PODi CASE STUDY

AUTOMATED DENTAL APPOINTMENT REMINDER POSTCARDS

Don’t hide your smile,
It’s time for a cleaning

Just a reminder that SARAH
is due for a dental examination on
July 10, 2008 at 2:00 PM
WE’LL SEE YOU THERE

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us:
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PODi is a global, member-supported not-for-profit organization. The PODi library consists of over 500 digital printing and marketing case studies from around the world.
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Business Objectives

Nearly all dental practices send appointment reminder postcards to their patients to help reduce missed appointments. A missed appointment can mean an instant loss of $250 dollars in revenue to the dental practice. Practices that manually send out appointment reminders find the process tedious and labor intensive, requiring hours each day in some cases.

Henry Schein Practice Solutions (HSPS), the leading provider of practice management software for dental practices, offers its eCentral Communication Manager to serve this communication need.

The objectives of the solution include:

- Provide an automated alternative to customers that send appointment reminder postcards
- Reduce or eliminate the staff time needed to remind patients of their appointments

Results

- Dental practices save time and money due to reduced labor for office staff
- An average of 15 hours of labor saved at each participating practice

Practices are now able to sign up once and not handle appointment reminders again. This allows their personnel to focus on their practice, while still producing a reduction in missed appointments.

Customer response has been overwhelmingly positive. “The automated appointment reminders are a huge time saver. They get done automatically - worry free. The process has freed up my time to work on other things and it has reduced our missed appointments,” says Brian Reid, Office Manager at Bourne Dental Associates.
**Campaign Architecture**

HSPS’ Dentrix system enables practices to send appointment reminders to patients in their preferred communication method. This can include email reminders, text messages or printed postcards. In the Dentrix system, if a patient responds to an email reminder, the appointment is automatically confirmed. But if the patient doesn’t have an email address or doesn’t confirm, the Dentrix system works with its technology partner to print a custom postcard and mail it out on behalf of the practice.

The system interacts with each patient individually, depending on the methods they respond to the best. If the patient responds to email and cell phone messages, the system sends an email or text message. If they don’t regularly use these channels, the system will send them a customized postcard.

**Production Workflow**

HSPS worked with its technology partner to develop a solution that automated the reminder process for the dental practices and the print process workflow. HSPS built an upgrade to their current product, Dentrix, which allows a practice to subscribe to the program and have the appointment data automatically uploaded to a data center nightly. The data is then NCOA updated and sent to the print service provider.

A custom application takes the appointment data and prepares it for printing. The application queues all the postcards according to estimated mailing transit time based on destination location. Addresses are corrected and the data is presorted for postal discounts. A print ready file is then output daily for production. The application also outputs all the paperwork required by the postal service. This is all done without human interaction.

When a print run is prepared, an email is sent to the account administrator with production and mailing details. The files are sent to the press and the bindery and shipping managers are notified. Reports and tracking tools are also automatically provided for the client to monitor the project.
Communication about the receipt of the data and shipping of the postcards is automatically transmitted back to HSPS and then back to the individual practices. At any point, a practice can see the status of all postcards being sent from their office. If a postcard has not yet entered production the practice can change an appointment time and/or patient information.

The postcards are printed daily and delivered within 48 hours from the time information is received by the service provider. Currently 6,500 postcards are delivered each day and that volume is growing.

The process created to automate each step of the process from data handling, to postal preparation and print production enables the project to be very scalable and ensures a very fast turn time.

Target Audience and Messaging

Patients of dental practices.

List

Based on their subscription settings, the patient and appointment data are automatically sent from each participating practice to the service provider daily.

Creative and Outbound Pieces

Dental practices who subscribe to the appointment reminder program can choose the design of the postcards, frequency of communication, purpose of communication and other settings.

Unlike typical stock postcards used by dental practices that manually send out reminders, the postcards are personalized on the front and back including the patient’s name, custom message, detailed information about what procedures the patient is due for, and contact information for the dental practice.

Reasons for Success

The high level of automation in this application makes it a truly outstanding example of a digital print communication solution. This automation enables tremendous efficiencies both in the dental practices and in the print production.