his practice "... were out of the hole and back in the black," he reports.

What are your dreams? What would you do with an extra \$50,000 in the bank at the end of the year? How about \$75,000? Or even \$100,000 and more? Can completing a DOCS course and adding OSD to your practice really help make your dreams come true?

Absolutely! I can give you example after example of dentists

just like Dr. Ringard, in markets tiny and titanic, who have achieved their life's goals faster and easier than they ever imagined possible. These successful DOCS graduates have also given the gift of life-enhancing, anxiety-free dentistry to their patients.

In the first two parts of this series, I explored the safety and health issues related to OSD and looked at the training and investment necessary to establish these techniques into your practice. OSD has been extremely well tested in the real world, without problems. Training for an entire practice and purchasing all of the recommended equipment to implement OSD can be accomplished for well under \$10,000.

As I wrap up this final article, I will detail the marketing strategies DOCS recommends to draw high-margin OSD patients to your practice.

I know many dentists who have set aside the extra income earned from their OSD investment toward an early retirement. By attracting just four sedation patients a week to an existing dental practice, a 50-year-old dentist could easily set aside an extra \$144,500 a year, after paying income tax, for an early retirement at age 61. Just imagine what that would mean to a younger dentist who starts saving even sooner!

My good friend and DOCS colleague, Dr. Anthony S. Feck, who practices in Lexington, Ky., increased his annual production from \$800,000 a year to nearly \$2.4 million. In June 2003, Tony took his entire dental team on a four-day cruise to the Bahamas.

Dr. John Frerich estimates his

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practice in rural western Minnesota has grown 15 to 20 percent in the two years that he has been offering OSD. Once every two months, Dr. Frerich closes his office and his team heads to a local hospital to work pro-bono on mentally handicapped patients.

As for me, well, I am building my dream home on a private lake island in Idaho. More importantly, I've dedicated my life to spreading the good word about DOCS so that I might share my own OSD success as a general dentist with others. That is where marketing becomes crucial.

We've established in the three parts of this series that OSD is safe, effective, and beneficial to both the patient and the dentist. I've pointed out that DOCS-trained dentists have already seen more than 500,000 patients. Yet nearly 140 million Americans neglect to make regular visits to their dentists, and almost two-thirds of them are so afraid of going to the dentist that it is a misnomer to call them patients. They are, as I pointed out in Part One, nonpatients.

So we have our work, and our opportunity, cut out for us. It is not enough to take our DOCS course and to buy the necessary equipment for your OSD practice. Doing so will allow you to better serve your existing patients — and they'll thank you for it — but it won't help you reach out to the thousands of prospective patients in your very own community who need your help, but are afraid to ask for it. To reach and serve these patients you need to employ proven marketing techniques. The combination of respected dental practitioner and a savvy marketer may seem incongruous, but at DOCS we have honed the marketing and communication techniques down to a science every bit as effective as dentistry itself.

Much of the credit for the DOCS method of marketing goes

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to Jim DuMolin, a brilliant marketing and management strategist who has taught on behalf of DOCS since our founding in 1999. DuMolin has successfully steered hundreds of dentists personally through the shoals of dental marketing to an incredibly profitable landing.

DuMolin and I both know that dentists should be free to concentrate on being dentists and serving patients. That is why the DOCS marketing program is designed as a turnkey approach that satisfies the practitioner's need for ease, economy, and effectiveness. The DOCS marketing program rests upon a proven, four-prong approach. DOCS teaches its members how to use radio advertising, a Web site, a yellow-pages ad, and building signs to win back fearful patients. "When you are working with marketing, everything is synergistic," DuMolin says. "It all works together."

Because each new OSD patient accounts for more than three-and-a-half times the profit of a standard dental patient, radio advertising makes perfect financial sense, even for relatively small practices. "The number one thing that will give you the most immediate return on your investment is radio marketing," explains DuMolin. DOCS members

have access to a sister service that writes the radio ads, produces them, buys the airtime, and monitors the results. Most dentists need do nothing more than make sure their staff is prepared to properly handle the influx of calls from new patients.

In small and rural markets, radio advertisements are surprisingly affordable. Typically, a dentist might run as many as 180 advertisements a month for under \$1,000. Even if it takes 10 spots to prompt one reluctant patient to a dentist, that adds up to 18 new patients a month for a \$1,000 investment. Given that OSD patients average well over \$2,500 in treatments each, radio advertising pays for itself dozens of times over.

In mid-size and large radio markets, the cost of commercial air time is higher. But the potential patient population in larger markets is also significantly greater, making the return on investment no less certain.

Because OSD is so appealing to prospective patients who are enduring physical and psychological pain due to prolonged dental care neglect, many patients are willing to drive 20, 30, or more than 100 miles in response to a targeted radio message. DuMolin's experience has shown that radio messaging pays for itself with just two new patients a month.

While radio is a powerful marketing engine, it requires a supporting cast consisting of a Web site, yellow-pages ad, and office signage to be most effective. Indeed, even after hearing a compelling, non-threatening radio message, anxiety-prone dental patients are hesitant to just pick up the phone and call for an appointment. DOCS research has demonstrated that roughly half of all new OSD patients consult the Internet first when seeking more information. The anonymity of the Internet provides prospects a crucial sense of safety, privacy, and

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comfort.

Often, their very first “toe in the water” is sending an email from a DOCS member’s Web site asking for more information on OSD. The yellow pages ad and office signs complete the circle. A prospective client who hears the radio ad, but is not yet Internet savvy, will likely turn to the yellow pages for more information. Office signs not only snag the occasional passerby, but also help to reinforce the other three forms of messaging.

Throughout the marketing process there are two principles to keep in the forefront of your mind.

1: If patients don’t know you exist, you can’t help them.

2: DOCS has made it simple and painless to draw in fresh, in-need patients.

Believe me, no matter how awkward you think you might be when it comes to promoting your practice to prospective patients, DOCS has a method that will make you look like a seasoned marketing wizard. If nothing else, I hope this three-part series gives you pause to consider how you can best serve the anxious dental patient. DOCS is proven to work for any dentist, although I know it isn’t right for every dentist.

If you have additional questions or would like more information, I encourage you to visit our Web site at www.sedation1.com, or phone our offices at (877) 325-DOCS and discuss your interest with us.

I hope that in 12 months, or even 18 or 24 months that I’ll get a postcard or note from you — just like the one I recently received from Dr. Shervin Erfani, the San Diego DOCS member who is both an OSD patient and practitioner.

“We have been able to collect more money, decrease the number of hours we work, and, most importantly, concentrate on one patient at a time, which was my goal in the first place,” Erfani writes.

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