



SECRETS TO SUCCESS ■ BY JOSEPH WILLARDSEN

SECRETS *to Completing Treatment*

There is no magic bullet for cosmetic treatment. You must have the best training, use the best lab, acquire the best staff, use the best marketing, and be in tune with what your patients want.

It seems that in every city there are a handful of dentists doing the majority of cosmetic dentistry. Many dentists may wonder why patients are seeking these offices and why they are different from other dentists in town.

Through my own success and from what my patients have told me, I'd like to share a few things I've discovered about getting patients through the door and completing their cosmetic treatments.

Training

Dentists who have set themselves apart usually have training and help from other colleagues. By choosing a curriculum that will get you on the right path, offers support, and sets out a plan, and by becoming a graduate of that program, you will gain some very strong allies. These new dental allies offer support when you have inevitable questions and problems.

In your quest for education, you must also be teachable. You may have to put aside some ingrained prejudices, but taking comprehensive continuing education courses is a must to gain the confidence you'll need to become a leader in your area.

Laboratory

Choose your lab like you choose your spouse. You must have the best. Nothing is worse than prepping the best case

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and delivering less than ideal restorations. Be sure your lab stands behind their work like you stand behind yours. It is imperative that your lab be experienced in aesthetic and comprehensive restorations. Your lab should offer specific materials for specific situations. It is essential that they be consistent in quality and time. Know their reputation.

Team

While training and lab selection are both essential elements to becoming the dentist of choice, your team is the most important component in your office. If the staff is not on the same page as the doctor, things will never go smoothly. A team must be formed. That team must have great respect for what the doctor is doing and must be able to convey the doctor's talents to the patient. Dentists can gain that respect by observing the doctor's work and knowing how the doctor treats the patients. If a staff member is unable to transition into the team, it is best to release that staff member and hire someone that can. The team should feel like they are building something special. You can help them feel like they are a part of this evolution by bringing them along to certain courses and including them in team training. Allow a professional to teach them what their new responsibilities are to be in a cosmetic dental office.

Marketing

With the right training, the best lab, and your ideal team in place, you can market to the cosmetic patient. Often the doctors doing the majority of the cosmetic work in your area are not the best doctors, but their patients think they are. You must let the public know about your talents, your fantastic staff, and your beautiful restorations. That is what patients are looking for and that is why they will search you out. You must also make sure you are what you say you are, so before you market your practice you must have been trained, have a good lab, and employ and excellent staff.

There are several ways to market your services—print ads, radio, PR firms, internal marketing. Find your budget and start at your own pace, then build from there. When it comes to practicing cosmetic dentistry, your marketing budget is an important part of your overhead. Feed it and it will feed you.

Patients

I have been very fortunate to learn from some of the best educators in the industry. One statement that has always stuck

with me came from Dr. Dick Barnes. He said, "Joe, if you can learn to keep your mouth shut and listen to your patient, you'll discover what your patient is really looking for."

Most offices are inundated with dental magazines with articles from leading dentists giving tips on how to get patients in the door and make the practice more productive, but the best production tips don't come from these articles. They

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come from patients. So, make sure you listen to the patients you do have. They're your best resource for market research.

Getting the cosmetic patient in the door and completing treatment is very obtainable. Remember, gain proper training

that will enable you to recognize and confidently treat the most demanding patients. Find a great lab that will make you proud of the work you have done. Have a supportive team that will build you up and respect you. Develop a creative marketing strategy that will set you apart from all other dentists. Let your community know how great your work is.

These are all key components of the successful cosmetic practice. This balance is not complete without being in tune with what the patients are looking for. Putting these elements in place can take much work and focus. If your goal is to do cosmetic dentistry and become part of that handful of doctors doing the majority of the work, then the most important factor now is to decide if this is finally the time to take action. ■

Joseph Willardsen is a graduate of Loma Linda University School of Dentistry. His expertise in marketing and aesthetic dentistry has allowed him to maintain a successful cosmetic practice in Las Vegas, Nevada.

From the Patients' Mouths			
Patient	Vaughn	Damelio	Quillen
How did you find our office?	TV infomercial	Word of mouth. A friend of mine knew a patient in the office who was very happy with Dr. Willardsen. I then watched the show and did my own online research about the doctor.	I saw Dr. Willardsen at another office. He called when opened his office.
Did you shop around, see other dentists, get other treatment plans or quotes?	Yes. I saw 5 other doctors.	No.	No, I had not been to a dentist in many years, was very afraid, and had let my mouth go because of fear.
If so, how many and why did you choose our office? What was the determining factor?	You offered the whole package—everything I wanted. The bite and the smile.	I did not feel the need to see any other doctors. I felt very comfortable and had 100% confidence in Dr. Willardsen. I was not disappointed.	I didn't feel the need to go anywhere else because I felt so at ease and comfortable with Dr. Willardsen.
How long have you considered or wanted this dental work?	7 months before I saw the TV show.	I had existing veneers for 18 years. They looked bad and I have wanted them redone for about seven years.	3-4 months
Had you considered a budget or did the treatment fee surprise you?	Yes, it was a little more, but worth it. I am very happy.	No.	It was a little more than I expected.
Did you use outside financing?	Yes, I used Care Credit for part of the finances.	No.	No
How would you describe the dental treatment and overall experience in our office?	It was wonderful, everyone was terrific. The whole thing was an enjoyable experience.	Fantastic, I loved Dr. Willardsen. The staff was great from the beginning to the end, and I knew it was right.	Everything was wonderful! There was no pain! I was very impressed with Dr. Willardsen and now have no fear and love to come to the dental office.
Before treatment			
After treatment	