

Seven Signs Your Dental Website is Outdated (and Five Redesign Pitfalls to Avoid)

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The chances are that your first step in marketing your practice was creating a fantastic website. It was beautiful, modern, optimized, and functioned perfectly. Now ask yourself, how many years ago was that? Has it undergone a redesign or significant update since, and how recently?

It might be ready for a redesign or major update if...

1. The site does not play well with mobile – The world is going mobile, and if your website is not ready, prepare to be left behind. For several years, Google has been gradually implementing mobile-first indexing, prioritizing mobile-friendly websites. Furthermore, 68 percent of all searches in the health sector are performed on mobile devices, and 61 percent of those searchers are more likely to contact a business that has a mobile-friendly site.
2. There are outdated components – There is a good chance that some of the functionality on your website is powered by plugins or other third-party software. Furthermore, if you added those plugins a few years ago, there is a good chance some are outdated, even though you have installed the latest available version. Often, third-party software is slow to adapt to new standards, and sometimes the developer simply quits providing updates. That can lead to slow loading times, glitches, and compatibility issues with new web browsers.
3. The design is visually dated – Aesthetics are always subject to trends, whether we are discussing architectural design or the hottest colour for new cars this year. In the digital world, where images can change in a heartbeat, this tendency toward the trendy is only magnified. HTML frames, Flash players, scrolling marquees, shiny bevelled buttons, and page hit counters are just a few examples of once-popular design elements that have fallen by the wayside. If your website shows telltale signs of yesteryears trends, visitors will notice – and not favourably. That is especially important for high-tech dental offices, which need to project a progressive image.
4. The website does not represent your dental practice well – This one seems like a no-brainer, but it can happen more easily than you might think. Maybe you added a new dentist and a couple more hygienists and have a new office manager, but the bios haven't been updated. You acquire a CEREC machine, but the old content on your website does not mention same-day crowns. Or you updated your logo and revised your brand identity after the site was designed. Simply stated, your practice is constantly evolving. If your website is not updated continuously, it will quickly become outdated.

5. Accessibility is an issue – You want everyone to use your site. Furthermore, it matters to Google. While accessibility is not technically a ranking factor, Google gives an edge to websites considered easy to use. Accessibility features include adequate contrast and font size for the visually impaired, appropriate captions and video transcripts for the hearing impaired, keyboard-friendly navigation, and compatibility with adaptive technologies.

6. Your bounce rate is high – Good placement on the SERP (search engine results page) is often treated as the holy grail of marketing. However, it does not guarantee success. You might get plenty of traffic, but that is useless if people do not stay on the site long enough to take meaningful action. If your bounce rate is high, your website is not making the right first impression. Perhaps it is slow to load, the navigation is confusing, or the design is simply unattractive. Whatever the reason, it is a sure sign that something needs to change.

7. Social media integration is lacking – Is it easy for visitors to share your content on social? Does the website invite people to connect on your favourite networks? At one time, these features were optional. However, social media has become an integral part of marketing (and of daily life for many people) within the last several years. Today's trend is omnichannel marketing, which incorporates websites, social, email, and other channels into a seamless user experience.

Now what?

OK, so you have decided that your website needs a little help. How do you go about it? The first question is who will do it. Your website designer may be an individual or part of a marketing company. Either way, you will want to begin collaborating with them early on.

If you are happy with whoever created the site, you will likely want them to update it. Furthermore, they are familiar with the website, the techniques used, and the technology powering it. In this case, you can choose whether to make minor updates or do a total redesign. On the other hand, if you are moving to a new company or individual, it is usually best to start with a brand-new website.

Redesign pitfalls to avoid

While every website and project is different, there are a few commonly repeated mistakes. Here are a few that you can easily dodge:

1. Too trendy – You are not in 1990's anymore! You want to update to the latest, most up-to-date, modern-looking trends. That is great if you are enjoying the redesign process. Otherwise, it is best to opt for the timeless, classic, and tried-and-true that will not be outdated soon.

2. Cutting corners – There are many web design professionals and services available. Please don't choose the DIY website builder or your neighbour who works in landscaping but claims to know all about technology. Redesigning a website is a massive undertaking, with the potential to dramatically impact SEO (search engine optimization). You need someone with top-notch skills.

3. Unrealistic expectations – Giving your website a makeover will not lead to a sudden influx of phone calls, nor will it make your pages skyrocket to the top of Google results. What it can do is mark the beginning of a *gradual* improvement in search performance, which in turn improves lead acquisition. It is a marathon, not a sprint.

4. Not asking for advice – As mentioned above, you want to have an expert in SEO and internet technology design your website. That makes this person or team an excellent resource. Be open to suggestions and ask for input on your requests.

5. Prioritizing aesthetic details – Your site needs to look great, and it needs to reflect your dental practice’s brand identity. Yes, aesthetics matter – but there are endless “good” options in virtually any situation. Perhaps you love the look of menu style A, but it loads slightly slower than style C and D. Prioritize functionality. Be flexible, and choose the better option between C and D.

Final thoughts – don’t miss any opportunity

Social media is all about capturing the moment and using it to connect with your audiences. Never miss an opportunity to reach out to your audience, and that includes updating your website.

Are you debating between two background colours? Post a poll and ask for opinions. Will it be offline for a while? Post a notice on social media and notify your followers when it comes back. You could even ask for website redesign ideas and advice. These are not only engaging topics but also an excellent way to build anticipation for the launch of your new-and-improved site.

About the Author:



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