

# Keeping Up with Google: Is Your Dental Website Ready for Voice and Visual Search?

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If you market your dental practice online, you are surely familiar with SEO (search engine optimization). It has been the foundation of digital marketing for decades. In that time, the internet has grown and changed dramatically, as has Google itself. More importantly, what people search for, and the way they go about it is evolving rapidly.

While the importance of SEO has not changed, the practice and techniques have. And, if you are not keeping up, you are probably losing potential patients.

## The evolution of online search

In the not too distant past, all internet searches started the same way: with a few words typed in a text box. Virtually every search had the same goal, which was finding an article relevant to the search term. Therefore, website optimization was as simple as choosing the right keywords and adding them in the right places.

Today, it is not so simple. A search might start at the keyboard. It could just as easily begin with the click of a camera or with a spoken question. Furthermore, the searcher might be looking for an article. Alternately, the individual may be looking for a video, an image, a podcast, a product, or even a physical place. A successful SEO strategy is just as multi-faceted as searchers' habits and the technology that they use.

## Voice search optimization

This is the rising star of search technology. Smart devices are no longer new and novel. They are mainstream and common. The same is true of voice commands for phones and computers. Naturally, most people conduct voice searches at least occasionally, and 21 percent do so on a weekly basis.

While there are many similarities between text and voice search, there are also some important differences. Most importantly, queries tend to be longer, phrased as questions, and use conversational language.

Tips to optimize for voice search:

- Include FAQ (frequently asked questions) pages on your website.
- Use questions as article titles and subtitles.
- When a heading is formatted as a question, follow it immediately with a brief, summarized answer. You can go into greater detail in subsequent sentences or paragraphs.
- Use an informal and conversational writing style.

## **Image and visual search**

Images have long been a very important aspect of web design, adding visual appeal and holding a viewer's attention. Furthermore, images can convey information that text cannot, such as showing how beautifully your office is decorated. Even information that can be described in numbers and words is often easier to understand when presented as an infographic or other informative image.

The above points, and other well-known benefits of website imagery, relate to what happens after a person finds your website. In recent years, images have also began playing an important role in getting people to your website, due to a couple of popular search types.

### ***Visual search***

Visual search, such as Google Lens, begins with a picture. Generally, this type of search is most relevant to retailers. People often use it to find products for sale. At this time, its usefulness to dentists is limited, but it may be relevant in certain circumstances. For example, if a child wants pink braces like the neighbor kid has, the parent might try using a visual search.

To optimize for visual search:

- Use clear, high quality photos.
- Make sure the background is uncluttered and sufficiently contrasting.
- The object of the photo should be obvious and immediately recognizable.

### ***Image search***

This type of search is much more relevant to dental websites. In this case, a person is not searching with an image, but searching *for* an image. It is especially beneficial if you offer cosmetic services. Someone might want to see before and after pictures of CEREC crowns to decide if they really look natural. Another person might be looking for examples of porcelain veneers, or results of teeth whitening.

To optimize for image search:

- Include before and after photos for the procedures you want to promote.
- Include important keywords in the image titles, captions, descriptions, and alt text.
- Use unique images, not stock photos.
- Make sure the text content surrounding the image is relevant.

### **Final thoughts**

Voice and visual search are the hot trends now, but they are not replacing simple text queries. Similarly, images and other visual content is becoming more important, but text articles are not becoming less important. In other words, the days of simple SEO are over. Narrowly focusing on one content type or one search type is not enough. For a winning digital marketing strategy, broaden your horizons and embrace the latest trends.

### **About the Author:**



Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, has been a leader in medical marketing for over 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 Naren.

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