



The most important question in dentistry

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August 12, 2015 -- Many of us know that having our patients complete a satisfaction survey can be a great way to figure out what is going well and what needs improvement. But these surveys can be a bit cumbersome. The longer the survey is, the less likely your patients are to actually take the time to complete it. It's best to get right to the point and find out exactly what you need to know.

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Recent research by Bain and Company has shown that there is a single question that can tell a business (or practice) owner more than all the other questions combined. To paraphrase it for dentistry, that question is ...

"What is the likelihood that you would recommend our practice to a friend or colleague?"

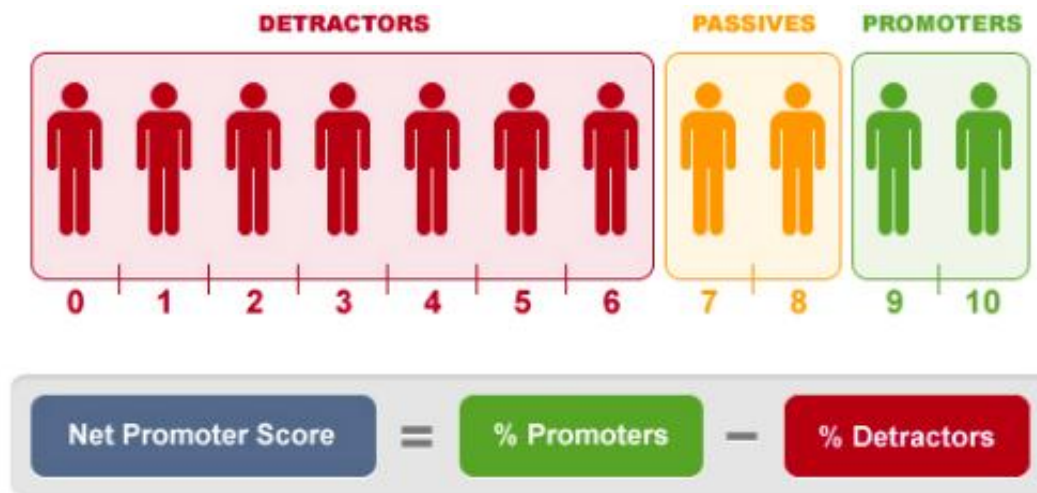
Respondents are asked to rank this on a scale of 0 to 10, with 10 being "extremely likely" and 0 being "not at all likely." Based on the results of this question, a net promoter score is calculated.

But get this: According to Bain, only scores of 9 or 10 are considered to be a positive response, known as a "promoter," 7 or 8 is "passive" (satisfied but not enthusiastic), and 0 through 6 is a "detractor."

The net promoter score is the percentage of promoters minus the percentage of detractors. Does this make sense? Maybe the diagram below will help.



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The average company has a net promoter score of 5% to 10%. Many companies (and some entire industries) have negative scores. And some companies have scores between 50% and 80%, such as Amazon, Zappos, Harley-Davidson, and Charles Schwab. So even the best companies have room for improvement.

So how can this help you, even if you do not decide to perform a similar survey?

Always realize that the ultimate yardstick of your success is making your patients feel that they would be confident enough to refer your practice to a friend or colleague. What are you doing to make them feel that way?

If your patients have mixed feelings about the service and treatment they've received at your office, they may not take the risk to speak up when a friend, family member, or colleague asks for a good dentist recommendation. There's enough pressure that comes with recommending a good restaurant, never mind a dentist! If patients aren't fully confident in you, it is unlikely they will stick their neck out and provide that all-important recommendation.

When treating each patient, imagine you are treating not only that patient, but that patient plus everyone he or she knows. If you do a great job, that could become the reality.

In 1989, Richard H. Madow, DDS, and David M. Madow, DDS, founded The Madow Brothers with the goal of helping their fellow dentists achieve success and happiness in their practices. For more information about their e-letters, audio series, New Patient Mail marketing program, Dental Powerhouse group, their live presentations (including "How To Love Dentistry, Have Fun, and Prosper," "The Ultimate Dental Boot Camp," and especially "TBSE"), and more, check them out at www.madow.com.

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