Dr Tinkler recalls the inception of Dental Gateway and looks at just how far the website has come in just under a year

After two years of intensive development, January 2011 saw the launch of specialist recruitment website Dental Gateway, a finely tuned resource dedicated to dental professionals.

From the onset of this venture there was an awareness that, in some sectors, traditional recruitment agents offer very little by way of added value. After ten years in practice, I know the inherent problems of dealing with dental agencies to find nurses, receptionists, hygienists, other dentists, practice managers and so on.

Dental Gateway approached me to see if I thought their automated online recruitment idea would work in the dentistry sector. Based on my experience, I thought very much that it would. In the past, if I'd needed to recruit a new nurse, I'd ring up an agency and they would send me four or five CVs, which I then had to filter through. It was up to me to contact the candidates, interview them and offer them the job (or not). However, I'd still have to pay the agency £1,500 to £2,000 for the privilege. It seemed obvious to me that dental recruitment could work online.

Early on, we realised that Dental Gateway had to offer advantages to both the employer and the candidate in order to succeed. A major benefit to dentists is the costs are minimised if candidates are suitable, not the agents, and the website works both ways: candidates can decide whether or not to apply for a role rather than the agent playing God with their careers.

The site itself is divided into permanent and temporary work. The permanent side, which was set up first, has reached the stage now where it very much runs itself. Employers are hiring candidates and applicants are finding jobs.

If a dentist is looking for a candidate to fill a permanent position, he can post a vacancy for free and candidates can upload their profile at no charge. Dentists can view as many profiles as they wish and they conduct a search by using their preferred criteria. Once a suitable candidate has been found, the employer can access their contact details by redeeming one pre-purchased credit.

Dental Gateway’s costs are less than with traditional agencies and take a smaller ‘cut’ or fee per hour, so costs are minimal on this system, allowing nurses to set their own charge out rates. So a nurse with general basic experience could set her charge at one level, while a nurse with extra qualifications/experience could set hers at a much higher level.

A dentist recruiting for a nurse can view a list of those available at the location and date of his choosing, as well as the rates that each of them are charging. He can also view the profile of the nurse and see...
Simply put, a mobile website is a massively stripped down version of your desktop site designed to make browsing sites on mobile devices an easier and more positive experience. The general look and feel will remain the same, but because network speeds, bandwidth and screen size differ greatly from desktop to mobile websites, there are significant differences in the way in which both sites are designed. Thanks to the progressive complexity of smartphones, mobile websites are the best way to reach an increasingly tech-savvy audience on the move, and the benefits are huge:

1 - Next level technology. Mobile phones boast inbuilt functionality that will make it easier for users to perform certain tasks, removing the need for manual steps. Users can find a location by simply clicking on an address, automatically call a number when ‘tapped’ or ‘clicked’ and easily identify their current location in order to seek out the nearest supermarket, cash machine or dentist!

2 - Quicker, easier info. A mobile website will contain approximately 20% of the content of your desktop website. Serve your patients with only the information they need, in a simplified format. They will predominantly be looking for any (or all) of the following 4 things – treatments available, opening hours, contact details and location.

3 - A positive mobile experience. Already, between 15% and 20% of all searches originate on a mobile device and this number is set to rise exponentially in the next year. Now that your patients are searching for your website on their mobiles, you must consider what kind of mobile experience you are offering them. If people cannot browse your website with ease, they will surf away and are unlikely to return.

4 - More traffic to your site. Upcoming 4G networks will mean faster and more reliable mobile internet connections covering greater areas. Wireless broadband is also increasingly being installed in locations not previously served by the internet, such as the London Underground.

5 - Highly targeted PPC campaigns. Most mobile searches are concentrated in the morning before work and then again in the evening when people are not in front of a PC. Setting Google Adwords campaigns to show between certain times of the day will ensure that you are visible at peak times only – so as not to waste your valuable Pay Per Click (PPC) budget. Furthermore, Google have recently announced that a mobile optimised landing page has a positive effect on Quality Score which results in lower costs per click and better ad positions.

6 - Greater Return on Investment (ROI). Mobile is also a far more time-sensitive channel. Google research has shown that the average time between initial customer research and purchase is a month on the desktop but just an hour on mobile. The chances are, if patients are looking for your site on their mobile, they will want to call or visit you fairly urgently!

Need advice on how to best capture the mobile market? Speak to one of the Dental Design team on 01202 238 473 or visit www.dental-design.co.uk – your marketing success is our priority.

**About the author**

Amy Rose-Jones is the Marketing Manager at Dental Design Ltd, the leading website design and marketing agency for the dental profession. With more than 9 years experience in a marketing capacity, Amy has helped hundreds of practices throughout the UK to build and develop a lasting web presence through a blend of creative and marketing skills. Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/dentaldesign Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/dentaldesign Find me on LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/amyrosejones
exactly what he’s getting, including the level of experience, rather than just being sent the first nurse that comes along to an agency.

Dentists are encouraged to leave feedback on the site relating to the nurses they have worked with. Any positive feedback is registered and nurses are listed in terms of their percentage feedback: the higher the percentage rating, the higher up the list they are. The nurses with the better feedback, based on criteria such as skills, punctuality and presentation, feel they can charge more for their time. The site is self-regulating, as it encourages nurses to maintain high standards to receive an appropriate pay rate, and the dentist knows what to expect of the candidate.

Dental Gateway had a ‘soft’ launch last October at the BDTA to get a feel for the market and determine the desirability of the product. We took a stall at the ExCel in London and were really pleased with the positive initial feedback from delegates. Over those few days we received about 500 emails. That spurred us on and the site officially launched in January 2011.

Within six months of going live, there were 2,000 candidates registered on the site, from all areas of dentistry, and this number is increasing every day!

As an employer myself, I find the website so convenient. Normally, if my nurse rang me on a Sunday to say that she was ill and couldn’t come in to work the next day, the first opportunity I would have to do anything about it would be Monday morning. I would spend time trying to find a replacement, only to discover that a temp might not be available until lunchtime, or the afternoon.

With Dental Gateway, I can immediately search the availability of nurses in my area using my mobile phone. I can then ring them directly and find out who can be there at 8.30am next day; and it’s done.

These days, almost everyone has an iPhone or equivalent, or access to a computer, so now is the perfect time for a service like this. It is moving away from the old ‘bricks and mortar’ agencies and bringing recruitment into the 21st century.

Candidates and employers seem to appreciate the niche factor of Dental Gateway: it’s not a generic website and it’s not classified ads or job board. It is less like a recruitment site and works more like professional network - and best of all there are no agents getting in the way.

The only downside is that to many people it sounds too good to be true! But the catch is: there is no catch. Dental Gateway has gone through considerable development and investment to produce a service tailored to dental professionals. It is something that dentists, nurses, hygienists, dental receptionists and practice managers can revisit again and again as they update their practice personnel or develop their careers.