The mobile-friendly dental practice: Why your website should be optimized for mobile-device users

By Diana P. Friedman

Forty-five percent of American adults owned a smartphone as of December 2012.1 As these powerful devices increasingly make their way into the pockets of your existing and potential patients, it’s a business imperative that your website deliver the experience these users expect. A strong mobile presence helps you get in front of prospective patients at the moment they’re looking for your business. On the other hand, if your site doesn’t look good or function properly on a smartphone, it won’t take long for patients to move on to one that does.

Not sure if mobile is important to your practice? Here are three reasons you could be missing the boat — and missing easy opportunities to attract new patients to your practice.

Mobile is where your patients are

Many of your patients probably use the mobile web — 87 percent of smartphone users access the internet using their phones.2 Mobile web usage has exploded during the past few years, and many industry experts project that mobile internet usage will exceed desktop Internet usage by 2014.3 For many smartphone users, mobile has also become their preferred way to use the web: 31 percent of current mobile web users mostly go online using their phones.4

A Sesame Communications research case study found that a mobile website drove an average of 19 calls per month to the practice.

Mobile is how your patients research — and make — buying decisions

More people are using the mobile web to research and buy goods and services. Ninety-two percent of smartphone users seek local information on their device, and 89 percent have taken action after looking up local content.5 More significantly for your practice, 52 percent of smartphone owners have used their phones to search for health information.6 Without a mobile-optimized site, your practice will have a harder time driving new and repeat appointments from the mobile web. Mobile shoppers are more likely to buy something if the company’s site is optimized for mobile, and are more likely to return to a site in the future if their mobile experience is good.7

Not mobile? You may be frustrating current patients … and driving away potential ones

Mobile users now expect any brand they engage with to have a mobile-optimized site. More than half of mobile users say they won’t recommend a business with a poorly-designed mobile site.8 If smartphone users reach a site and see that it’s not optimized for mobile, what will they do? They might leave — 74 percent of mobile users are only willing to wait five seconds or less for a single web page to load before leaving the site. Or worse, they might visit a competitors’ site — 61 percent of customers who visit a website that isn’t mobile-friendly will leave to visit a competitor.9

The bottom line is that not having a mobile-optimized site can hurt your relationships with current patients, and drive away prospective ones.

The mobile web is where many of your patients are, and where they go to find and research your practice. Optimizing your website for mobile will help you best capitalize on the mobile web as a tool for building and strengthening relationships with patients. In selecting a partner to launch your mobile site, make certain they understand on-the-go patient online behavior and leverage your existing online practice brand and social media channels to optimize the impact of your new mobile site.

References are available upon request from the publisher.

About the author

Diana P. Friedman, MBA, is president and chief executive officer of Sesame Communications. She has a 20-year success track record in leading dental innovation and marketing. Throughout her career, 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.