

Whitepaper

# 5 SECRETS

## OF DORMANT PATIENT REACTIVATION

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There's a production gold mine hidden in your office. It's not hard to find. Just take a look in your practice's dormant files to see the once-active patients who haven't been into your office in a year or more.

**Today, 20% of the patients at the typical practice are considered dormant.** That means you spent time, money and energy attracting them to your office, just to have them slip back into procrastination, or worse...get lured away by another dentist. Reactivating these lost relationships is crucial because it allows you to easily add tens of thousands of dollars in high-value production to your bottom line every year. Best of all, reconnecting with dormant patients can be relatively simple. It's often just a matter of picking up the phone.

But here's the catch: Making these calls takes time – and study after study shows that the average front desk team struggles to get around to calling dormant patients, especially when the practice gets busy. In fact, a survey conducted by Futuredontics and the American Association of Dental Office Managers (AADOM) revealed that **46% of office managers feel they spend too little time on reactivation.** More importantly, nearly 25% of practices report spending zero time on reactivation.<sup>1</sup>

*25% of dental practices currently spend ZERO time on dormant patient reactivation.*

Not surprisingly, in the same study, office managers reported feeling a high level of anxiety in this area. They know the value of reactivation; however, in most cases, an ever-expanding workload prevents them from devoting the time they'd like to this important task. This time crunch is why Futuredontics created ReActivation Pro®, a unique patient reactivation service featuring a US-based team of specially trained agents who personally call dormant patients on your behalf. It's a great way to save your front desk valuable time and keep your open appointments filled with reactivated patients.

The other great thing about ReActivation Pro is that it's given us real, statistical insight into the most effective ways to reactivate dormant patients. This whitepaper outlines these findings, sharing the best practices that have proven to be most effective in bringing dormant patients back.

So whether you let ReActivation Pro do the work for you, or you're still interested in handling dormant patient reactivation on your own, **keep in mind these five secrets to an effective reactivation strategy.**

## 1. THE RIGHT WORDS MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE

The old saying, “You catch more flies with honey than vinegar” certainly applies to dormant patient reactivation. **Using the right language during a reactivation call can make all the difference between getting a patient back on the schedule – or scaring them off.** Typically, these patients feel a little guilty that they haven’t been back to your office for so long. There’s no reason to add to that sense of guilt. The last thing patients want to hear from you is a lecture about how they have been neglecting their oral health.

The most successful reactivation calls are those that let the patient know that you are genuinely interested in their good health. The following phone script is a great example of what to say during a reactivation call:

*“Hi Julie, my name is Linda and I’m calling from Lakeside Dental. I’m calling because Dr. Smith has been updating some of our charts and he noticed that we haven’t had you in the office in almost 18 months. He was a little concerned and wanted me to give you a call to see if we could get you scheduled for an appointment. Would you be able to come in this week?”*

The magic of this type of call is that it accomplishes three things: 1) It reminds them that they’ve fallen behind on their dental care, 2) It expresses concern for their wellbeing without judgment, 3) It invites them to come in right away.

## 2. ALWAYS ASSUME PATIENTS WANT AN APPOINTMENT

In the classic movie “Glengarry Glen Ross,” Al Pacino’s character becomes the top real estate salesman by approaching every call as if the client has already decided to buy.

**This technique is called the assumptive close,** and it is just as effective with dormant patient reactivation. Don’t approach the conversation by asking whether your patient wants to come back to the office. Instead, assume that they value their oral health, and just haven’t gotten around to coming in. In other words, you’re calling to help. The assumptive close creates positive energy, enthusiasm and confidence. The more positive you are during the call, the more likely it is that patients will reappoint.

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Always assume that the patient will want to come in and **focus your phone conversation around finding a convenient time.** A great approach is letting them choose between two appointment times: “Do you prefer mornings or afternoons?” or “I have an opening Wednesday at 9 or Thursday at 4:30, which would work best for you?”

