

Did I Call Your Office? Part II

During this call experiment, we contacted 30 offices in Atlanta and surrounding communities including Athens, Cobb County, and west Georgia. We focused our calls on offices with Yellow Pages ads. Some ads were large and colorful, while others were small and conservative. Our question was very simple: “How much do you charge for a cleaning?”

All calls were made Monday-Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or Friday, 9 a.m. to noon. We assumed the role of an uninsured new-to-town prospective patient who has not had a cleaning in 18 months.



dollars. She asked me to make an appointment and did not seem rushed. If she was using a script or trained verbal skills, I could not tell. She welcomed me to the area, which no other office had done. We ended the call talking about Georgia in the springtime. She made my day, and I was not even for real.

So, Did Size Matter?

In our experiment, ad size had no bearing on how our calls were handled. Even though our best call had a full-size ad, the runner-up had a postage-stamp size black and white ad.

The Run-Down

Of 30 offices called

- Not one person asked our name.
- Two (6.7%) people made an attempt to make a personal connection with us.

“In four of the calls, we barely got our question out and were told ‘HOLD PLEASE.’ In one case, the phone was answered this way before we said a word.”

- Three (10%) asked us to make an appointment.

The Subjective Side

- In most of the calls the receptionist sounded rushed and harried.
- In four of the calls, we barely got our question out and were told “hold please.” In one case, the phone was answered this way before we said a word. Each time we were placed on hold we heard beautifully scripted recorded messages about cosmetic treatments, implants, and whitening.
- In one call I noted feeling “hung up on.” Another response by an annoyed receptionist is detailed below:

Receptionist: (after a breathy “Ugh!”) Ma’am in order to clean your teeth we need to know exactly what type of cleaning you need. We have to see you first for an exam and xrays and take gum measurements to determine this. (STOP)

Me: Okay, how much is that?

Receptionist: A full mouth series of x-rays is around \$\$\$. (STOP) After waiting through 5 seconds of dead air to see if there was more coming, I said thank you and good-bye.

The Best Call

The best call of the group was to an office with a full-page ad. The young lady that addressed my question was one of TWO in the entire group that “reached through the phone” to make a personal connection with me. She began with some probing questions (e.g., how long has it been since you’ve seen the dentist?) and after hearing my brief history, had helpful suggestions about obtaining my previous x-rays, because she genuinely wanted to help me save a few

Food for Thought

In *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Dale Carnegie wrote, “Remember that a man’s name is to him the sweetest and most important sound in any language.” This customer service principle has been proven time and time again since the 1960s. So get a name and make a personal connection with all your callers.



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How much do you charge for a cleaning?

YELLOW PAGES AD SIZE	3/4-Full Page	1/2 Page	1/3 - 1/4 Page	Less than 1/4 Page	Total	%
Number of Calls	4	13	4	9	30	100
RESPONSE						
No Answer	2	3	2	1	8	26.67%
Gave Their Name	2	6	1	6	15	50%
Asked Caller Name	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Made a Personal Connection	1	0	0	1	2	6.67%
Gave Fee for Routine Cleaning and Exam - X-rays “Extra”	0	2	0	1	3	10%
Gave Fee for Routine Cleaning with Exam and X-rays	2	4	2	4	12	40%
Quoted Exam and X-rays Only - Would Not Quote Fee for Cleaning	0	4	0	3	7	23.33%
Used Clinical Terms	0	2	0	2	4	13.33%
Asked Caller to Make an Appointment	1	1	0	1	3	10%
Asked If Caller Has Dental Insurance	1	3	0	5	9	30%