Webinar Summary:

**Facts Not Fear**

*Discover what people are really thinking about the dental industry once the world awakens*

BigBuzz & Pacific Coast Society of Orthodontics

Speaker: Wendy O’Donovan Phillips, CEO of BigBuzz, in Denver, Colorado

This webinar will use the results of in-depth surveys conducted by BigBuzz with both American dental professionals and patients to illuminate upcoming patient needs and make recommendations for marketing plans when dental clinics reopen.

**Goals:**

1. Use real-time survey data to make great decisions about future communications. (Hundreds of people surveyed in the last 5 days.)
2. Understand how to forecast timing for reopening preparations.
3. Learn to launch fresh marketing communications that speak to patients’ new demands, keep them glued to your practice and help your practice grow. (Patients will not be going back to old norms. They are thinking differently about their health, safety and health care.)

**Real-time survey data from patients.** 200 U.S. respondents on April 15, 2020. Mostly middle and upper-middle class. Skewed older. Skewed female (but woman make most health care decisions for their families).

Q: When was the last time you saw a dentist? A: 90% in the last 12 months.

Q: Before COVID-19, when did you plan to go again? A: 94% in next year.

Q: With COVID-19, when did you plan to go again? A: 91% still plan to go to the dentist in the next year.

Q: My dental office is a safe place, free of viruses or exposure to other infectious diseases? A: Strongly agree: 27% Agree: 46%

Q: Will you be able to pay for your dentistry this year? A: Strongly agree: 46% Agree: 48%

Q: Will you have time to go to the dentist this year? A: Strongly agree: 45% Agree: 47%

Q: I believe that my dental care is an essential to my overall well being. A: 96% Yes

Q: Would you refer your friends and family to your dentist? A: Strongly Agree: 57% Agree: 37%

Q: My current dentist has provided me with an update about how their practice is dealing with COVID-19. A: 54% Yes; 48% No

**Real-time survey data from dental professionals:** 140 participants. Orthodontists in the Pacific region of the U.S.

Q: Given what I know now, I predict my practice will reopen:

End of April: less that 20%

End of May: 55%

End of June: just over 20%

End of July: 5%

Q: Given what I know now, I predict my practice will:

Have lower production than before when it reopens: 95%

Have same or higher production than before when it reopens: 5%

Q: I made staff reductions due to COVID-19 and resulting closures.

Yes: almost 70%

No: just over 20%

Q: As an orthodontist who has made staffing reductions, when I reopen I plan to:

Rehire all my staff: 70%

Rehire some of my staff: 15%

Q: Currently, our team is meeting virtually in some way.

Yes: over 90%

Q: Has your team called your patients on the phone during COVID-19?

Yes, all of my patients: less than 20%

Yes, some of our patients: just less than 70%

No: 10%

Q: We plan to increase marketing efforts in the 2-3 weeks BEFORE reopening.

Yes: 70%

Q: We plan to increase marketing efforts in the 2-3 weeks AFTER reopening.

Yes: 75%

**Wendy’s advice:** Your plan to make reopening a success should include marketing. Indeed, if you want to a patients in your offices, you need to prioritize marketing even while you decide how and when to bring back staff. Having staff but no clients won’t work.

Q: Upon reopening, we will provide extra PPE for staff.

Most respondents agree.

Q: Upon reopening, we will communicate more with patients.

Every respondent agreed.

Q: Upon reopening, we will offer extended hours.

Some respondent agreed.

Q: Upon reopening, we will offer flexible payment plans.

Some agreed.

Q: Upon reopening, we will offer discounts or special deals.

Less agreement from respondents.

**Wendy’s advice:** Don’t do discounts. But maybe do value adds. Don’t cut your fees right now. Maybe do adds such as “visit twice get a free Sonicare toothbrush.” Do talk to individual patients about what their financial needs might be right now. If you need to make a special deal to keep a patient, do it on an individual basis.

Q: I think the following marketing efforts will be most effective.

Respondents chose:

* SEO
* Online paid advertising
* Using social media
* Email campaign
* Increasing online review
* Referrals form current patients
* Website development

**Wendy’s advice:** Reduce costs, maximize patient traffic, and realize faster results.

No new emails. We are already getting so much email. No more mass email. Only one-on-one communication via email. Call your existing patients; it will mean so much more to them.

If you are already doing SEO, keep at it, but don’t start now. Old adage: Someone needs to see you name 10 times before they even notice they’ve seen it.

What should you do? Online paid advertising. Use social media to drive traffic to your website. Get referrals from current patients.

**Understand how to forecast timing for reopening preparations**

**Wendy’s advice:** Go to the best sources of info such as the CDC and the FDA. Wendy’s prediction: After one week during which there are declines in new cases every day, then we’ll be three weeks away from reopening. (Whether it is the right thing or not is another discussion, she says.)

Reopening preparations:

* Staff adjustments (Work with your financial folks to figure out what you can do and what you can afford, you probably won’t be able to bring everyone back all at once.)
* Team communications (Meet with staff members one-on-one and together.)
* Patient communications (Let patients know that you are reopening and when.)
* Marketing outreach (Start 3 weeks before reopening so you have patients on your first day.)

**Learn to launch fresh marketing communications that speak to patients’ new demands, keep them glued to your practice and help your practice grow.**

Best practice fro reopening jump-start plan

1. Social media advertising (paid ads on Facebook, Instagram)
2. Online adverting (Google Adwords)

Ads must point to your website.

Messaging:

1. My office is a safe place
2. It is flexible, with both scheduling and payment options
3. It welcomes referrals

**Wendy’s advice:** Train your staff to find the micro-moments when they can ask for referrals. The message: “Your friends and family are always welcome here.”

At the end of the webinar, Wendy read a motivational letter she wrote about being a small business owner during these difficult times: <https://www.bigbuzzinc.com/an-open-letter-from-my-small-business-to-yours/>