

Harness the Power of Storytelling to Improve Your Dental Marketing

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You're serious about marketing your dental practice, and you've done your homework. You know that you need an optimized website, active social accounts, updated business listings, and quality content.

Every item on the standard to-do list for a good marketing plan is checked, yet you aren't seeing results. Why? It could be that every other ambitious dentist in town has the same "good" marketing plan.

If you want to stand out, good marketing isn't good enough. You need something extra to propel your marketing from good to great. Here are three effective strategies for accomplishing that goal.

Storytelling

Many schools have a career day where various professionals describe their experiences to help kids understand their options. Aesop's Fables teach moral lessons through fantasy. Documentaries give audiences a deeper insight into a situation than any fact sheet could.

What do these things have in common? Storytelling. It has been used across various cultures throughout history to educate and engage in a way that plain facts cannot. Stories capture the attention and imagination of the audience. They are interesting, memorable, and meaningful.

There are several ways that storytelling can boost your marketing results and patient conversions.

First, tell your story. Technology, variety of services, and credentials matter to patients. But when people envision sitting down in the dental chair at a new office, they are thinking about facing a stranger and trusting that person to perform potentially painful procedures. Mention your hobbies in your bio, publish a blog post about that charity event you hosted, post on Facebook about that plate of cookies a thankful patient brought you, tell the story of what inspired you to become a dentist...

Next, tell patient stories. Video testimonials of patients discussing how dental treatment changed their lives are some of the most powerful marketing materials. You can also describe the new confidence you have witnessed in patients and the

reactions you've gotten when people see their new smiles. Patient stories are important, but you need to be mindful of HIPAA here. Keep information anonymous or get proper written consent.

Effective Branding

You probably understand the importance of consistency and cohesiveness in your public image and digital presence. This might include your logo, slogan, color choices, fonts, and marketing message. Those things comprise your brand identity, that distinctive and memorable combination of elements that help people recognize your practice.

However, the entire concept of branding is more than a collection of details. It includes the intangible aspects of image, what your practice is known for, and why people associate with it.

All too often, a carefully crafted brand identity represents nothing more than a dental practice. People might know that Happy Smiles with the green logo is the one on Main Street, and Dental Doctor with the yellow logo is the office across town. They will probably choose the closer practice. In this scenario, brand recognition is bringing in some new patients, but not necessarily the right ones.

Now imagine people know that Happy Smiles is the one with the dentist on Main Street who wears silly hats and sings to the kids, while Dental Doctor is the one with the high-tech office across town who works wonders for people with major dental problems. Each practice's ideal patient will likely drive across town, or even travel from another city, to see the more qualified dentist.

Personalize your brand identity and marketing message with:

- What you want to be known for: Of course the answer is good dentistry, but that certainly isn't unique. However, there is something (or things) unique about your practice. Maybe it is affordable family care, high-end concierge service, painless treatment, or the best implants in town. Whatever sets you apart, highlight it.
- What your target market wants: Every dentist hopes to see more of a certain patient type. Similarly, every patient wants a dentist who truly meets his or her needs. Once you identify your perfect patient, you can define what that person wants, and craft your marketing messages accordingly.

Reputation Management

You don't have any terrible reviews, and you haven't gotten any bad publicity. All is well, isn't it? Not really. If you, like many dentists, only think of reputation management when damage control is needed, then you are missing a tremendous opportunity. In fact, building a strong reputation is one of the best ways to bring new patients through your door.

In today's internet-based world, a large percentage of a dentist's reputation is built on patient reviews. According to a [survey by Ceatus Media Group](#), 62.9% of potential patients consider online reviews extremely important when choosing a dentist, and 32.7% consider them somewhat important. A mere 4.4% of respondents said that reviews are not important to their choice of dentists.

There are two essential aspects to making patient reviews work for you.

First, get more reviews. This can be as simple as asking. You can use in-office handouts or follow-up messages encouraging feedback and include instructions for leaving reviews on various sites. Even a simple verbal request as a happy patient leaving your office will help.

Next, respond to reviews. You need to learn the HIPAA rules, though, which forbid disclosing any personal information. But a simple "thank you" or "please call our office" will show readers that you are paying attention to patient feedback and that you take patient satisfaction seriously.

Conclusion

Basic marketing best practices are well known, which means that everyone is using them. But some things cannot be duplicated. The genuine words of a happy patient, your personal story, and your unique brand are one of a kind. They are exclusive to your practice and give patients a reason to choose you above the competition.

Mr. Arulrajah is president and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists. With a team of more than 180 full-time marketers, [ekwa.com](#) helps dentists who know where they want to go get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call (855) 598-3320 or email naren@ekwa.com.