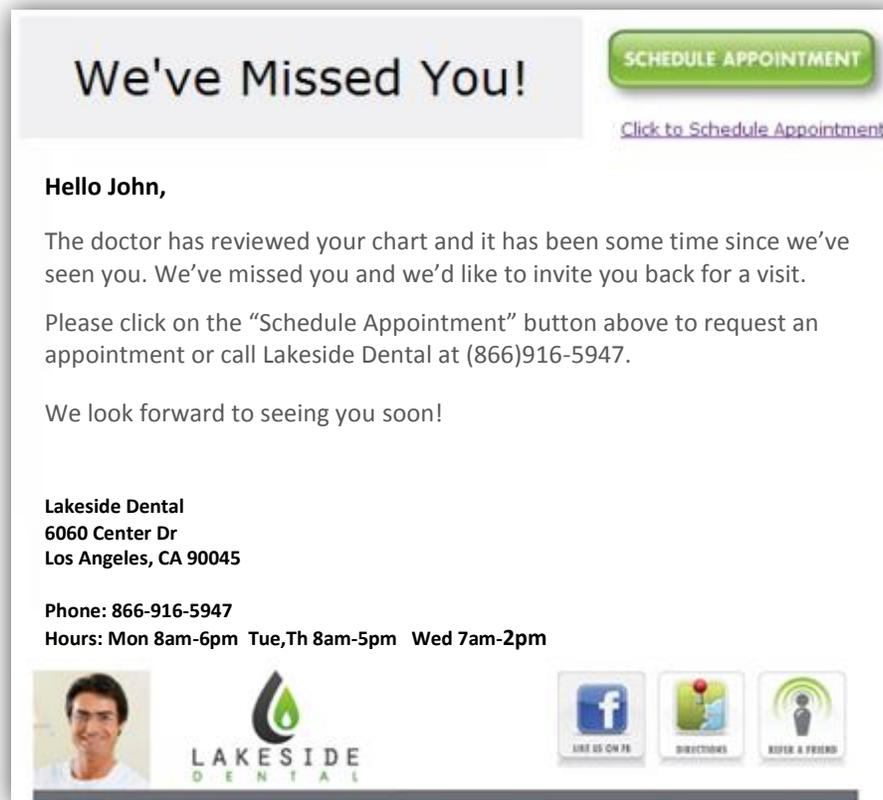
Being assumptive doesn’t mean you’re being pushy. If patients truly don’t want to return, they’ll tell you. But more often than not, you’ll find they’ve simply fallen into procrastination and just need a little nudge in the right direction.

### 3. TIMING IS EVERYTHING

As noted above, many front desk teams simply don't have time in their busy day to phone dormant patients. But even those who do face another challenge: Calling during your office hours is usually the least effective time to reach patients.

Believe it or not, **the best time to make reactivation calls is between 4:00 - 8:00 PM.** You're much more likely to reach patients (and get their full attention) if you call in the evening hours, after they're home from work, rather than catching them at the office or during lunch. Of course, not every practice is staffed to make reactivation calls in the evening – especially after working a full day already. We know that statistically speaking, this is the most effective time to handle your dormant reactivation, so our ReActivation Pro service uses live operators who call your dormant patients on your behalf during the early evening hours when the success rate for reactivation is highest.

Another way to reach patients in their most receptive time of day is to **send emails that patients can respond to after-hours.** Patient communication services like PatientActivator® even offer emails that automatically go out to dormant patients who haven't been in or scheduled in 12 months, with no extra work for your team. Here's an example of an effective message:



