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YOUR GUIDE TO A HEALTHY PRACTICE



Marketing strategies for your practice

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Phone and TV services help dentists maximize patient wait times

By Jean Williams

There are moments that take your breath away, and moments that just take your time away.

Moments that patients spend on a phone call, waiting for office staff to find an answer to a question, or hanging out in the waiting room before an appointment can feel like colossal wastes of time. With nothing to engage them, patients and potential patients can become bored — or even worse — resentful.

Dental practices may want to reposition these idle moments as opportunities, say communications experts.

“Somebody who is looking for a new business and is put on hold for a minute and 45 seconds feels abandoned, disrespected and frustrated,” said Katie Schroeder, president of InTouch Practice Communications. “This is not a way to build a new relationship. That minute and 45 seconds feels like

five minutes when you’re listening to nothing.”

Two decades ago, Ms. Schroeder and her husband, Bill, launched InTouch Practice Communications, an ADA Member Advantage-endorsed provider, to help dental practices use phone wait times to engage their patients.

“We realized that there was a real need in the dental industry and started to help dentists promote the services that their dental practices offer that a lot of times a patient wouldn’t be aware of,” Ms. Schroeder said. “People are coming in to a dental practice once a year and thinking, ‘OK, I’ve got my cleaning, so I’m good.’ But, we know that the dentist does so much more than fill cavities and clean teeth. We wanted to help them find a way to educate their

patients, about additional services that they’re probably not aware of — whitening, alignment of teeth, veneers — all the different kinds of products that a dentist might recommend.”

Dental practice staff often think that they’re maximizing all channels of patient communication and that they’re



Click to listen to a sample of the InTouch Practice Communications system.

With nothing to engage them, patients and potential patients experience boredom



already fully covered on patient education via brochures and posters, Ms.

Schroeder said, and they often think that patients are more informed than they actually are.

“The dentist might believe, ‘Well, everybody knows this,’” Ms. Schroeder said. “But, what we began to find out is that, ‘No, you know this, but patients don’t.’”

Aside from its potential use as a customizable channel to promote services and to impart patient education, InTouch’s on-hold system can be used to deliver other types of content. “Sometimes

some practices will say, ‘I don’t like to use it as an advertising tool.’ You don’t have to use it as an advertising tool. We have a lot of practices that deliver trivia. People like trivia. So, coming up with questions where people can check themselves and say, ‘Yeah, I thought this was the answer, or I thought that was the answer,’ those kinds of things make message on hold a nice opportunity, too.”

The TV in a practice’s waiting area is another kind of real estate that dentists can consider maximizing. ADA Member Advantage also recommends ADA TV, which was created in conjunction with

dental marketer PBHS and the ADA Catalog, to appeal to patients in the waiting area.

ADA TV puts total control of waiting room television content in the hands of the dentist and front-office staff. No longer are offices limited to what major networks or local stations program. Rather, dentists can fill their waiting areas with a variety of customizable content. Dentists store their personally curated content on

The TV in a practice’s waiting area is another kind of real estate that dentists can consider maximizing.

a Chromebit computer stick that plugs into a TV’s high-definition multimedia interface (HDMI) port and streams over a practice’s wireless Internet.

ADA TV provides practices with a tool capable of entertaining, informing and marketing to people in their waiting rooms. Dr. Kirby Bunel uses the service in his Texarkana, Texas-based oral surgery practice.

“They have a catalog of things that they can run that they already have in their library, according to certain subjects,” Dr. Bunel said. “So, if you want to talk about dental implant treatment, wisdom teeth, anesthesia — things that are important to

me — then it’ll kind of be like that. We don’t talk about making dentures or doing veneers or tooth whitening, or any of those services. They’re not on my feed because we don’t offer those services, but they do (offer) general information about what those services might be.”

The service can also entertain patients alongside informing them.

“It’s not constant dental stuff bombarding the patients in the waiting room,” Dr. Bunel said. “They’ll run clips of current events and news of the day, or severe weather expected, or that the World Series was won by the Houston Astros. They have that kind of stuff interspersed through there. You don’t feel like you’re being brainwashed in the waiting room by Dr. Bunel.”

