

Readers of this journal are generally in a class by themselves. They understand at least two things. First, that to be an exceptional, comprehensive therapist it is necessary to constantly upgrade oneself by reading the literature. Second, that *The International Journal of Periodontics and Restorative Dentistry* brings to them cutting-edge research and techniques that have been peer-reviewed by a group of renowned researchers and practitioners who take the reviewing of new papers very seriously.

However, even those who practice at a very high level of competency are frequently frustrated by a public that is unaware of the difference between the value of their professional service and the service of those delivering a mediocre product. Indeed, how does the public decide what to purchase—whether it is dental service, apparel, automobiles, or common stocks?

There are myriad ways to anticipate what the public will buy. The goal is to find people who will buy what you have to offer. For example, the economist, John Maynard Keynes, compared the stock market (any purchasable item is also applicable) to a strange sort of contest that was popular in the British press in the 1930s. The pictures of a dozen attractive women were published, and readers were asked to vote. The object was not to pick the prettiest woman, but to choose the woman that other voters were likely to pick as the prettiest. Keynes suggested that what counts is not the intrinsic value of a product, but the ability to predict what others will consider valuable. The two may coincide. This is the ideal.

The challenge, therefore, is not only to strive for an ever-increasing level of knowledge and competence, but also to realize that finding ways to break through the smoke and mirrors of false perceptions is just as important. This may be an even harder challenge than becoming a true professional, but it is a challenge that will always remain with us.

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