A new wave of digital engagement

Rita Zamora details how to scan your way to new patients with marketing QR codes

What is a QR Code?
A QR code most closely resembles a barcode. You know, like the barcode on the back of a book or many purchases you make at a store. The barcode is scanned by a barcode scanner and then reports inventory, gives price, etc. A QR code, when scanned by a consumer’s smartphone using a special QR code scanner application can lead them to a website, a text message, business information and a whole lot of other information places...with just one scan.

The codes themselves can be easily and inexpensively created on a number of QR code builder websites and then tracked to keep track of the effectiveness of any particular QR code campaign. The low cost, ease of use, and analytics make it a useful tool for dental practices.

How can a dental practice use QR codes?
Dental practices can use QR codes for everything from marketing to making access to information more convenient for patients. According to a 2011 Olswang report, one in three adults in the UK now own and use a smartphone. The report further showed that many users “couldn’t bear to be separated from their smartphones”. The report also noted that smartphone users will turn their attention to those businesses that make it easy and convenient to access information.

So rather than expect potential new patients to Google to find you, place QR codes on your business cards or brochures for easy direction to your website or even quick Google directions to your office location. You can also use it to provide instructions on aftercare for their dental practice. If you want to make the process easier and more convenient you could also provide a patient who just had a tooth removed, you could provide a QR code that will give them information on aftercare for their recent oral surgery. Not only does this create an easy way to continuously access the information but it reduces print-out cost and waste as well. Many offices have already begun using these codes. Here are a few examples of great ways to utilize this cost effective tool:

1. Boost your Facebook Business Page activity by posting signage around the office with a QR code linking to your Facebook Page. Patients can quickly and easily “like” your practice and then post a rave review of the practice on your wall.

2. Place a large QR code sign in your window. If you have a storefront practice this is sure to garner attention of passersby.

3. Put an intriguing headline and special offer QR code in your adverts. As most people rarely separate from their smartphone, they can immediately scan the code in your advert to retrieve the special offer.

4. Create a QR code campaign that will motivate new patients to schedule an appointment directly. Rather than directing visitors to the main page of your website, have them land on an easy to fill out mobile-friendly appointment page. The faster and easier you make it for people to schedule the better.

5. Are you seeing the appeal yet? QR codes make marketing more engaging, interesting and incredibly quick. With the continued rise in smartphone use, we are sure to see more of this particular type of marketing.

Generating QR Codes
When you are ready to generate QR codes for your practice, visit www.qrcode.kaywa.com. Kaywa is a popular non-commercial site that is known to be one of the simplest to use. Also a Google search of “How to generate QR Codes” will provide you with an abundance of additional options.

QR Codes: what not to do
Although generating and then scanning your QR codes are relatively simple, as with anything there are mistakes that can be made. Mashable, a top technology news blog recently released an article by Matthias Galicia about the five biggest mistakes of any QR code marketing campaign and the list warns:

1. Don’t forget to test the code - While you may be proud of your visually stunning QR code, if it doesn’t function properly, the only thing it will reap is the frustration of your patients or potential new patients.

2. Don’t make the code a multi-step process - When someone scans a QR code, they expect it to take them to the intended content immediately. Don’t bog your code down by making patients jump through hoops to get to where you want them.

3. Don’t direct your code to a website a mobile device can’t access - One of the points of incorporating QR codes into your marketing is so your efforts can be mobile. If someone scans your code only to find that your website can’t be accessed on mobile devices, your efforts weren’t very successful.

4. Don’t put QR codes in locations that don’t have a signal - Putting a code where a smartphone isn’t functioning is like putting a QR code on a deserted island. For example in a subway or elevator where internet access isn’t available.

5. Don’t forget the incentive - For most to pull out their phone to scan, a pretty appealing offer has to be in place. Make sure what you’re offering is helpful, interactive, or enticing!

In addition remember that while QR codes are still relatively new and quite clever, be sure to use them in the right context. For example, don’t use a QR code when a simple phone number or website address may be better suited. Use your QR codes wisely and sparingly. As popularity of these codes increases, people will begin to scrutinise what they will and will not scan.

Implementing QR codes into your practice marketing strategy is an entirely new and cost effective way to encourage interaction with your patients and potential new patients. Positioned correctly, QR codes are sure to garner attention for your practice. Go ahead. Take advantage of this new wave of digital engagement!

Sources:
www.olswang.com/convergence2011/