

FROM THE INSIDE OUT VS. FROM THE OUTSIDE IN: STRATEGIC INTEGRATION IN DENTISTRY

“You can’t just ask customers what they want and then try to give that to them. By the time you get it built, they’ll want something new.” *Steve Jobs*



Orlando Monteiro da Silva, President of the National Association of Liberal Professionals. Former President of the Portuguese Dental Association.

In the dynamic and highly competitive world of dentistry available in the private sector, the strategic management of a clinic can be approached in two different ways: “From the Inside Out” and “From the Outside In”. Each of these approaches defines a unique way of organizing and delivering healthcare, influencing the efficiency of procedures and the sustainability of the clinic. This short reflection explores both strategies, seeking to describe how they can complement each other to shape a resilient and customer-centric approach.

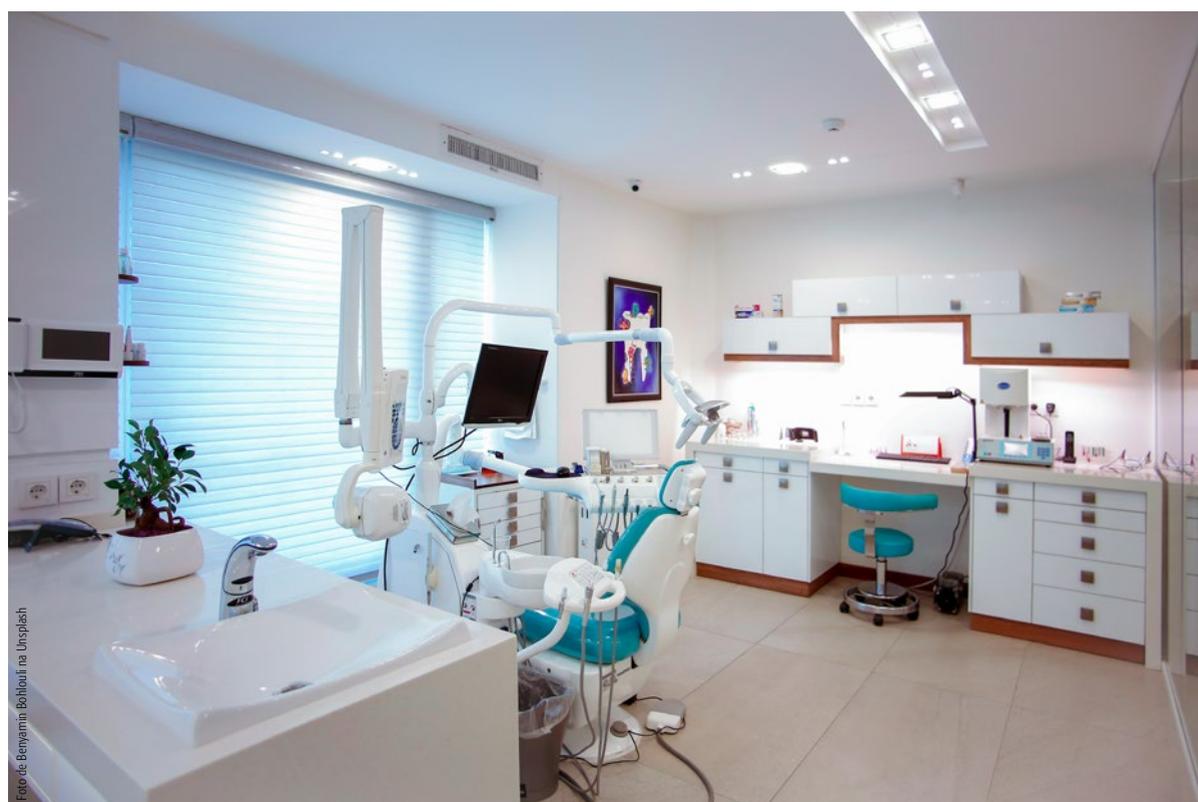
Inside-Out Strategy

The Inside Out strategy focuses on maximizing the clinic’s internal capabilities. This approach underlines that the success of a clinic depends on optimizing its core competencies. Aspects such as the qualification of the team, technologies,

equipment and devices, quality of facilities and location are considered fundamental. The idea is to create and leverage a solid internal infrastructure that can be designed to attract and retain patients. By focusing on internal strengthening, the clinic can offer high-quality services, reflecting them directly on customer satisfaction and the clinic’s reputation in the market.

Outside-in Strategy

In contrast, the Outside-In strategy in dentistry directs attention fundamentally outwards, i.e., to the needs and expectations of patients and the market. This approach advocates adapting the clinic’s services and culture to patients’ demands, expectations, and desires. Here, the focus is on understanding and embodying what patients really want and need and how the clinic can respond to those expectations.



tations effectively. The goal is to align the clinic's offerings with the needs of the market, thereby creating a competitive advantage. A clinic that adopts this approach is constantly looking to innovate and improve its services, relying mainly on feedback and evolving patient preferences.

Comparison and Integration of the two Strategies

Although the Inside-Out and Outside-in strategies seem opposite, the true effectiveness in running a dental clinic can be found in their integration. The Inside Out approach focuses on internal strengths, believing that the skills and resources of the clinic are crucial to success.

On the other hand, the Outside-In strategy puts the patient's needs at the center, adapting to market changes and consumer expectations.

The synthesis of these strategies can create a harmonious management model, where internal capabilities are balanced with external expectations. For example, a clinic can use its internal excellence From the Inside Out to innovate in areas identified as important by patients From the Outside In. Thus, the clinic not only maintains the quality of care but also positions itself competitively in the market, satisfying the needs and desires of patients. The creation of value for patients and professionals in this case is greatly increased.



Practical Examples

I am deliberately not going to collect examples in dentistry, although they existed. I prefer to list examples of products and services in the technological area. Like this:

Inside-Out Strategy: Apple

Apple is a classic example of a company that uses the Inside Out strategy. It focuses on its internal strengths, such

as innovation and design, to create products that set market standards. While Apple doesn't directly "ask" customers what they want, it has a deep understanding of the needs and wants of the market, using the intuition of its leaders to develop widely recognized disruptive products.

Outside-In Strategy: WORTEN

An example of an outside-in approach can be seen in an electronics store that offers integrated customer support services. Instead of following the conventional practice of routing customers to manufacturers, this store creates a more convenient experience by offering a single point of contact for all support needs, regardless of brand, aligning directly with customer expectations and needs.

Conclusion

The choice between an "Inside-Out" and an "Outside-In" strategy is not a matter of opting for one over the other. The effective management of a dental clinic in today's market requires, in my opinion, the integration of both. Utilizing the internal strengths of the clinic while adapting to the needs and expectations of the market is the key to success.

On the one hand, the clinic must recognize and optimize its internal competencies and resources. On the other hand, you must always be aware of market changes and trends, ensuring that your offerings are aligned with what patients want and need. By balancing these two approaches, dental clinics can achieve a level of service that is not only high-quality but also highly relevant and desired by patients, thereby promoting sustainable growth and innovation in the field of dentistry. ■

