

service will help to build an emotional connection as the basis for care.

Taking time is an important key to providing top-rank customer service. Rather than watching the schedule or thinking about productivity, being present in the moment with that particular person is important to conveying interest and attention. Providing excellent customer service makes the customer the hero of the encounter. It is important to communicate to those we serve that we couldn't do it without them. Finally, remembering details – not just superficial things, but the preferences and attentions that contribute to a personalized experience – demonstrates an attitude of personal caring. These ways of showing personal investment help to establish a culture of trust, and thus the sense of loyalty that leads to long-term practice success.

Clinical Significance

In dentistry, providing excellent customer service means caring for patients in a way that communicates interest, compassion, and concern. Building trusting personal relationships facilitates long-term relationships, which translate into better oral health for your patient and business success for your practice.

Williams T: The relationship between customer service and profitability. *Dent Econ* 110(8):16-18, 2020.

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DIGITAL CONSIDERATIONS

Data Is the Key to Digital Marketing



BACKGROUND

Every dental practice has “ideal” patients who keep every appointment and show commitment to maintaining good oral health, functioning, and appearance. Data can help you identify your best patients and their characteristics, and build strategies to attract them to your practice. While “digital first” strategies are transforming the marketing world, it is important to understand the importance of data in designing an effective digital strategy.

PILLARS OF DIGITAL MARKETING

The three essential “pillars” of digital marketing are goal-setting, testing, and analysis. Goals can be short- or long-term, and may include measures such as productivity, appointments, or social media metrics. Regardless of your practice objectives, *data benchmarks* are a critical starting point. Measures such as number of active patients, patient value to the practice, and digital conversion rates provide a clear picture of your practice baseline.

Split testing, sometimes called A/B testing, is a valuable but often-overlooked tool for evaluating digital marketing strategies. A “test, track, adjust” strategy can be used to evaluate any type of marketing content, including ad copy, social media posts, and email subject lines. This approach enables business owners to

compare their best-performing strategies against new approaches, leading to more effective efforts to increase conversion.

Effective *data analysis* is important to determine what aspects of your digital marketing strategy are having the greatest impact. Practice data are only useful if you act on the information you collect. The analytic process aims to translate data into actionable steps, such as audience segmentation, identifying characteristics of high-value patients, acting on the results of testing, and identifying the best new prospects.

THE DIGITAL FUNNEL

The journey from prospect to patient is visualized as a funnel, leading to concrete actions such as calling the practice and making an appointment. Key data milestones include social media engagement, performance of the practice's Google listing, search result rankings, evaluation of the practice website, and tracking of office phone calls. Knowing where customers are coming from enables marketing strategies that target specific demographics across platforms. Developing key performance indicators allows the practice to assess measures such as the return on investment on digital marketing and the cost of acquiring new patients. As the practice database expands, patient acquisition processes will become nearly automatic, allowing the practice to increase its focus on maintaining its base of high-value patients.

Clinical Significance

This is a clear-eyed overview of some of the essentials of digital marketing in dental practice. Data is the key to efforts to identify your best patients and attract more like them. Analyzing and acting on data enables your practice to develop an effective, cost-efficient digital strategy.

Nation K: When it comes to digital, data is critical. *Dental Econ* 110(10):22-25, 2020.

Reprints available from Kristie Nation; email: mydentalcmo@gmail.com

Pitfalls in Digital Marketing



BACKGROUND

Google Ads has become the prime player in the online marketing world, with revenue of nearly \$135 billion in 2019. As organic ranking of online advertising becomes increasingly difficult, Google Ads becomes an increasingly important aspect of digital marketing strategy. A dental marketing consulting outlines some key mistakes in digital marketing.

COMMON ERRORS IN DIGITAL MARKETING

Sending Ads to Your Website

Online ads for your dental website should link users not to your practice website, but rather to a landing page. For example, users searching for information about dental implants should land on a page with information relevant to this topic only – targeted to the key concerns and obstacles patients may have. The landing page should be the patient's last stop, leading to making an appointment. Whereas websites exist to inform, landing pages are designed to “promote and convert.”

Overlooking Remarketing

Not every click will lead to an appointment. In Google Ads, patient conversion rates exceed 20% for new patients, while patients interested in specialized services are more likely to seek more information and ask more questions. Google does not allow dentists to remarket, due to HIPAA provisions. However, adding a simple Facebook remarketing pixel to your landing page allows your ad to repeatedly display in potential patients' Facebook feeds. That keeps you at the top of their minds when the time comes to schedule an appointment. The practice pays nothing until the patient clicks on your ad, providing highly affordable brand awareness.

Not Using Tracking Numbers

Tracking numbers are unique phone numbers that redirect to your office number. Recent changes have been introduced to avoid previous concerns about search engine optimization with this strategy. With unique tracking numbers, you'll know exactly

how many calls you're getting through your Google Ads campaign, and how many of those are being successfully converted – you can even listen to the calls personally. With the addition of tracking software, you'll also know your campaign's exact return on investment.

Not Promptly Responding to Leads

When a potential patient provides information on your landing page, callback time should be no more than 15 minutes. Email responses need to be almost immediate. To be able to “speed to the lead” in this way, staff members must be aware of the digital campaign and have the knowledge and ability to respond immediately. The ideal solution is to enable patients to schedule online, saving the time and inconvenience involved with calling the office.

Not Highlighting Your Brand

Your practice's brand and culture have a major influence on whether users will take action or simply move on to the next items on their search list. Patients must be able to see what distinguishes your practice from the other results they're looking at. The language on your landing page needs to be judgment-free, while answering the most difficult questions right away. Practice maps, welcoming photos of the dentist and staff, videos, and patient testimonials can help patients feel comfortable and confident with proceeding.

Clinical Significance

Digital marketing can be a little daunting at first, but the potential benefits are worth the investment. We're all familiar with searching for information online and making decisions based on the results. Dentists and practices should put themselves in the patient's shoes: If you were Googling “dentist near me,” what would you be hoping to find?