

Is Your Dental Content Marketing Failing? This Could be the Reason

August 8, 2022

by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing



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One of the first things that a content marketer will want to know is your target audience. If your answer is “everyone,” you will likely have a problem.

Why marketing to everyone means marketing to no one

Amazon did not become the world’s largest retailer simply by making shopping convenient; it is also because of the dizzying selection available. Whether we are talking about books or clothing, everyone has different tastes. There is no universally agreed-upon definition of interesting topics or attractive styles. What is appealing to one person is atrocious to another; what is acceptable to everyone is exceptional to no one. The same principle applies to content marketing for your dental practice.

Have you ever frozen up when trying to create content as simple as a Facebook post or short blog entry? You want to be conversational but still professional, catchy but not cheesy, attractively formatted... Every time you think it is perfected, you notice something that might be problematic. This is a common dilemma, and there is a good reason for it: the perfect piece of content does not exist. That is because aesthetics, engaging topics, enthralling language, and other elements of perfection are subjective.

Defining your target market

Let’s start by clearing up a bit of confusion. You have undoubtedly heard the terms “target market” and “targeted marketing” frequently. Despite the similarities, they mean two different things.

Targeted marketing refers to the practice of tailoring materials, channels, and other aspects of a campaign for a specific individual or audience segment. However, a “target market” is not necessarily a narrow segment – it simply means the entire group of people that comprises your market, as opposed to the general public. If we say “the target market for this campaign is...” that applies to the entire projected audience of that campaign. However, when we refer to the target market for your dental practice, it means everyone who you want as a patient.

The next question is who you want to target. There are several factors that can help define and describe your market:

- **Current patient base** – Your office records and your own knowledge of your patients are excellent data sources. In particular, look at your best patients – those who keep coming back, bring in referrals, and seek the type of services you want to increase. How close are they located to your practice, what are their average ages, and are they individuals or families...? It is okay if there are multiple answers; your target market may have multiple segments.
- **Demographics of your location** – Unless you are targeting medical tourists or other travellers, it is not realistic to market to people beyond a certain proximity of your practice. Look closely at the income level, education, household size, and any other demographic statistics available for your area. Also, draw upon your and your staff’s knowledge of the local people and culture. This local analysis will give you a clear picture of the available market.
- **Your preferred procedures** – Maybe you are full up with hygiene appointments and reconstructive work, but you really want to break into the cosmetic market. What segment(s) of the available market are most likely to seek that type of service? In a retirement community, older adults might remain active and appreciate anti-aging medicine. In a community of younger business people and university students, it might be those who consider image and appearances important for opening opportunities, such as professional networking or job interviews.
- **Feedback** – One of the simplest ways to find out what people like is to ask. Patient feedback, public surveys, focus groups, and similar research tools can give you a much deeper insight into what type of people are interested in your services and, equally important, what else they are interested in.

Narrowing it down – segments and personas

Your target market might not be everyone, but it includes everyone you are marketing to – that can be a pretty broad group. The next step is segmentation, which involves dividing that group into categories according to similarities in characteristics. This might be demographics, shared interests, or preferred dental services. Whatever criteria you choose will allow you to create targeted variants when mapping patient journeys, developing marketing strategies, and even optimizing your services.

Defining market segments can be tremendously helpful because people are grouped by commonalities that can inform your strategy. Yet, they are still groups, which can present a problem. Creating a blog post is not like writing a speech; it will not be delivered to a group but rather to an

audience of one (repeatedly). Or, if you want to make your reception area more child-friendly, you are not designing it for a mass gathering but for one family at a time.

How can you make the blog reader feel like this was personal correspondence written for them? And make the stressed parent feel like this engaging play area was created with their family in mind? You create personas, which is something like selecting fictional representatives for your market segments. Imagine a person who embodies the relevant characteristics, then add details about lifestyle, background, and personality. Approach the exercise much like you were creating a character for a novel. In fact, Google even suggests naming your personas.

Now, you are not trying to write a blog post describing tooth decay to the public, which no doubt would sound as generic as a textbook. Instead, imagine conversing with Suzie, the perpetually over-booked 35-year-old juggling a rising career, three children, and an active social life. She wants to know how serious a small cavity is, if it can wait until her kid's next routine appointment or if it warrants a special trip to the dentist, and what she can do to keep it from happening again.

Or maybe you are talking to Mark, the 75-year-old retiree who is slowing down, enjoying his golden years, and prioritizing every aspect of health and wellness. He is worried about some erosion along the gum line, wondering if it is decay, gum disease, or just a typical sign of aging. He wants to know if it is going to endanger his health and wonders if – at this age – losing his natural teeth is simply inevitable.

Conclusion

Remember this timeless quote, coined by poet John Lydgate and popularized by US President Abraham Lincoln: "You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can't please all of the people all of the time." Refining your audience with target markets, segments, and personas allows you to customize materials and campaigns to some of the people – and to make sure they are the people you want to attract to your practice.

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. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by

clicking <https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.