3 online tips that will increase appointments

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In today’s connected world, your future patients depend on the Internet to manage almost every aspect of their lives. However, the tremendous expansion of the Internet makes reaching and engaging with them a constant challenge.

According to business intelligence firm Domo, every minute 571 new websites are created, more than 100,000 tweets are sent, and Facebook users share 684,478 pieces of content.

Here are three ways to ensure your practice rises above the persistent noise to connect with prospective patients and convert them into new patient appointments.

1. Tailor your website for an amazing patient experience: In the connected world, prospective patients will form an immediate opinion of you and your services based on what they see and experience online. To ensure your website will drive new patients to choose your practice, ask yourself the following questions:
   - Do I have a functional website? If not, your practice is invisible to the connected world.
   - Does my website appeal to patients? Make sure your website reflects the vision of a developer who has taken a research-based approach to designing sites with prospective dental patients in mind.
   - Is my website optimized for mobile devices? As of January 2014, 87 percent of smartphone users accessed the Internet using their phones. If your website does not automatically optimize, your prospective patients will likely head to a competitor.

One last piece of advice — dental practices are unique businesses. If you decide it’s time to work on your website, use a reputable vendor with deep roots in designing sites specifically for the dental industry.

2. Make SEO a priority: Once you have your website in order, you need to make sure prospective patients can find it. Eighty percent of traffic to a website begins with a search query, and 61 percent of searchers consider local results to be more relevant than standard search results. This makes search engine optimization (SEO) efforts a must. A key here is to use a firm well versed in local SEO strategies within the dental industry to achieve lasting results.

3. Energize your social media efforts: According to a recent study, Internet users spend more time on social media than any other Internet activity. Embracing a social media presence enables you to spend time effectively forging genuine relationships with prospective patients. In terms of where to invest in social media: Facebook, YouTube and LinkedIn are three places where you should focus your efforts. If your practice wants to attract more new patients, it is important that you be active and engaged on these three social media channels.

Final thoughts

The Internet is your best source for reaching prospective patients — and focusing on these three strategies will help your practice create connections that convert into new patient appointments.

• References
  2. www.pewinternet.org/2012/11/08/mobile-health-2012/

Diana P. Friedman, MA, MBA, is president and chief executive officer of Sesame Communications. She has a 20-year success track record in leading dental innovation and marketing. She has served as a recognized practice management consultant, author and speaker. She holds an MA in sociology and an MBA from Arizona State University.