

# 3 digital marketing myths dentists need to stop believing

Are the marketing “rules” you’re following outdated or inaccurate? Naren Arulrajah says there are 3 persistent myths that dentists need to ignore. Then you’ll start to see better results in your marketing efforts and an increase in patients.

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You’ve worked hard to put your dental practice on the map—written blog posts, hired web designers, and followed all of the rules of digital marketing. Why aren’t you seeing results? It could be that those “rules” you’re following are outdated or inaccurate.

Here are three myths that you can ignore.

# 1. Keywords are everything (or nothing) in SEO.

The once-common practice of keyword stuffing declined through the years with Google algorithm changes designed to favor quality content. Some marketers have declared keywords dead, while others insist that the old rules of SEO still work. Both are myths, which can seriously impact your dental website marketing.

Yes, keywords still matter. No, keywords are not everything. Furthermore, the rules have changed. Here is what you need to know before you sit down to write that next blog post.

A good keyword is:

- Descriptive of the topic—Botox is always a popular keyword. You could write a blog post about veneers and slip in the word Botox by mentioning that antiaging isn't all about wrinkles. However, it won't bring you Botox traffic. Google's algorithm is smart enough to look for similar and related words; it will "know" the article is not really about Botox.
- Relevant to your practice—In the example, you could make Botox a keyword and the topic. If the text is high quality, it may very well earn your website some Botox traffic. That's great if your practice offers Botox. However, you probably aren't going to convert someone searching for Botox into a smile makeover patient.
- Used naturally and flexibly—Google is looking for quality, readability, and authority. Most of all, the search engine aims to serve up good content that matches the searcher's intent. Someone might search for "can Botox fix a hurting jaw?" Your targeted keyword might be "Botox treatment for TMJ disorder." If the article is good and it discusses jaw pain, it is still likely to appear in the results.

## **2. Email marketing is dead.**

Most people are selective about what they open and what they opt into. Therefore, email ceased to be an easy, effortless way to reach the masses years ago. In other words, effective spam is dead. However, well-executed email marketing campaigns are still very much alive, and they show no signs of going anywhere.

According to Optinmonster, 99% of people check email daily, with some people checking as frequently as 20 times per day. Email is a great way to reach your audience, but if it feels like spam, they won't read it. The first rule of modern marketing is that value must go both ways. The more value a marketing campaign gives the audience, the more effective (and valuable to the business) it becomes.

### **How can you make email marketing work for you?**

- Don't treat your newsletter like an advertisement—Of course you want to promote your practice. But your patients don't want to see more ads in their inboxes. They want something useful, entertaining, or both. Think practical hygiene tips, introducing new staff members at your practice, information that answers commonly asked questions, or seasonal content. If it suits your branding, you could include humorous pieces or local interest items. The possibilities are endless; just remember that people need a reason to want to open your emails.
- Use an opt-out survey—It can be frustrating when you're losing subscribers and don't know why. Most people will take the time to answer a couple of simple questions, especially if you offer easy checkbox options. For example, you could ask if the emails are too frequent, the content is not valuable, or the person moved away from your area. Always include a text box for optional additional comments. Most importantly, use this information to improve your strategy.

- Use an appealing title—Avoid misleading or clickbait titles such as “you will be shocked to learn . . .” Choose something descriptive and catchy that will make people want to open the message. The first few words are most important because a high percentage of people check email on their phones.

### **3. You can't, or you shouldn't, answers online reviews.**

We've all heard horror stories about medical professionals facing exorbitant fines due to an inadvertent HIPAA violation. Some doctors mistakenly believe that the rules forbid publicly replying to a reviewer. Others conclude that review responses aren't worth the risk.

Ignoring reviews is a surefire strategy for avoiding HIPAA conflicts, but it can also be a serious marketing mistake. If you don't respond to accusations of poor service, readers are likely to think you aren't interested in patient satisfaction. Furthermore, doctors who feel helpless to manage negative feedback are less likely to encourage patient reviews, thus eliminating a very important aspect of marketing.

Does this mean you should risk crossing a HIPAA line? Not at all! In truth, it's not hard to stay well within HIPAA's parameters, as long as you follow a few simple guidelines:

- Don't reveal any personal or medical information—It doesn't matter if the reviewer already divulged the information. Even repeating it is not allowed.
- Don't confirm that the person is or was a patient—Medical conditions or treatments aren't the only protected information. A person's status as a patient is protected health information.
- Do talk about your practice—You are free to highlight your standards of service and quality of care.

- Do provide contact information—Encourage the reviewer to contact your office. An open line of HIPAA-compliant private communication may resolve the issue. At the very least, readers will see that you tried.

## **Conclusion**

Perhaps the most dangerous myth about digital marketing is that once you learn about best practices you have a permanent recipe for success. In reality, it is constantly evolving, and there is an exception to every rule. Don't believe hyped-up myths, and don't assume something that worked once will always work. The only true recipe for long-term success is constant analysis, evaluation, adjustment, and improvement to your strategy.

***Naren Arulrajah**, president and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for more than a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full-time professionals providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call (855) 598-3320 for a free strategy session with Mr. Arulrajah.*