For more information on InTouch Practice Communications, go to intouchdental.com or call 1-877-493-9003. For more information on ADA TV, visit ADA.org/tv or call 1-888-993-5664. ♦

Ms. Williams is a Chicago-based freelance writer and editor who specializes in practice and research news for dental and medical professionals. She can be reached at writewoman12@hotmail.com.



Branded apparel in

By Jean Williams

The old saying goes, “Clothes maketh the man.” Could it be that they also maketh the dental team?

An ADA survey of dentists conducted in June 2018 determined that 97 percent of respondents had some kind of dress code for their dental practices, with most respondents required scrubs. This survey found that 13 percent of respondents had a business casual dress code, and 11 percent required practice-logoed office attire.

What you wear is thought to have bearing on what you do and how you do it. Scientists have even coined a term for it: enclothed cognition. One definition for the term states it is the systematic influence clothes have on a wearer’s psychological processes.

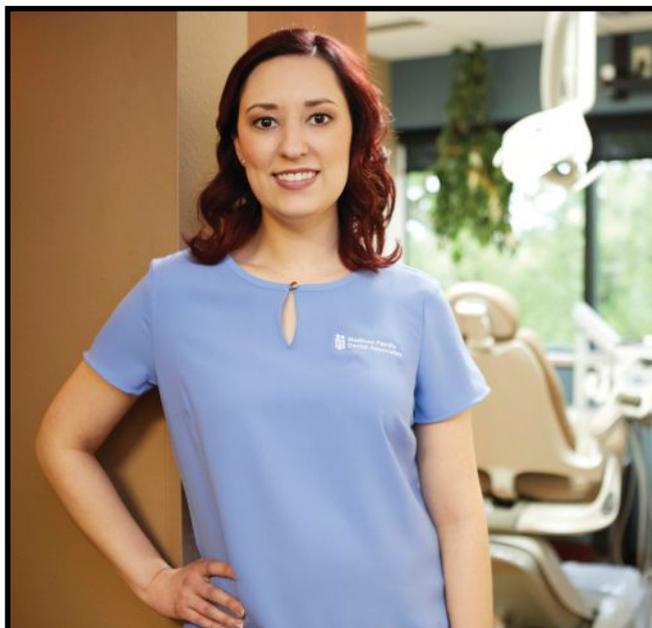
Dental practices may not get so technical when deciding to opt for uniforms instead of personal wardrobes, but there are plenty of reasons for wearing a certain type of specified clothing, instead of personal attire, to work in a dental office. The ADA survey showed that:

- 76 percent of respondents said official attire helps simplify things for staff.
- 50 percent said official attire prevents inappropriate dress.
- 57 percent said official attire promotes team unity.
- 44 percent said official attire promotes the brand and image.

Drilling down further into survey results, some respondents also cited such concerns as Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations and infection control when opting for scrubs in particular. Some specified that, when it comes to official attire, it “makes for a nice appearance when everyone is in uniform.”

