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Dentist, PR agency team to promote doctored smiles

BY ROBIN LONDNER

Reeves Laverdure Public Relations wants to bring smiles to some South Florida faces.

Really.

The Boca Raton public relations agency said it plans to kick off a campaign for its client of four months, Dr. Vincent Dolce, branding the dentist who specializes in improving the look of teeth as "The Smile Doctor."

Agency President David Reeves said his firm has seen an increase in medical clients in the last year or so and represents a cosmetic surgeon, hair transplant physician and a corneal surgeon specializing in Lasik laser eye surgery. However, Dolce is the 10-year-old agency's first dentist.

"One of our challenges going in with a dentist — as opposed to a hair restoration surgeon, a Lasik surgeon or a cosmetic surgeon — is none of those are associated with a negative, the way a dentist is," agency VP Diana Laverdure said. "With a dentist, we had to think of a way to overcome some preconceptions people have about what it's like to go to the dentist. We needed to come up with a way to convey going to the dentist is a positive experience."

Reeves said after meeting with Dolce, a smiling, talkative man who prefers perfecting smiles to digging root canals, the agency realized an educational campaign could teach people to expect more from a dentist than cleanings and caps.

"We felt, given Vinny's personality, his experience with people once he transforms their smile, the way to do this is to make him the smile doctor," Reeves said.

Because Dolce rarely works on children, Reeves said the "Smile Doctor" campaign will begin by targeting adults in South Florida with a smile contest.

Laverdure said people should nominate people who have made them smile in the last month, or on a regular basis. The prize

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is a smile makeover from Dolce.

"This could be a nurse at a hospital, the cleaning lady, your boss," Reeves said, adding another contest will highlight already-beautiful smiles and that prize may be a free whitening.

The agency will likely work with non-profits to get contest promotion, Laverdure said.

Dolce is no stranger to the media. For the last five years, he has hosted a dentistry-oriented, paid, local Saturday morning radio show on WBZT 1230 AM.

When he graduated from Boston University's dentistry school in 1983, Dolce said dentistry was more about drill and fill than whitening and veneers. He credits Hollywood for expanding cosmetic dentistry.

"First models got their teeth done, then movie stars got their teeth done. Now these makeover shows show the average people from Okefenokee Swamp getting their eyes done and their noses done and their smiles done," he said.

With a new smile costing at least \$6,000, Dolce indicated people too embarrassed to fully smile with bad teeth may want to consider the procedure a form of therapy.

"We're going to focus in on the aspect that people don't smile and how detrimental that is, how it affects your day, your life," he said. "Everyone else is selling teeth. We're selling smiles and the idea of 'How much better will you do in your life, your career, your marriage when you see happier, have more confidence in yourself?'"

Dolce clearly doesn't mind marketing his product. However, when Dolce first arrived in South Florida in 1986, he said, local dental groups were not happy when he began advertising.

But Dolce asked why medicine should be different from any other business.

"No dentist likes dealing with the business side of his business, but we are a small business and we have to promote ourselves," he said. "I have to let people know I'm doing this."

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