

Five Surprising Truths About Dental Marketing

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The savvy dental practice owner knows that it takes more than clinical skills and dedication to succeed in this competitive industry. It takes a winning marketing strategy – and that is easier said than done. In reality, some of the most basic truths and most effective methods are often overlooked.

1. Yes, your patient base is on social media

Facebook, the world's leading social network, was initially developed by and for college students. When it became available to the public, it was targeted to (and dominated by) teens and young adults. That was nearly two decades ago. Yet, many people still consider Facebook and other social networks to be the domain of the younger demographic.

Dental practices that market to seniors and even working-age adults often dismiss social media as irrelevant. That is a mistake. Why? These numbers speak for themselves:

- 94 percent of Canadians between 45 and 55 use Facebook, as do 76 percent of the over 55 age group
- More than half of Canadian adults across all age groups use instant messenger apps
- 43 percent of Canadians over 55 use YouTube, and more than a quarter use Instagram

2. You will never be finished with SEO (search engine optimization)

Your website looks great. It is user-friendly, fast loading, and it ranks well on Google. You might be tempted to mark website optimization off the marketing to-do list. That would be a mistake. In fact, it is one of the biggest and most common marketing mistakes that dentists make.

The truth is that SEO is perpetual. To say it is finished would be like saying you mowed the lawn, so you are finished with yard work. Your lawn may look great at the moment, but it will not stay healthy for long without regular care and maintenance. The same applies to a website. It will flourish and produce better and better results with continued effort – or it will fade, become outdated, and lose momentum if neglected.

Some of the most important, ongoing SEO activities include:

- Regularly adding fresh content to your website
- Acquiring high-quality links
- Keeping code and software updated, so the site functions properly
- Identifying and correcting any broken links

- Adding new features and eliminating outdated ones to keep the site modern and relevant
- Adjusting content, code, and design as needed to keep up with Google's latest requirements

3. Lead generation is not the ultimate goal of marketing

The dental marketing conversation often revolves around ad campaigns, Google search rankings, and other ways to get the phone ringing. It is easy to think of lead generation as the end goal of marketing. However, the true purpose is growing your practice. For that to happen, leads need to become new patients. Furthermore, those patients need to keep coming back.

If you are laser-focused on lead generation, then you are missing two critical facets of marketing:

- Your in-office team plays a role. A knowledgeable receptionist with excellent customer service skills can help convert leads to appointments. Quality care and a positive patient experience will help turn new patients into long-term patients. A clinical team with a great chairside manner and refined presentation skills can increase the percentage of patients who schedule additional treatment.
- You need to market to existing patients as well as potential leads. An active social media presence, email newsletters, follow-up phone calls, and effective appointment reminders help build patient relationships, increasing retention.

4. Patients don't care about your technology

You spent a small fortune (or maybe a large one) acquiring the latest laser, milling machine, or CT scanner. It is a worthwhile investment, as it can increase efficiency, save time, improve quality, and draw in new patients. At least, that is what you expect. Yet, when you announce and advertise this new state-of-the-art technology, no one seems to pay attention. Why?

The mistake most dentists make is discussing technology as if they were talking to another dentist. They discuss manufacturers, equipment versions, technical specifications, and clinical details. Most patients do not understand or care about such things. What matters to patients is how the device benefits them.

When promoting in-office technology, use talking points such as:

- Shorter appointments due to faster, more efficient treatment
- Fewer appointments
- Improved safety or reduced risks to the patient
- Enhanced comfort during treatment
- Faster healing times after a procedure
- Better cosmetic outcomes
- Longer lasting or higher quality restorations
- More accurate diagnostics

5. New patient numbers do not tell the whole story

Many practice owners and managers have a very simple method of determining the effectiveness of marketing: watching the flow of new patients. Plenty of new patients equals good marketing. No new patients equals bad marketing. Unfortunately, few things in life or business aren't that simple, and marketing is no exception. In reality, the basic new patient numbers tell you very little.

The first thing to consider is the complexity of marketing. It is not a single activity but a wide variety of techniques. For example, printed advertisements and mailers can be quite pricey, but they are not easily targeted and have shrinking audiences. Imagine spending 75 percent of your budget on these traditional methods, while digital marketing was generating 75 percent of the new leads. If you were lumping all marketing activities together and evaluating effectiveness as a whole, you would never know the difference!

There are many different ways to track the success of various marketing channels or campaigns. Some are more precise than others, and some only work for specific marketing activities.

Therefore, the most accurate tracking utilizes multiple techniques to produce the most accurate, complete picture. Some of the best methods include:

- Call tracking numbers
- Online tracking pixels
- Source-specific discount codes
- Patient surveys
- Google analytics and other third party analytic software

Marketing is not always what it seems. Furthermore, it is constantly evolving. The most overlooked universal truth about marketing is: what worked yesterday might not work tomorrow. Even if you think you have it figured out and have a winning strategy, you still need to keep learning, trying new techniques, and discarding outdated ideas.

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

www.ekwa.com/msm/ or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.