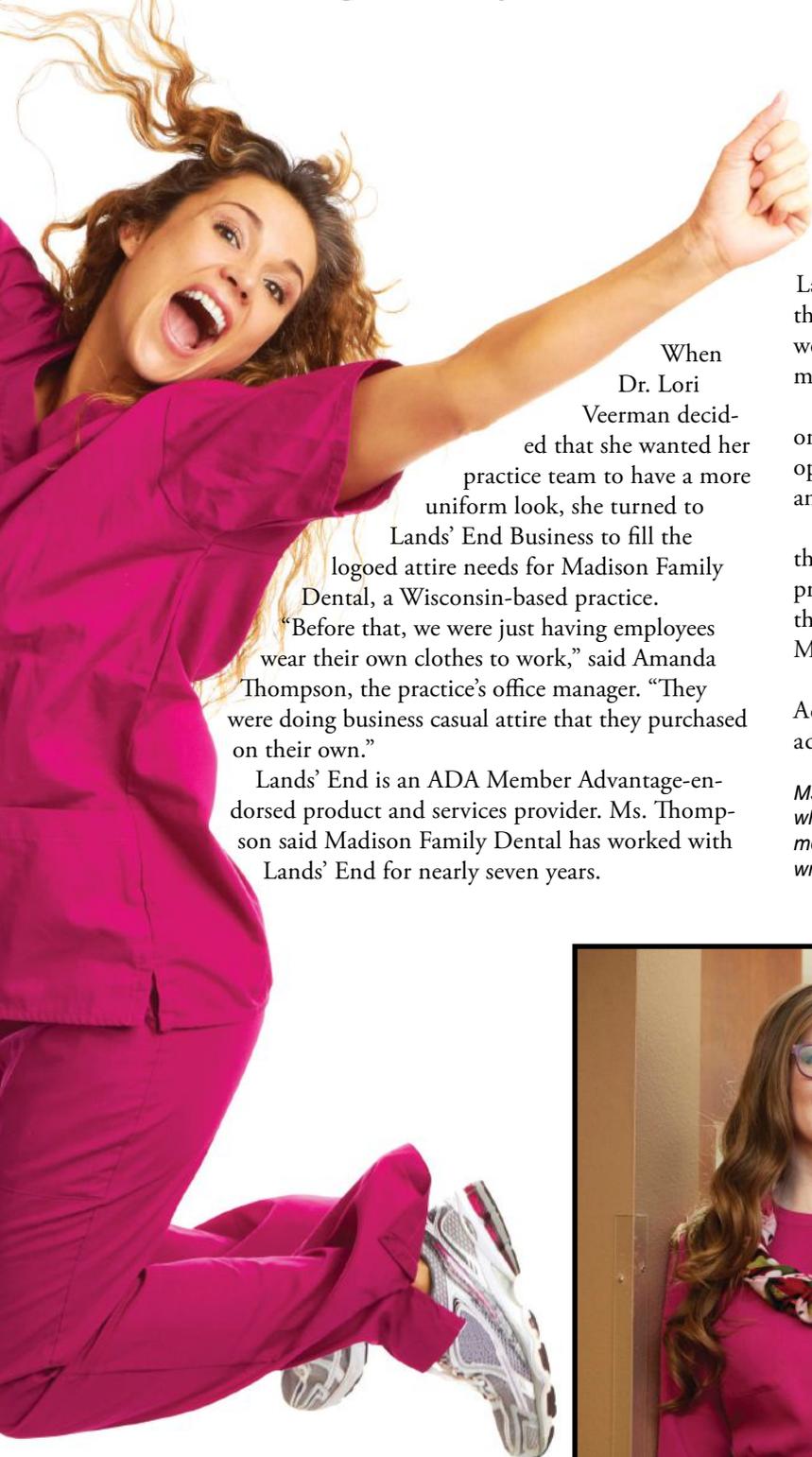
Survey says it's good.

**What you wear
is thought to
have bearing on
what you do
and how you do it.**



dental practices

for marketing, comfort, ease



When Dr. Lori Veerman decided that she wanted her practice team to have a more uniform look, she turned to Lands' End Business to fill the logoed attire needs for Madison Family Dental, a Wisconsin-based practice. "Before that, we were just having employees wear their own clothes to work," said Amanda Thompson, the practice's office manager. "They were doing business casual attire that they purchased on their own."

Lands' End is an ADA Member Advantage-endorsed product and services provider. Ms. Thompson said Madison Family Dental has worked with Lands' End for nearly seven years.

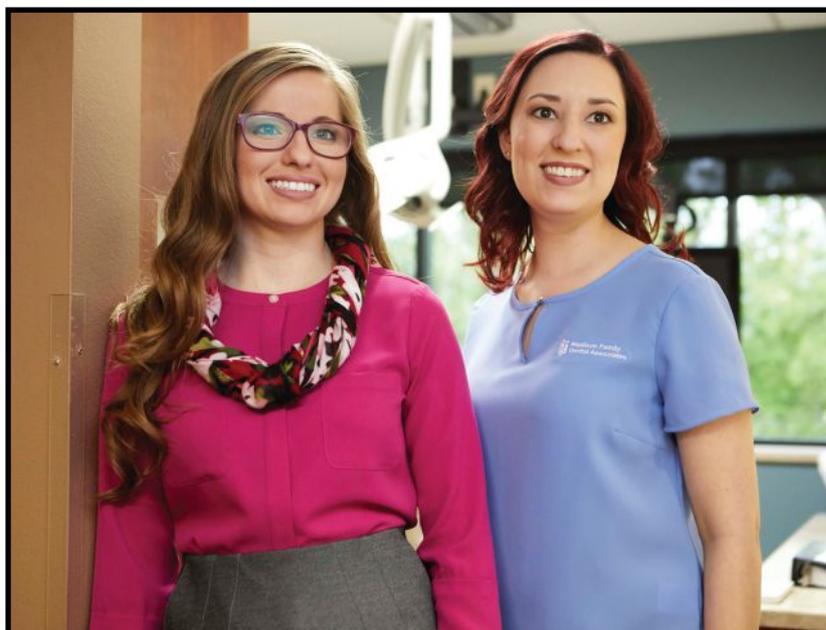
"For a long time, all we were ordering were the pullover sweaters, the pullover V-neck sweaters, and button-up, long-sleeve broadcloth blouses," Ms. Thompson said. "Now, the practice has allowed us to kind of branch out and pick what we want from the Lands' End website. We're still kind of sticking with that business casual aspect of things, but we are able to wear the pullover half-zips and other cardigans that staff might like."