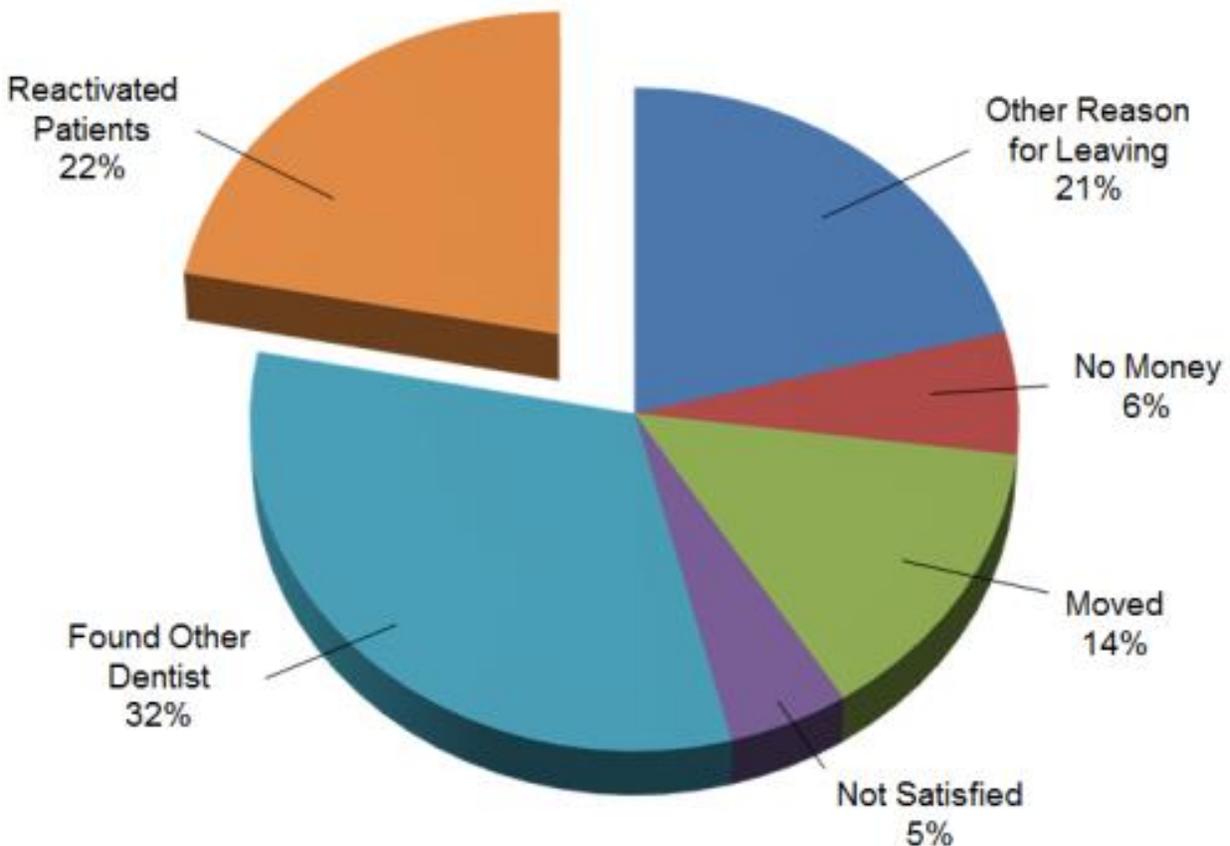
You'll notice that this email uses the same type of non-judgmental language as our recommended phone script from before!

#### 4. LISTEN TO FEEDBACK (AND USE IT)

We've found that in addition to the thousands of dollars of production you get from reactivating patients, **you can get invaluable feedback from those who left.** If a dormant patient declines to come back, ask why. More importantly, keep a record of the information you get. This information is good as gold. First, it allows you to fix any issues in the practice and improve your retention. But just as important, it may reveal trends in your practice you weren't even aware of!

A recent study by the American Dental Association (ADA) revealed that many dentists are dangerously out of touch when it comes to patient dissatisfaction. The ADA study found that 14% of dental patients report being dissatisfied with some aspect of their treatment or visit. In nearly **nine out of ten of these instances, the ADA found that the dentist was completely unaware that their patient was unhappy.**<sup>2</sup>

This is why a major component of the ReActivation Pro service is the provision of monthly call summaries and reports – **essentially providing free market research about your practice.** Take a look at the chart below, which shows some of our overall findings from the thousands of dormant patients we've called. Wouldn't you want this info about your practice?



