Growing your practice with digital dentistry

Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door

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We all hear it. Have a superior product or service, and customers will automatically stream through the office door. If only it were so easy.

The reality for most dentists is that new technology does not lead to a major increase in patients. Yes, there are often more referrals because of satisfied patients, but not the hoped-for volume increase. The good news is that relatively small investments in marketing can change this and lead to significant growth of the practice.

Once you’ve made the decision to grow your patient base using digital dentistry, you have to target and engage potential patients. Here are the four most critical:

1. Develop an impactful website.
2. Execute a patient review strategy.
3. Engage with your community on social media.
4. Deliver targeted marketing campaigns.

_You only have eight seconds to convert a lead_

According to the National Center for Biotechnology Information, the average attention span is now 8.25 seconds. Test this theory. Show your website to someone new and time them. What can they report back to you? The bottom line is: only a truly effective website can grab the attention of a prospective patient in less than eight seconds. And if you can’t grab their attention, you certainly can’t convert them.

Here are a few ways to ensure your website not only grabs the attention of prospects but, more importantly, turns them into patients.

Images with captions
Images with captions are read on average 300 percent more. Adding captions gives you a golden opportunity to show a tool like the Planmeca FIT system for open CAD/CAM and communicate why it benefits patients.

Videos
Visual learning leads to improved memory retention and comprehension and triggers an emotional response while motivating the learner. This is why television advertising remains the largest segment of advertising spending.

Q&A
You may only have eight seconds to get a new
patient’s attention, but you also need to provide the depth of content to answer their questions and build credibility. A Q&A format is an easily digestible format for understanding and communicating the technology, ultimately building credibility.

**Call-to-action**

This may seem simple but is often forgotten on dental sites. Tell your patients the next step — whether it’s to call, email, book or simply learn more. You need to ensure your phone number is prominent and clickable on mobile devices. You also need to include a submit form for users who access your site during evenings and weekends.

**Custom photography**

High-quality, custom photography makes your practice approachable and gives you a chance to highlight the new technology you have invested in. A competitor website full of stock photos looks like any generic office, whereas using custom photography ensures your practice comes across as unique and personable.

**Ask for patient reviews**

Ask patients who have experienced the benefit of CAD/CAM technology to provide you with an online review on Google+, Facebook or Yelp. Online reviews build instant credibility when someone is looking for a dentist. Reading reviews about a positive experience and unique technology impacts people’s decision when looking for a dentist.

The best way to get reviews is to ask for them. Make it part of your daily routine. Send an email to the patients you saw that day and ask them to provide you with an online review. An email template can streamline this process.

**Engage with your patients on Facebook**

Having a vibrant Facebook profile is important. Potential and current patients are going to look on it. You want it filled with oral health tips and dental education, illustrating that you care about the oral health of the local community.

In addition to the general Facebook engagement, you have the option to boost your posts using targeted advertising to reach people who have not already liked your page. For example, you may share a post on the convenience of one-visit dentistry for the busy professional. Targeting options in Facebook are extremely powerful — not only can you target people based on demographic information, you can target based on interests, education and even areas of study.

**Advertise on YouTube**

Television advertising has been the primary medium to build brand awareness. The challenge for most dental offices is that television advertising is expensive and covers a geographic area beyond the service of their practice.

YouTube provides the impact of television ads, but in a targeted geographic area, meaning you can roll out highly engaging videos commercials with a much smaller budget.

**In summary, digital marketing and the better mousetrap**

Your investment in digital dentistry will help you stand out compared with other dentists in your local area. By initiating a comprehensive marketing strategy, you can display the technology you’ve invested in and increase the number of new patients who choose you and your office.

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**About the Author**

Brent Parr is president and CEO of Optio Publishing Inc. He has developed industry-leading patient education and online marketing solutions for dental offices for more than 12 years. Working with hundreds of dental offices in the United States and Canada, Parr and his team have developed proven marketing strategies that leverage patient education, search engine optimization, social media and paid display to attract new patients and promote high-value services such as dental implants and single visit restorations.