The practice's team members order new uniforms once a quarter. The Lands' End catalog offers enough options to allow them choices within given parameters and still have a sense of branded uniformity.

"Now that we're able to choose a little bit more than the broad-cloth, button-down shirts, we still look really professional; and, with the logo printed on there, I think our staff looks pretty good in their work attire," Ms. Thompson said.

For information on Lands' End ADA Member Advantage-endorsed product and services, visit ada.landsend.com ♦

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Introduce your practice to Siri, Alexa, Google Home and Cortana

Optimize your website for artificial intelligence voice search

By Jay Levine



Voice search allows an artificial intelligence (AI) personal assistant device to use speech recognition technology to identify a verbal query and deliver search results in a spoken format.

Because so many Americans are using AI personal assistants like Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri, Google's Home or Microsoft's Cortana, it's important to understand how AI systems can have an impact on how patients find your practice via voice search.

In just two years, 47.3 million U.S. adults have gained access to a smart speaker; that's 1 in 5 U.S. adults or 20 percent of the U.S. adult population,

which is up from 1 in 6 U.S. adults in January. To put that in perspective, it took 13 years for televisions to reach the 50 million mark. It is projected that by 2020, 50 percent of all searches will be conducted via voice search.

Sources estimate that it is three times more common for mobile voice search to produce local results than queries made via a keyboard.

Voice search is all about the user experience and convenience. It's not an advertising model — at least not yet. By focusing on proper search engine optimization of your website, you can implement existing best practice techniques that will help your practice come up in voice searches.

Natural language focuses on the intended meaning of a patient's search query. For example, if we ask Alexa to "Find me an oral surgeon in Caldwell, New Jersey," she will answer "A popular one is New Jersey Center for Oral Surgery located 2,546.1 miles away on 16 Smull Avenue, and it is currently closed



Mr. Levine is president of PBHS, the endorsed marketing services company for ADA members. For more information on integrated websites, SEO and social media campaigning for your dental practice, please contact PBHS at 1-855-932-4232.

but will be open tomorrow from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m."

The user can then ask Alexa for the practice phone number, and she will respond in kind. (Full disclosure, N.J. Center for Oral Surgery is a PBHS client that has been optimized for Google and voice search).

Natural language queries have been accessible on Google since 2013. If you type the exact same query into the Google search bar, you will receive the same exact results that Alexa provided. Most people don't type this way, but they do speak this way. Because of this conversational approach to search, websites must be optimized contextually, not by key word. Does your home page content focus on intent of communication and is it written using an easy-to-understand approach?

Unlike Google or Bing, voice search will generally return the single most authoritative search result, not a verbal regurgitation

of 10 websites. There is no ranking 4th, 5th or 6th in a conversation of results. Could you imagine Alexa rambling on about all the local dentists in your city? Your website must be one of the best results available. A contextual search result that ranks in the top three positions on

Google will, 75 percent of the time, be the result of a voice search.