Patient feedback like this is invaluable. **Imagine finding out that 30% of your patients went dormant, not because they were procrastinating, but because they found another dentist!** That's crucial information that alerts you a change needs to be made to prevent more patients from leaving.

## 5. IT'S EASIER TO RETAIN THAN TO GAIN

**Your existing, active patient base is your best, most reliable source of production.** According to a recent study, businesses that retain 4 out of 10 customers generated nearly 50% more revenue than similar businesses that only retain 1 out of 10 customers.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the costs associated with retaining patients are significantly lower than those required to acquire new ones.

In other words, keeping the patients you have is vital to your profitability – and it's imperative that you have a system that prevents patients from going dormant in the first place.

**One great strategy to help prevent a patient from going dormant is scheduling the next appointment at the end of each visit.** This sets the expectation of the next visit and gets it on their calendar. (Assumptive close, remember?) However, setting the appointment alone is not enough to guarantee that your patient will return. A series of follow up communications via phone, text and/or email appointment reminders are an extremely effective and easy way to ensure these appointments are kept.

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One of the best ways to send these reminders is with an automated communication service like PatientActivator. Especially since these services also help you engage with patients in an automated way. You can automatically send patients newsletters, holiday greetings and special offers – all to keep your patients engaged and your practice top of mind.

## THE BOTTOM LINE

Dormant patient reactivation gets short shrift in most dental offices – but it's truly one of the most impactful marketing activities you can engage in. Make it a priority and watch your profitability rise.

Use these 5 secrets to reconnect with the valuable patients you already have on record and reclaim the production hidden in your patient files.

## ABOUT REACTIVATION PRO

Dormant patient reactivation is too important to let it fall into your “someday” pile. Hundreds of thousands of dollars in unclaimed production are sitting in your patient files right now. Don't let it go to waste. ReActivation Pro is an easy, affordable way to reconnect with dormant patients and get them back on your schedule:

- **Results from reactivation are guaranteed**  
We promise 7-10 appointments per month (unless used for practice acquisition)
- **Highly-trained operators**  
We represent your practice with a friendly voice, specially trained in reactivation.
- **After-hour calls**  
We call in the evening from 4 - 8 PM when patients are most likely to answer & appoint.
- **Detailed reports**  
You get in-depth call summaries, including feedback on why patients left.

**For info about ReActivation Pro, or our other marketing products, call 1-855-230-1313.**

## ABOUT FUTURE DONTICS®

Futuredontics®, parent company of **1-800-DENTIST®** and **Patient Activator®**, is the nation's leading provider of dental marketing services. Since 1986, the Los Angeles-based company has dedicated itself to developing powerful products that help dental practices thrive.

Recognized as dentistry's premier new patient leads program, the company's flagship 1-800-DENTIST service has helped over 9 million dental patients nationwide connect with member dentists. Every day, thousands of patients get personally matched to dentists through their 24/7 call center or via [1800dentist.com](http://1800dentist.com).

PatientActivator — Futuredontics' communications, social and online reputation solution — increases production and boosts the practice's online presence with automated appointment confirmations and tools for marketing, social media, reviews and much more.

Futuredontics also offer an extensive library of dental marketing resources – including whitepapers, webinars and videos. With unlimited live customer support, dentistry's best marketing products and North America's largest dental referral website, Futuredontics is the proven way for dental practices to grow their patient base and increase production year after year.

For more information about our dental marketing services visit us at [www.futuredontics.com](http://www.futuredontics.com)

**To get a FREE copy of any our additional resources, including whitepapers, videos, webinars and more, visit [futuredontics.com/MoreResources](http://futuredontics.com/MoreResources).**

<sup>1</sup> Futuredontics, The Changing Role of the Dental Office Manager, October 2012

<sup>2</sup> Journal for the American Dental Association, April 2014

<sup>3</sup> Sum All, The Importance of Repeat Customers, April 2013

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Disclaimer: This whitepaper provides general marketing advice. Please consult your legal professional to ensure compliance with applicable laws in your jurisdiction.