Cost effective tools to boost your online marketing efforts

Rita Zamora discusses strategies for online marketing

Are you looking for cost effective ways to expand your online presence? You are not alone: Every day, greater portions of marketing budgets are being dedicated to online efforts because that is where patients are spending more and more of their time. However, the greatest challenge with online marketing is how fiercely dynamic it is. Some common concerns I often hear are:

1. How will we know if someone is saying something negative about us online?
2. How can we increase online positive reviews, testimonials, word of mouth and referrals?
3. What online marketing can we do that won’t cost a fortune?
4. How do we track what’s working?

Finding the negative and positive

Let’s begin by addressing negative reviews... To help monitor if someone has said something negative about you online, you can use the free tool Google Alerts. Many dental practices encourage patients to post testimonials or comments on public review sites. Meanwhile, one of the most common concerns doctors share is; “How will I know if a patient says something bad about me online?” Let’s face it. Even the best practice is susceptible to an occasional rant.

Google Alerts is a terrific solution (visit www.google.com/alerts). Enter a variety of search terms, including your name, and simply provide your email address to receive updates. These alerts are a cyberspace monitor who is watching out for your best interests. This solution won’t cost anything, yet it can prove invaluable.

In addition, make a note in your calendar to have a staff member do thorough searches for you each quarter on the major search engines. Searches of the doctor’s name, and practice name, should be performed regularly on Google, Bing, and Yahoo for example. Often practices will run across something you would have otherwise been unaware of. It makes a difficult situation even stickier when you attempt to respond to a complaint that is months or years old. You must keep up with your online reputation. If you don’t do regular online searches for your name, you will never know what complaints (or compliments) may exist about you.

Boost reviews and testimonials

Would you like to increase your positive reviews on sites like Google Reviews or Yelp? Many practices today are clamoring to build up their positive online PR—or in some cases they need to bury a negative review or two.

Some of you may be thinking that you provide good service and that should be enough to motivate reviews. Yet, as Gary Vaynerchuk, author of The Thank You Economy said: “Marketing is about to get really hard.” Service needs to be exceptional if you want to motivate positive word of mouth today.

There are several proven tactics you can utilise to help increase your positive reviews, including asking patients via word of mouth, tangible reminders, or digital tools (like surveys or emails that push to review sites). However, the

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The most important thing to keep in mind with both Facebook and Twitter are systems, (although social media may seem like a task that can be done “whenever you have time”, it will only prove cost effective if you are organised).

Here are a few tips to keep in mind for Facebook:

1. Determine who in your office will be responsible for asking patients for Facebook “likes”
2. Determine if you will offer incentives or hold a special promotion
3. Determine how much time you want to dedicate to these tasks each week
4. Schedule in specific days / times to handle this marketing

Repeat, repeat, repeat. If asking for patient “likes” does not become a habit in your practice, your Facebook community will perish.

Marketing on Facebook can provide your practice with amplified exposure. For example, a patient who shares your practice with their Facebook friends could potentially share hundreds of links that lead to your practice in a single day.

Today, digital reputations mean everything. So certainly spend some time taking action to grow your positive reviews. However, spend the greatest effort and energy on what’s even more important—showering your patients with pleasant surprises, thank you’s, and genuine appreciation. Set your intentions everyday on delighting patients and saying thank you. The positive word of mouth, referrals and reviews will then naturally follow.
NEW Disposable Dental Products

* As valuable as a personal referral remains, online word of mouth will continue to grow in volume and power*

Dental Practice Managers Association. Rita is also Honorary Vice President to the British Dental Practice Managers Association. She has been published in many professional publications. Rita is also Honorary Vice President to the British Dental Practice Managers Association. Learn more at www.DentalpracticeMarketing.com or email rita@rita-zamora.com.

How do we track what’s working?

Now that you are aware of several free or cost effective tools you can use, it’s important to address the question: “Why are marketing are you doing that is working and what is not?”

Another great free tool from Google that you can use is Google Analytics. Google Analytics is a free service that will help you with tracking. The service generates detailed statistics about the visitors to your website. Ask your webmaster to set up Google Analytics for your website. You’ll have the option to log-in or get reports regularly emailed to you. Google Analytics can track visitors from referring sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.), search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.), as well as key words, display advertising and pay-per-click networks. In addition, you’ll find it interesting to see which pages are most often visited and how much time is spent per visit.

If you are actively marketing on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube, another way to track what’s working is to interview patients about where they found you. One option is to add these choices to your patient registration or intake forms. For example: “Who referred you to our office?” Because of the ever increasing budgets that are being dedicated to online marketing, many offices are implementing a patient interview process to literally ask patients: “Have you seen our Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.? This gives patients a convenient option to specify exactly where they found you, and it also serves as a reminder of your presence in these platforms. As valuable as a personal referral remains, online word of mouth will continue to grow in volume and power. It’s important that you know what other people are saying about you and your practice. Utilise the tools above to help monitor your online reputation. Continue to strive for testimonials, positive word of mouth, and referrals – the importance of interviewing patients about exactly where they found you. Once you have these systems in place, your practice will be well positioned to attract new patients while at the same time allowing you to manage successful marketing initiatives.

Video and marketing with sites like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter can give practices a competitive edge. Do research before adopting one or all of these tools. They can all be valuable and effective, and not without forethought.
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What makes you hesitate?
Dr Chonghwa Kim discusses restoring missing mandibular incisors with implants

Mandibular incisors can be vulnerable to early loss due to their inherently weak periodontal support and high prevalence with respect to periodontal disease. What are the most common treatment options for missing mandibular incisors? Aside from removable prosthetic options, the restorative options for a fixed prosthesis include a conventional bridge, a resin-bonded bridge (Maryland Bridge) and implants. For a case in which one or two mandibular central incisors are missing, a three- or four-unit bridge has often been the treatment of choice. A resin-bonded bridge, in these cases, can be a reasonable alternative to a conventional bridge; whereas implant treatment, more often than not, is not suitable due to insufficient space. When more than two incisors are missing, the implant option may become the first choice for most clinicians these days.

Preparing mandibular incisors for bridge abutments is an extremely delicate procedure that often leads to root-canal treatment due to pulp damage that might occur during the procedure. Even without the risk of pulp damage, it is still quite a challenge to recreate natural contour and shade on such tiny dentition.

Dental implants have, in many cases, become the treatment of choice for restoring missing teeth and have been documented to have a high degree of success. With implant therapy, the preparation of healthy teeth adjacent to the edentulous area can be avoided. An additional advantage to the implant restoration is the maintenance of the alveolar bone, which otherwise would undergo resorption with other restorative options, hence, often complicating aesthetics.

What's happening?
What's happening in the real world? Are we comfortable enough placing implants in the mandibular anterior region? In spite of understanding both the disadvantages of conventional fixed bridgework and the advantages of implant restorations, we often make the treatment choice for missing mandibular incisors in favor of the bridge. Why is that? What hinders us from providing an implant option for patients in such cases? Restoring mandibular incisors with implants can be one of the most difficult dental treatments to perform due to the limited amount of bone and interdental space. Placing implants in

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