Patients search for information because

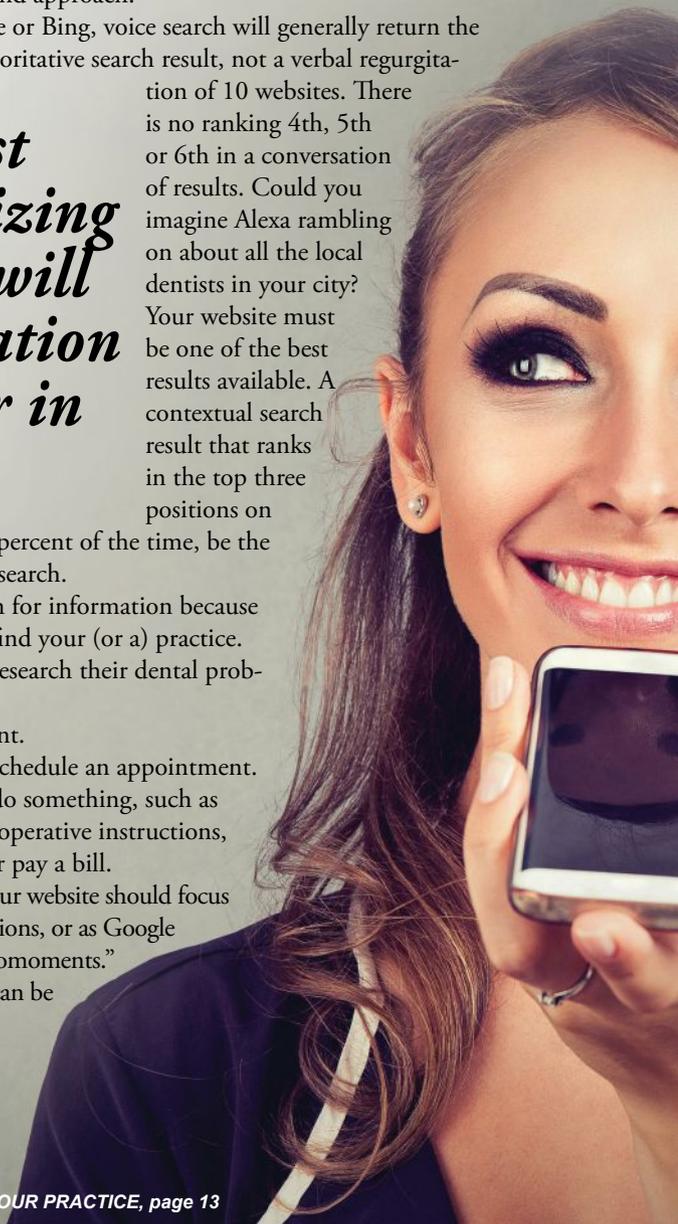
- They want to find your (or a) practice.
- They want to research their dental problem or possible treatment.
- They want to schedule an appointment.
- They want to do something, such as download post-operative instructions, register online or pay a bill.

Optimizing your website should focus on specific intentions, or as Google calls them, "micromoments."

Micromoments can be best exemplified by the use of the word "Best" in a search — especially a voice

If you follow best practices for optimizing your website, you will likely set the foundation for being a winner in voice search.

See **INTRODUCE YOUR PRACTICE**, page 13





9 SEO strategies to rank on voice search

▼ **Optimize for the answer box snippet.** Just over 40 percent of voice search results come from a featured snippet at the top-ranking position of Google. This is the definition box that you may occasionally see at the top of the page. If I were in New Jersey and queried Google “What are wisdom teeth?” the results would show:

The back **teeth** (molar **teeth**) are used to grind food up into a consistency suitable for swallowing. The average mouth is made to hold only 28 **teeth**. It can be painful when 32 **teeth** try to fit in a mouth that holds only 28 **teeth**. These four other **teeth** are your third molars, also known as “wisdom **teeth**.”

Wisdom Teeth Caldwell NJ | Gentle Wisdom Teeth Removal West ...
<https://www.njcenters.com/procedures/wisdom-teeth/>

About this result Feedback

Wisdom Teeth Caldwell NJ | Gentle Wisdom Teeth Removal West ...
<https://www.njcenters.com/procedures/wisdom-teeth/>

