

Marketing, Ink

Which method of print marketing
best fits your practice's needs?

by **Brandie Lamprou**

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In this digital age, it would seem that we should steer clear of print marketing for the orthodontic practice. However, print marketing actually should continue to have a place in your marketing mix. Why? Because it works!

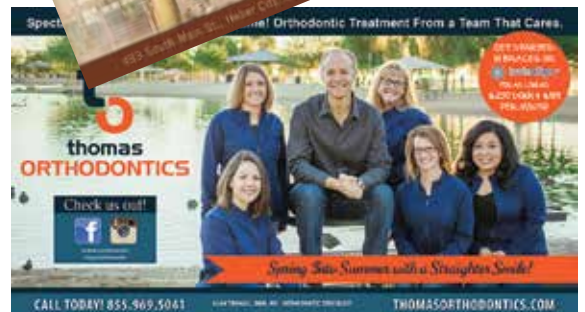
Here are a few options to consider:

Direct mail: The key to a successful orthodontic postcard campaign is to find the right demographic and have an excellent design and the best message for your target audience. Using a company with the best printing services and materials available is necessary for making a great first impression. You need to target people in the area who actively seek your services in order to obtain the highest ROI on your postcard marketing investment. Make sure you research your market area to determine where your patients come from and where the opportunity exists. This could be mailing to a specific income bracket, neighborhood or ZIP code. Will you target homeowners or renters? Also, be certain that your campaign includes a call tracking number so that you can measure the campaign's success by the number of incoming calls and appointments set.

For best results, experts suggest that you run your postcard campaigns for three mailings to optimize longevity. As with Valpak, consistent mailings increase your brand awareness, credibility and versatility. You should have the ability to change offers, messaging and lists as needed, which gives you consistency while still having some flexibility.

Orthodontic postcard campaigns are a great way to announce a new practice, new treatment offerings, finance options, and other announcements because they are generally printed in full color with lots of space for relating practice branding and the experience you can provide the potential patient. Postcard campaigns have proven to be highly effective in marketing orthodontic practices— OrthodonticMarketing.net's average ROI can be as high as 640 percent.

The downside of a postcard campaign is that it may not have as long of a lifespan as a print ad or directory listing. Postcard campaigns can also be slightly costlier than a directory listing, newspaper ad or insert print marketing piece. According to OrthodonticMarketing.net, a well-executed postcard marketing campaign can take 2–3 weeks to implement the first mailing, and a total cycle of three mailings would be a four-month timeline from beginning to end (2–3 week set up and three monthly mailings).





Newspaper: Whether it be a small neighborhood paper or a large city paper, newspaper ads are another method of bringing new patients to your door. Advertising rates are generally determined by readership and the size of the ad so fitting newspaper ads into most marketing budgets is quite easy. The ads are also published throughout the paper by section, so your advertising hits those interested in health and wellness who may be looking for an orthodontist.

Like magazine ads, there are often discounted ad rates for purchasing a series of ads. The increased exposure when purchasing a series of ads tends to add credibility that may influence a potential patient's choice to book an appointment with you. Newspaper ads work best for special offers, financing options and grand opening announcements.

There are also some disadvantages to consider. Although ads come in many sizes and shapes to properly display your message, the image quality is poor. Therefore, photos of happy patients and your staff, patient testimonials with images or even before-and-after cases, usually don't render great results. Another downside is that, in some cases, the readership itself may be limited and the shelf life of a paper can be less than 24 hours!

Local print directories: According to a recent tracking study of the effectiveness of local media by Local Search Association & Burke, eight out of 10 people use print directories when looking for local products and services. Seventy percent of those people turn to the directories first. After all, you could consider the print directories the original locally targeted search engine! With 84 percent of those users intending to make a purchase and 46 percent of them being new potential patients, it makes sense to take advantage of this type of print marketing to grow your patient base.

Some examples of local print directories include the Yellow Pages, White Pages, ZipLocal Business Guides (list of publications available on ziplocal.com), community guides published by the Chamber of Commerce and local coupon books (entertainment.com, SaveAround.) The cost is relatively low and they have a longer shelf life than some of the other print media options as most focused local directory publications are published bi-annually.

The disadvantage is that you are listed among your competitors and many directories may not offer enough space, verbiage and design to represent your branding or service offerings and make them stand out in the sea of your competition. The size of your ad varies from publication to publication. Some offer just a few lines of text (350 characters), 2.5in x 4.5in, 4in x 10in, or a full-page layout. With some directories, it is not possible to display special offers or new practice opening information that may be crucial in influencing a potential patient's decision to book an appointment.

Valpak: Unlike new mover targeted direct mail packets, Valpak mailers go out to larger mailing lists in your area but permit you to print and mail variations of your marketing campaign based on different segments you wish to target. You can determine your target by ZIP code, neighborhoods, education and income level. For example, you can send a new-patient special to the freshly built neighborhood homes while sending a new treatment plan launch to a different segment of your area. The mailing pieces are in full color, standard sized for the pack and you have the flexibility of using the front and back of the flyer piece to give the recipients a good sense of your practice experience, staff, location, services, specials and branding.

Valpak also offers tracking and response information in an online portal so you can get a better feel for the return on the investment. This tool is normally not available with other print mediums. The information usually includes confirmation of delivery area, quantity delivered, and calls received through your campaign tracking phone number.

One of the disadvantages of the Valpak mailing campaigns is that your flyer ad is in among nonrelated advertisers, ranging from home construction to auto detailing. You are also taking the chance that, unless you have some exclusivity arrangement, your competitors may also be mailing in the same pack.

Valpak is one of the largest direct mail options. The company says that advertisers should run at least a six-month campaign to be consistent to get their branding on recipients' radars. This long term may be hard for some practices who just want something to introduce a new practitioner, treatment option or location.



Yellow PagesTM

New mover target packs: Marketing to new movers offers you the chance to build a foundation right out of the gate for a lasting and solid patient base. According to a study by v12data.com, within six months of moving, 70 percent of new residents are looking for a dentist/orthodontist.

With an average value of \$4,000–\$6,000 for a new patient in the first year, this could also be a new patient revenue source that could yield an excellent return on investment. New mover marketing is very targeted and makes sense when offering new patient specials for growing families. Some movers may even be looking for an orthodontist to continue their existing treatment but have put off looking for one due to the stress of moving!

With approximately 40 million people moving each year, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, your practice may have to replace 20 percent of its patient base in a given year. New movers may help you do just that by targeting them at the right place and the right time. You can target new homeowners, as well as new movers.

Living in a small community might hinder the effectiveness of this type of print marketing campaign as you are limited by the number of homes/potential patients you can hit in a given campaign. If you live in a mainly elderly community, you are missing homes with children and adults needing orthodontic services. Also, if your marketing budget is of concern, the specialized lists for these types of mailings can be costlier than a list just based on mailing route or ZIP code.



No matter which print medium you choose for your practice, be sure to ask your provider for any and all tracking sources they can provide so that you can accurately measure your results! With all of these print options available, you certainly have the ability to “hit them at home” and get them in your chair. ■