

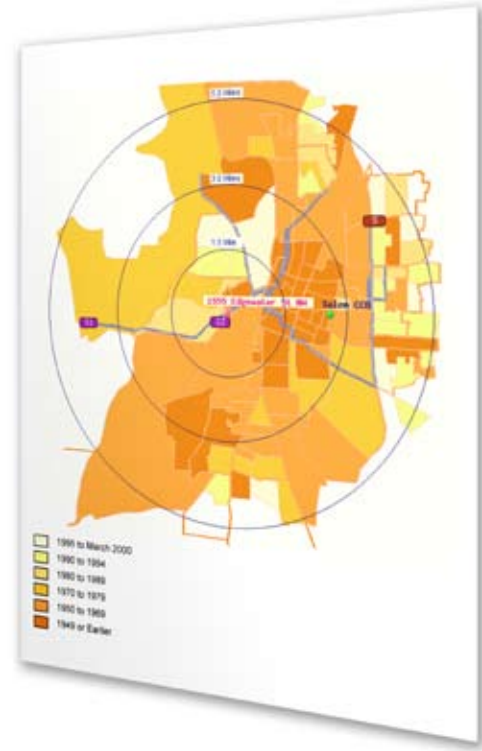


Understanding Frequency and Reach?

Joel Harris, CEO of ADA Intelligent Dental Marketing, discusses how to get the most out of your marketing efforts without wasting your money.

A common mistake that many dental practices make is breaking the marketing rule of maintaining proper frequency and reach in their marketing efforts. Although entire books have been written on the subject of frequency and reach, the idea is really pretty simple. Reach is the number of consumers you touch with your marketing message or the number of potential patients that are exposed to your message. Frequency is the number of times you touch each consumer with your message.

In a world of unlimited resources a dental practice would obviously maximize both reach and frequency. However, since most dentists live in a world of limited resources, the decision to sacrifice reach for frequency or vice versa is just part of their everyday reality. In the case of a dental practice, money can be wasted on marketing strategies that have too much reach because of the travel limitations of prospective patients. For example, radio and television advertising nearly always result in way too much reach and not enough frequency. Some magazines and even newspapers are also a poor advertising investment. Remember that for nearly every dentist, a five-mile radius from the practice is the prime



marketing territory. Yes, there are some exceptions. However, they are few and far between.

A dental practice in Anaheim, California that has decided to execute a direct mail campaign has to decide whether to mail the entire Orange County area once, or to mail a much smaller area surrounding the practice many, many times. Another dentist who likes the idea of running a radio ad in Dallas, Texas will need to decide if it a wise decision to run an ad that many thousands of people will hear, that live more than 50 miles from the practice. The worst offenders I see are the dentists who advertise in national publications such as in-flight magazines. Those ads create wonderful awareness for dentists everywhere but the vast majority of readers would

never think of traveling outside of their home market for dental care no matter how compelling the ad may be.

When faced with decisions of reach vs. frequency remember this rule of thumb: Reach without frequency = wasted marketing money. Have you ever established a lifelong friendship with someone you had contact with only once? Probably not. Generally, friendships (and all relationships for that matter) grow as a result of frequent contact over time. Even when the potential to form a great friendship is there at the first encounter, it is unlikely it will grow without nurturing.

Seth Godin, in his book Permission Marketing, uses an analogy of seeds and water to demonstrate the importance of assuring adequate frequency in your promotional campaigns. If you were given 100 seeds with enough water to water each seed once would you plant all 100 seeds and water each one just one time. Or, would you be more successful if you planted 25 seeds and used all of the water on those 25 seeds?

Even though most dentists conceptually understand the importance of frequency to ensure a successful marketing campaign, somehow when it comes to actually implementing the plan, too many opt to choose reach over frequency. And then complain about the ineffectiveness of their marketing efforts. Sometimes, the idea of hearing their ad on the radio or seeing a gigantic billboard on a major freeway is just too hard to turn down. Unfortunately, it's usually a hard lesson to learn.

When faced with the decision of mailing one direct mail piece to 50,000 people, or mailing to 5,000 people ten times, think about the fate of those 100 seeds you can water only once. Unless you have an

unlimited source of water or marketing dollars you must think smaller to achieve greater results.

Don't let your ego get in the way... Target a smaller, focused area and you'll win every time.

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Joel Harris is a co-founder and President of ADA Intelligent Dental Marketing located in Salt Lake City, Utah. His company provides powerful marketing tools to help dentists grow their patient base, increase the profit and improve their image. Joel is also the author of the book, Breakthrough Dental Marketing.