

# Set SMART Goals for Your Dental Marketing

July 27, 2022

by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing



“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

You have probably heard this famous quote by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, often mentioned in motivational and self-help texts. However, it is equally applicable to most areas of business, including marketing your dental practice on social media. In fact, we can take it a step further. You need not just a goal but a SMART goal.

## What is a SMART goal?

You know the definition of the word “smart,” and that is certainly applicable because setting good goals is an intelligent thing to do. However, in this case, it is an acronym, meaning: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

In truth, a SMART goal is a bit more than a goal. It is a concise summary – usually just one or two sentences – that describes precisely what you want to achieve, how you will go about it, a deadline, and guidelines for measuring success. You can think of it as a complete strategy implemented at a granular level. Let’s break down exactly what a SMART goal means:

**Specific:** Maybe you are using social media to boost your marketing efforts and build your dental practice’s reputation. Those are great broad goals. However, it is difficult to act on something so vague. Instead, be specific. What social media networks are you using to support this objective? How

will you use it to build your reputation?

**Measurable:** Now you've gotten specific and decided to use Facebook to increase your audience and Instagram to engage with them. Your social media analytics will tell you the follower count, impressions, clicks, shares, total reach, and more. Maybe one number is going down while another is going up. Or perhaps the numbers are going up, but not very fast. Unless you have decided which metrics best measure your goal, you will have no idea whether you are succeeding.

**Achievable:** You want people to engage on Instagram, so reaching a 100 percent engagement rate would be ideal. That is specific and measurable but not realistic. The average brand engagement rate on this network is between 1 and 3 percent. A good strategy can undoubtedly elevate your numbers beyond good, but 100 percent engagement is essentially impossible.

**Relevant:** If your current Instagram engagement rate is 2.5 percent, then you may plan on increasing it to 5 percent, but what will that accomplish? This is where you revisit the broader marketing goals. You want to build your practice's reputation. Engagement is a good measure of brand awareness, but not necessarily reputation. If people find a post offensive, it can garner a lot of negative attention.

**Timebound:** At last, you have distilled your goal into building your practice's reputation by increasing Instagram engagement to 5 percent without increasing the percentage of adverse reactions or comments. However, there is still one thing missing – a deadline. Did you fail if your Instagram stats are not better by next week? Did you succeed even if it takes ten years?

**Put it all together:** A SMART goal looks like this: "To build our reputation by having more positive interactions with our followers, we will increase our Instagram engagement rate to 5 percent within six months, without increasing negative comments or reactions."

## Choosing the right SMART goal

The SMART goal system sounds simple at first until you try to create your own. In reality, most dental practices just want to get more patients in their chairs. Lead acquisition is the obvious goal, but acquiring patients directly from social media is more challenging than you might expect.

## Social media's place in the marketing funnel

While people might discover your practice on Facebook or Instagram, most of them are going to know a little more about you before making an appointment. They will most likely read reviews on Google, check out your website, and call the number listed there. The lead would be credited to the website in your analytics, even if that is not where a person initially learned of your practice.

The marketing funnel describes the process of acquiring leads. The top of the funnel is simple awareness because a person cannot choose your practice without even knowing it exists. The next step is making a great impression so that those people consider your practice and then converting them into new patients. The funnel does not stop there because the ultimate goal is for those people to keep coming back, love your practice, and recommend it to others.

Social media tends to be most useful in the early and late stages of the funnel. It is a great place to be discovered and begin catching the interest of your audience. Although they move on to the website and other elements of your online presence before scheduling, they are likely to keep following social

accounts. That provides an excellent opportunity to build and strengthen patient relationships, allowing you to engage with them in the months between visits.

## Identifying relevant goals and KPIs

Lead acquisition is certainly something that can be measured, and improving it is excellent. However, since that is not the part of the funnel where social media excels, it is generally more productive to aim for:

**Brand awareness** – Metrics such as share of voice, post reach, and follower count can tell you if your audience is growing.

**Engagement** – Are you successfully catching your audience’s attention? Base your KPIs on metrics such as overall engagement rate, post shares, likes, and applause rate (positive interactions).

**Community** – Tracking the number of messages received, unique visitors to your profile, and mentions can show how effectively you are building relationships with your audience.

**Website traffic** – Link clicks, website traffic from your social accounts, and session length for visitors from social can tell you how effectively you are pulling people farther into the funnel.

In today’s uber-connected world, having a social media presence is no longer optional. For example, if people look for your Facebook page and do not find one, it will reflect poorly on your practice. However, whether or not your social accounts serve a purpose beyond simply “being there” depends on your strategy. And you will never know how well that strategy is working unless you set good goals and make the adjustments necessary to reach them.

### 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 visiting

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