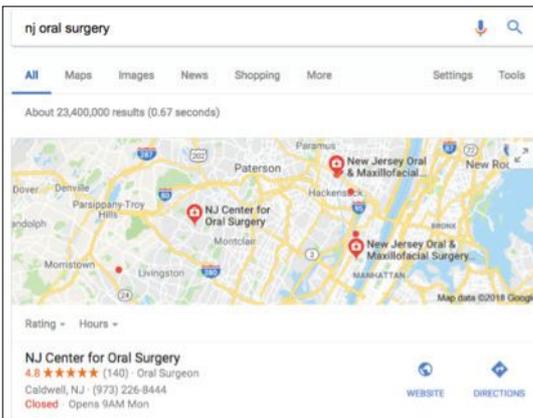
★★★★★ Rating: 5 - 886 votes

The back **teeth** (molar **teeth**) are used to grind food up into a consistency suitable for swallowing. The average mouth is made to hold only 28 **teeth**. It can be painful when 32 **teeth** try to fit in a mouth that holds only 28 **teeth**. These four other **teeth** are your third molars, also known as “wisdom **teeth**.”

You've visited this page many times. Last visit: 8/9/18

If you can rank your website results in what is called “Position 0”, it’s more likely you will be the answer to this voice search query.

▼ **Claim and flush out your Google My Business (map) listing.** Your Google Business listing is a large data source for patients searching for your practice. By having a completed listing, fully optimized and up to date with the most current data, you have a higher probability of being the return on a patient’s voice search.



▼ **On page schema for top pages.** On page schema (a semantic vocabulary of microdata that you can add to your HTML to improve search results) enables Google to better comprehend the intent of your page and what it represents. Yet, only one-third of voice search results come from pages that use schema.

▼ **Secure websites rank higher.** About 70 percent of Google Home voice search results are websites that are secured with HTTPS.

Secure | <https://www.njcenters.com>

▼ **High social engagement.** Content that is shared, liked or retweeted performs well

in voice search. The average voice search results has 1,199 Facebook shares and 44 Tweets.

▼ **Easy-to-read content.** Google voice search results are based on easy-to-read content averaging at the ninth grade level.

▼ **Page speed.** The loading time of your website is important not only in your Google search results, but in voice search results. The average voice search result is based on a page load time of 4.6 seconds, which is 56 percent faster than the average page.

▼ **Use of natural language.** Google sources answers to voice search based on highly descriptive pages of content. We call this “long form content” or a “long-tail” approach to content creation.

▼ **Optimize for mobile.** Mobile optimization is one of the most important factors for ranking high on Google search results. The more mobile friendly, the easier it is to be the voice search answer.

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Your social media presence

Enhance your brand to improve search engine rankings, engage patients

By Jay Levine

When your dental practice properly maintains a proactive social media presence, you enhance your brand. An active social media campaign can lead to an increase in patients, more community-based opportunities and increased visibility of your practice brand — specifically when the number of posts, fans, likes and shares (social signals) increases.

Most of us already know how important it is to encourage positive reviews and leverage social media by sending requests to patients for testimonials. Many social media channels, like Facebook, have built-in review systems that enable patients to leave direct testimonials. Other systems in the community allow for the posting of reviews to multiple platforms. But social media can also play an important role in search engine optimization (SEO), or how your practice's website ranks on search engines like Google or Bing.

Strengthen your online presence. Direct communication in a public forum is simple on social media. Your practice gains exposure and can promote its unique personality without the help of an expensive public relations firm. When patients interact with your practice on Facebook, it improves and promotes awareness of your practice brand within your local community. The publicity generated by the likes, shares and overall

engagement magnifies your practice's online presence.

Improve quality traffic to your website. A professional SEO campaign should report sources of online traffic to your website: how patients found you, where did they come from (Google, Bing, Yelp, Facebook), how long they spent on your website and more. The traffic generated from your social media channels to your website should be higher quality because people who find you through social media already have some level of engagement, interest and brand recognition. The more frequently you post a unique story, blog or testimonial and share it on social media, the more organic links are created back to the practice website, which is an important attribute measured by Google's algorithm.

Increased patient referrals. The traffic driven by your social media presence to your website is often from prospective patients who have researched you and are now interested in your practice and services, which generally leads to more potential patients.

A social media platform is only as powerful as its subscriber base. It's important to market where your patients are spending the most time. After Google, your target audience is most active on social media. Consider these popular social channels before wasting your time and money marketing on

irrelevant sites:

- **Facebook.** The most popular social location to engage with patients, friends, family and fans, while spreading news about upcoming local events, case studies (with patient consent) and promotion of services. Not only does this social media giant allow users to review your practice online, it allows you to target demographics similar to your existing patient base, boosting posts and advertising your practice for a reasonable investment.

