

5 Tips for Marketing Your Dental Practice Online

These are five of the key techniques that we at Nampora Dental use to help our dental practice partners market their dental practices online. Unfortunately, many in the online marketing industry propagate the idea that online marketing is some kind of black magic; we hope these tips will demystify online marketing and provide you with actionable information to help you market your practice online.

1 Create a Website

This may seem too obvious, but there are a number of dental practices that still do not have websites. Even for the majority of dental practices that do have websites, there is room for improvement. Start by asking, "What is the purpose of my practice's website?" Simply having an online presence is not enough to effectively market your practice online; however, that does not mean you need to spend thousands of dollars on a state-of-the-art website.

An effective dental marketing website should both inform *and* sell. That means that you want to provide both your existing and prospective patients with information about your practice, but there's no need to overwhelm them with information. Some practices take this concept one step further and have an entirely separate website geared for attracting new patients. Chances are, like most businesses, you can do a better job of selling in-person and on the phone, so your practice's website should direct prospective patients to call your office and schedule a consultation. That is why it is especially important to include your contact information in a conspicuous location on every page.

2 Make Sure Prospective Patients can Easily Find Your Website

Having a domain name that is easy to remember is helpful for existing patients and their referrals, but it won't help new patients find your website. In order for new patients to find your website, it must be listed on the places that they are likely to search for a new dentist. There are literally hundreds of search engines, local business listings and medical directories that provide listings in each area, so this can be a daunting task.

Start by making a list of the more common sites that prospective patients in your area are likely to use when searching for a new dentist. Don't forget to include the major search engines, like Google, Yahoo and Bing (Microsoft's search engine). Next, search on these sites yourself and see if your practice is listed. As a general

rule, don't expect prospective patients to scroll past the first page of results – if you are not listed on the first page, they probably won't find you. Now you should have a better sense of how easily new patients can find your practice online.

If your practice's website appears towards the top of the first page of results for the websites you searched, then you are in good shape. If not, then there are two common methods you can use to improve your "ranking" within the local search results. The first method, known as Search Engine Optimization (SEO), involves following a series of best practices that, over time, will increase the likelihood that the search engines determine your website is a relevant result for a particular search phrase. The other common method to improve your ranking within local search results is called Search Engine Marketing (SEM). Search Engine Marketing is, quite simply, paying search engines to list your website at or near the top of the list of results for relevant search phrases.

In addition to the major search engines, it is also important to make sure that your website is listed in online local business directories. Most of these directories will allow you to submit your own website for free, and many also offer an option to pay for placement, which increases the visibility of your listing.

3 Optimize Your Website for New Patients

Once you have ensured that prospective new patients can find your website, it is important to evaluate your website's design and content against the expectations of your audience. For example, if you are running advertisements on Google for the search phrase "implant dentist", you can reasonably expect that the website visitors delivered by those ads are looking for information pertaining to implant dentistry. The same goes for all of the search phrases that prospective new patients are using to find your website.

Rather than trying to cram content related to every single search phrase on a single page and directing all visitors to that page or to your homepage, it is advisable to create highly-targeted landing pages. A landing page is a single page on your website that visitors "land" on immediately after clicking on a link or an ad from a search engine. A landing page for implant related keywords should focus on your practice's implant-related credentials, while a landing page for cosmetic dentistry related keywords should focus on those treatments.

By creating separate landing pages for each topic that prospective patients are searching for, you can better engage your visitors and increase the likelihood that they convert from website visitors to new patients. It is easy to underestimate the importance that small changes to a landing page can make, but numerous tests have shown the impact that they have. For some examples of small tweaks to landing pages that had a significant impact on conversion, consider checking out Anne Holland's "Which Test Won?" (<http://whichtestwon.com/>).

4

Track Results

As you continue to invest in online marketing and improving your website, it is important to be able to quantify the results of your efforts. Fortunately, there are many tools and techniques available to help you measure your online marketing success.

Before you can begin measuring, you need to decide which metrics you are most interested in measuring. If you are running pay-per-click advertisements, you can easily track your spending and the number of clicks/website visits that your campaign generates using the advertising networks built-in reporting tools. For other sources of website traffic, you need to set up a separate website analytics package. Google's offering, Google Analytics (<http://analytics.google.com>), is free and relatively easy to use. Once you set up your website analytics package, you will be able to keep an eye on the number and source of your website visitors.

Of course, tracking website traffic can be helpful, but traffic doesn't always translate into revenue. For a better gauge of the results of your online marketing efforts, consider setting up a dedicated phone number for use online. That way, depending on which phone number a patient calls when scheduling an appointment, you can determine if the call was generated by your online marketing efforts or another source.

5

Analyze, Fine-Tune, Repeat.

By following the first four tips above, you should be able to start effectively marketing your practice online. As you monitor the results of your marketing efforts, you will get a sense of what is working well and what is not. Every market is different, and you may find that a particular search phrase or special offer that works well in one area isn't very effective in your area. Armed with this knowledge, you can improve the return on your investment by expanding on whatever is working and cutting back on what is not.

It is also important to keep in mind that the internet is a constantly changing landscape and the website that is #1 today, might not even show up on the first page of search results tomorrow. That doesn't mean all of your efforts are in vain, but it does mean that you have to continually update your website with fresh content and regularly revisit the other tips listed above.

Now that you have read Nampora Dental's 5 Tips for Marketing Your Dental Practice Online, we hope that you will agree that online marketing doesn't have to require any magical powers. Instead, effective online marketing relies on the right combination of knowledge, time and most of all, dedication. If you would prefer to leave it to the experts, please contact Nampora Dental today to schedule a free online marketing consultation.