



Turning a negative into a positive

Jane Lelean looks at how to turn a negative into a positive, with 'no ifs, no buts'

Now the summer has arrived, the days of sunlight are really lengthening, the flowers are blooming and, despite the doom and gloom, many of us have a spring in our step.

It is a good time to reflect on what we are doing in our businesses and lives, making sure we are being the best we can possibly be.

What does your business card say about you?

I do a lot of networking, as I believe it is the most effective way to build a business and a reputation. The exchange of business cards is an essential part of every networking situation, whether it is a structured networking event or meeting a new client prospect in an informal setting.

I have been to several networking events recently and am stunned at how poorly business cards were being used. Your business card is often the only tangible item a prospect has, of your services, after an initial meeting with you. They will use your business card to judge you, your business and the quality of the services you offer. Does your business card say what you want it to say?

I sorted through my business card file last week and this is what I found, business cards:

- Without any branding or business identity
- That are not attractive to the target niche
- Without names on
- Without contact details, including email or telephone
- With hand written details
- Made of cheap quality paper
- That were not cut square
- Cheaply obtained logos and cards from the internet so that other people share your 'co-corporate identity'.

I was at a meeting the other day and I met a businessman who has a 'top-end' dental practice. He told me that he has been suffering in the current climate, and was implying that he was doing everything he could to promote his business. It transpired that he did not have a business card, and the one his manager offered me was from a well-known online card printer and was the same design as someone else I met last week. What is particularly curious about this dentist is that he has a beautiful website, which is branded and clearly identifies his niche market, however, none of this is represented on the very poor business card – clearly he is not doing all he can to be noticed by his target market.

Your business card must be impressive and stand out from the rest – make it work for you.

Is your receptionist driving patients away?

Over the last few weeks I have rung many dental practices and been astounded at the extremely poor service some receptionists provide.

We are currently in a situation where many people are choosing not to spend their money. When people do spend their money, they choose to spend it on better 'value for money' items.

Your receptionist is the first contact that a current or prospective new patient has with your practice so it is important that your receptionist is attracting new patients rather driving them away. The standard of your dentistry, your qualifications, experience and the customer care of the entire team will be judged on how your receptionist handles that initial telephone call.

If my experience is anything to go by, patients will be

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shopping around a good while yet to find a dentist. In all the calls I made I only came across one receptionist who made me feel like I would be welcome at her practice, and had she offered me an appointment I would have said yes even though I have just had my routine examination.

Common telephone experiences

Some of my common telephone experiences when ringing dental practices include:

- Reception staff answer the phone in a bored and resentful manner
- Reception staff are not provided with basic information like the practice web or email address
- Answerphones left on during office hours.

Here are two of my most enlightening experiences:

On calling the first practice I was instructed 'ring back in 10 minutes', there was no good morning, I am sorry I am with a client, just 'ring back in 10 minutes' barked at me. Needless to say, I didn't.

In the second practice I was greeted with a 'good morning, can you hold?' The phone was then put down without being muted so I listened in on the entire patient/receptionist conversation. When it came to an end, the handset was picked up and placed back on the receiver and I was cut off.

If you want to attract new patients at this time, you must train your reception staff how to answer the telephone with a welcoming smile and convey the information you want to get across. Spend time in regular meetings with role-plays and invite a trainer in for the day to get the best from your team.

A word to avoid

Many of my clients request coaching in various areas including business development issues, time management challenges, as well as personal development and health issues. I am very pleased to report that all my clients have reported that the coaching work that we have done together has made a significant – and immediate – difference.

There is a very common language pattern, the use of the word 'but'. The word keeps on cropping up over and over again. For example:

- 'I really want to develop my business *but* I want to spend more time with my family'
- 'I am determined to increase this month's sales figures *but* we are behind target'

- 'I want to lose weight *but* I like to eat out'
- 'I want to support my children as they are taking their exams *but* they are so grumpy and unapproachable'.

What I notice, as a coach, is that when the word 'but' is used, everything that comes before it is dismissed and the focus shifts on to the 'problem' that comes after it. This trait limits the choices my clients have available to them.

Replacement techniques

Let's take a look at what would happen if you replace the word 'but' with 'and'. In my experience, when clients replace 'but' with 'and' they notice they have more options available to them and can achieve what they want in spite of the potential obstacle.

Compare these sentences with the previous ones, say them aloud and notice the difference:

- 'I really want to develop my business *and* I want to spend more time with my family'
- 'I really want to get well *and* my doctor says my condition is genetic'
- 'I am determined to increase this month's sales figures *and* we are behind target'
- 'I want to support my children as they are taking their exams *and* they are so grumpy and unapproachable'
- 'I want to lose weight *and* I like to eat out'.

My challenge to you, if you choose to accept it, is to notice every time you use the word 'but', then repeat the sentence substituting the word for 'and'. You may feel awkward initially, and that is ok, but notice how things begin to change. As change happens, for the better, banish that word for good. No buts! **PD**



Jane Lelean will be speaking at Private Dentistry's annual seminar, Private Dentistry Live on Friday 23 October in London. For further information and to book please contact Independent Seminars on 0800 371652 or visit www.independentseminars.com.

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Dr Jane Lelean is an accredited coach with the International Coaching Federation and is a member of the Association for Coaching. Jane has gained over 20 years experience of running a business and being involved in patient care as a dentist and business owner. Having trained as a coach for the last few years, Jane has now sold her dental practice to dedicate herself full time to providing coaching, NLP and training to business owners and individuals who have a desire to make their careers, life and relationships healthier and wealthier. Jane can be contacted on 01296 770462 or jane@healthyandwealthy.co.uk.