- **Twitter.** Less commonly used among dental practices, but a perfect channel for opinion sharing, practice updates and testimonials that can be posted within 280 characters. Practices using Twitter should post multiple times each day and immediately reply to any mentions of their practice or direct messages. Tweets containing links to case studies, articles, photos and even videos receive higher engagement than text-only updates. While Twitter may not be the best vehicle to promote your practice locally, it provides a high-value social signal, which gives it more weight in the Google algorithm.

- **LinkedIn.** Currently the most professional social media channel for sharing information between colleagues. LinkedIn targets professionals interested in business-to-business (B2B) practice-to-practice and practice-to-vendor

See SOCIAL MEDIA, page 10

SOCIAL MEDIA

Continued from page 9

communications. Practices use this platform to connect with one another and share industry-related news. Forums, posts and newsfeeds enable dentists to share everything from the latest technologies to dental implant case studies, promotion of industry updates, authoritative articles and vendor updates.

• **Instagram and Snapchat.** Dental marketing is highly image-focused; photos of case studies and results lend themselves to image-focused social media platforms. Photographers and videographers of any skill level can use the built-in filters and editing features to create professional stories. Followers and the general public can see your content if you tag posts with hashtags that are relevant to your target audience.

Additional platforms to market your practice include Reddit, Pinterest and YouTube. ♦



Mr. Levine is president of PBHS, the endorsed marketing services company for ADA members. For more information on integrated websites, SEO and social media campaigning for your dental practice, please contact PBHS at 1-855-932-4232.

9 social media tips for dental practice

1

FIRST

Include name, address, phone number (NAP) and a link to your practice website when setting up your personal bio and practice description with each social media channel. NAP is critical to ranking well in local search results because Google considers these data when determining which practices to show for geo-targeted searches. When creating your Facebook profile, customize your cover photo, hours of operation, website, etc. Facebook prioritizes business pages and ranks them higher when they are 100 percent complete.

6

SIXTH

Respond to patients' comments and encourage engagement.

2

SECOND

Social media channels like Facebook enable you to verify your account, so patients and search engines recognize the listing is officially associated with the practice

7

SEVENTH

Follow the rules regarding patient or team member privacy by getting written consent for any photos or messages used on social media.

3

THIRD

Frequent social media posts that prompt engagement will attract new fans and keep your practice brand in the minds of your followers. Higher engagement factors into visibility of your practice.

8

EIGHTH

Make sure to link your social media profiles within your email signatures (desktop and phone), as well as on your website.

4

FOURTH

Geotag your posts and use location-based key words as hashtags to attract attention and more local followers.

9

NINTH

Place visible social media sharing buttons on your practice's website and blog posts so your posts and content can be easily shared.

5

FIFTH

Keep followers interested by sharing a variety of content including case studies, testimonials, results-based articles, infographics and videos.



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Direct Mail

A great marketing tool for the digital age

By *Stacie Crozier*

Connecting with patients is key to effective marketing, and today many dental practices are using digital channels to reach patients and potential patients. But recent research shows that people of all ages still trust and respond to good old-fashioned direct mail marketing.

✕ What kind of ads do consumers trust?

A 2015 study by the Canada Post said researchers “focused on the two key indicators of media effectiveness — ease of understanding and persuasiveness — and examined the corresponding brain imaging metrics. Through these tests, direct mail proved the most effective advertising media. It outperformed digital channels consistently — and, in some cases, significantly. These findings suggest that while the digital space provides essential

platforms for customer interaction, physical media is better suited to close the marketing-sales loop, or the gap between interaction and action.”

A 2016 study by the US Postal Service found that all age groups — including millennials — spend more time with physical ads, have a stronger emotional response to such ads and remember them better. “You know the stereotype: Millennials are digital natives, glued to their smartphones, and the only way for marketers to reach them is through social media,” the study summary states. “The truth is, Millennials respond to a low-tech marketing approach that’s been around for centuries: Paper in a mailbox.” The USPS piece offers to help marketers “better understand how and why Millennials respond to mail, how mail compares with other marketing channels, and how to create an appealing mailpiece for this generation.”

