

MARKETING

Mistakes That Sabotage Marketing Plans

 Check for updates

BACKGROUND

Marketing appropriately can be a nearly impossible task given all the moving parts of the process. There is a marketing sweet spot that balances money spent, promotions, time, and targeted audience, but it isn't easy to achieve and changes throughout the years. For dentists to market their practices appropriately will require the avoidance of common marketing mistakes so that a strategic, growth-focused approach can be implemented.

MISTAKES

Failure to Define Goals

Marketing includes both external efforts that are geared toward reaching prospective patients and internal processes that are designed to keep current patients happy. To ensure a proper mix, it's important to spend time formulating a strategy. This will require the dentist to clarify the desired outcome so that the correct marketing approach can be applied. The ultimate goal of a marketing plan should be clearly identified before any new initiatives are launched.

Not Identifying the Target Audience

Patients, especially prospective patients, need to hear the dentist's messages repeatedly, with some experts quoting the number of repetitions required to move patients to action to be between 7 and 20 times. Until the proper number of repetitions has been achieved, patients won't make an appointment. Building the repetition, termed frequency, can be both difficult and expensive when a wide audience is targeted. A better approach is to identify a more circumscribed patient audience.

The target audience should be based on a survey of current patients to identify which patients the dentist wants to see more of in the office. Once that target audience is identified, it's easier to build the needed frequency at a more reasonable cost and greater success rate.

Investment in Wrong Areas

The same marketing efforts don't work for every dentist, which means that some dentists will spend too much money for too little return. Dentists should consider what, if any, current activities

are producing a reasonable rate of return. Only when these activities have been identified should the dentist move forward with efforts that are hyperfocused on the targeted patient audience.

Ignoring Budgeting and Metrics

One absolute must is the setting of an annual or quarterly marketing budget, with the understanding that it can significantly fluctuate throughout the years. When no spending plan is in place, dentists can fall victim to salespeople and make unwarranted marketing investments that aren't in line with the practice's growth plan.

Various factors contribute to the marketing budget. Dentists who have an established marketing infrastructure will pay less than those who are beginning from scratch when developing a marketing budget. In addition, budgets differ based on the size and location of the practice, the local competition, and how aggressive the dentist wants to be, which will be guided by how aggressive the goals for the marketing plan are.

External marketing can only succeed when some internal components have been established. The practice website should be current, the front desk team should possess effective communication skills, and the results of marketing efforts should be tracked and monitored regularly to ensure that everything is working well.

Clinical Significance

The challenge in marketing a dental practice is in crafting a plan that is solidly based on facts such as a well-defined goal, an understanding of the target audience, adherence to the budget for the practice, and ongoing measures of the plan's effectiveness. While it has this solid foundation, the marketing approach will also need to be flexible to address changes in trends or unforeseen events. It's definitely a moving target but one that dental practitioners can hit with the proper approach.

Setting Unrealistic Expectations

It takes time for marketing efforts to gain momentum. Meanwhile, the dentist is spending money and time to build appropriate efforts. Dentists should be patient and ensure that their goals aren't unrealistic. If the goals are well-defined, the target audience has been identified, investments are being made in appropriate areas, and results are being tracked and analyzed, the marketing plan should be able

to deliver the desired growth in business and increased income.

Cooper N: Is your marketing plan delivering? *Inside Dent* 16:8-9, 2020

Reprints not available

MOBILE DENTISTRY

Make an Impression on all Devices



BACKGROUND

More than 50% of the internet searches done are performed on mobile devices. In the past, web pages that were designed to be displayed on a desktop device could be difficult to navigate on a tablet or smartphone. The first way to fix this problem was to ask the user if the device being used is mobile, then the mobile users were redirected to a different web page designed specifically for smartphones and tablets. The problems with this approach included difficulty keeping up with all the different mobile devices being used, the need to maintain additional web pages, and limited functionality on the mobile site. Today responsive templates allow a complete website to be viewed on all devices, thus avoiding the problems associated with redirecting. Even with these templates, dental offices can take steps to ensure their mobile site is as useful as possible.

LAYOUT

The most important information on a mobile site needs to be situated in the area first viewed without scrolling. Mobile devices offer limited space, so having the information readily available in that position can be an important determinant of whether the prospective patient continues with your site or moves to the next dentist on the Google list. In addition, Google has decided to give mobile-friendly websites priority in its search listings, so it's important to be as high on the list as possible.

The content that offers the best visual presence is an image that uses the majority of the screen. Pictures of people can be effective in the search for a dentist, whether the people are patients or the dentist and dental team. A slide show is a great way to display the important information in a very limited viewing area. It could include pictures of the dental team, the office and building, actual patients, or high-tech equipment that is being used. The main page should also include the name and address of the practice. To meet the criteria used by search engines, this information should not be embedded into an image but should be listed separately.

NAVIGATION AIDS

To help users navigate the website, a tab bar with clickable icons can be helpful. This tab bar should be on all of the pages of the website so that patients can click on it at any point in their search.

Specific elements to be included in the tab bar include a clickable telephone number, a clickable address or location button, and a hamburger button. The hamburger button consists of 3 symmetrical horizontal lines that resemble a hamburger. The user can click on this icon and open a menu or navigation pane. Because not everyone is familiar with the usefulness of these 3 lines, the word "menu" can be placed next to it to guide the user.

DISCUSSION

To ensure that mobile phone or tablet users can access all the information of the dental site, a responsive template should be used

Clinical Significance

Use of a responsive template allows the presentation of the content of a web page to automatically adjust to be optimized no matter the size of the device being used. Prospective patients often do their searches for websites, including dental websites, on their smartphones or tablets, so a responsive template is required for the best results. Even current patients will appreciate the ease of searching on their smartphone rather than having to run to their desktop computer. Since so many searches are performed on mobile devices, it's important to upgrade the dental website to ensure it can be readily found and contact can be made effortlessly.