A 2016 MarketingSherpa study that surveyed 2,400 US consumers in all age groups and found that people of all ages reported high rates of trust for television ads, print ads and direct mail ads and high rates of not trusting online pop-up ads, mobile phone ads and ads in podcasts.

✕ Direct mail choices

There are a variety of direct mail types for every marketing need and budget. Some examples include postcards/self-mailers, envelope mailers, newsletters and dimensional mailers — a box, tube or package, often with a sample or giveaway enclosed.

Simple mailers can be a great tool for reminding patients of upcoming appointments, said Stacey Chenoweth, a brand specialist with SmartPractice, a dental supply and marketing company in Phoenix, Arizona. She highly

recommends using direct mail for appointment and recall reminders to reduce the number of missed appointments and to increase the number of patients scheduling regular preventive care appointments.

“As patients lead busier lives in this digital age, it’s more important than ever to help them prioritize their dental appointments,” Ms. Chenoweth said. “Postcards fill in the gaps where text messages, emails and social media may fall short.”

“The success or failure of a dental practice depends largely on patient recall,” said Ms. Chenoweth. “Recall postcards can be sent to your entire patient file — both active and lapsed — to remind them of the importance of regular dental care. Friendly messages and reminders can be the catalyst to a patient remaining compliant and regularly visiting your office.”

Ms. Chenoweth estimates that practices sending regular patient reminders can reduce their percentage of broken appointments.

Jay Levine, president of PBHS, the endorsed marketing services company for ADA members, notes that his company’s most popular direct mail campaigns for dentists include new patient specials and treatment-specific promotions that highlight services like dental implants, cosmetic dentistry and orthodontics.

“Many patients today are looking for dental care beyond preventive care and basic restorations,” said Mr. Levine. “There is a lot of interest in services that can enhance their smile and provide better function, too. If your practice offers cosmetic dentistry services, dental implants or orthodontic care, you may want to highlight these services in your marketing efforts.”

Tips for making the most of direct mail

In a blog post from January 2018, Bruna Martinuzzi highlighted some common sense strategies to keep your direct mail piece “out of the junk pile.” She advises using plain language and small “nuggets” of information to make your message easier to read, adding personal touches that enhance your credibility and build trust (like photos of you and your team members or a couple of testimonials), personalizing messages to individuals when possible, and using a simple design that includes your branding.

PBHS also advises dentists to follow these three rules to make a direct mail campaign a success, Mr. Levine added.

- Select your mailing list. Define your audience by selecting demographic constraints that are applicable to your target age of patients, household income and geography. Legally purchase your list from a reputable source. The more careful you are in analyzing your direct mail lists, the better your chance for success.

- Deliver a clear message. A direct mail campaign should visually engage your audience and create an emotional response within a few seconds. State a clear message, incentivize your patient and promote a call to action which will drive the patient to the contact you easily and quickly.

- Design is key. Let a professional designer help you select images, fonts, colors and layouts that best reflect your practice brand in a consistent manner. Visually engaging campaigns create a feeling of trust and encourage the audience to take action. Support your campaign with analytics to better understand your return on investment.

Even if you’re not quite ready to jump

into direct mail by developing your own marketing campaign, you can still boost patient touchpoints with recall and marketing cards from the ADA Catalog. The ADA Catalog offers a variety of personalized recall and marketing cards in two formats — postcards that can be personalized with one of a dozen personalized messages or one you write yourself and “laser cards,” which come four to a sheet, perforated and can be fed through a printer.

Readers can save 15 percent on personalized postcards and all ADA Catalog products with promo code 18140 until 12/14/2018. To order, visit ADAcatalog.org or call 800-947-4746. ♦

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INTRODUCE YOUR PRACTICE

Continued from page 6

search. Google shows growth of the use of “Best” by more than 80 percent from 2015 through 2017. For example, “Best Restaurant in San Francisco” or “Best Dental Implants in New Jersey.” Also, mobile search for the term “Best Toothbrush” has grown over 100 percent in the past 2 years.

If you follow best practices for optimizing your website, you will likely set the foundation for being a winner in voice search. Stay competitive, work with an expert, set realistic goals and expectations, demand easy access to reports and track the progress of your rankings and conversions. Most importantly, keep your eye on the future. Change is happening quickly, and the marketing and visibility of your dental practice brand needs to stay current. ♦

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