Key mistakes that may be affecting the search rankings of your dental website

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By Susan M. Hutson, with Vikas Vij

In an increasingly complex Internet search environment, it's easy for a website to lose the plot at some point, and the result could be a steady decline in search rankings. In some cases, the rankings of the website may not be affected, but the results in terms of new patients actually visiting the dentist's office may not be forthcoming.

This could occur due to two reasons — the website may be receiving irrelevant traffic or non-localized traffic of visitors who are not the target audience for the dental practice. The second reason could be that even if the website manages to pull in the targeted traffic of localized potential patients, they may be leaving the website quickly without engaging with it.

In this situation, it is important to analyze the website traffic patterns and evaluate the bounce rate of your dental website. In any case, web analytics must be reviewed on a regular basis to keep a tab on the direction that your website is taking. Web analytics can provide you accurate insights into how many unique visitors accessed your website during a given period, and how much time they spent e on a particular web page. If the web pages on your site are experiencing poor 'stickiness' in terms of the average viewing time spent, and low reader engagement levels, this is a cause for concern. This situation will eventually affect search rankings, and your website will gradually lose traffic.

Here are 10 common mistakes that could be causing your dental website to lose its targeted traffic and experience abnormally high bounce rates:

1. Poor site design
In a crowded Internet space, visitors have many choices. As a result, their tolerance levels have grown thin. Your targeted visitors who were actually visited your dental website for solutions may move away from your site if they do not find the site design attractive. They will not have the patience to review the content if the website design fails to draw their interest and makes them navigate through the content.

2. Ill-conceived homepage
According to Usability.gov, your homepage should be treated differently from other web pages. It must effectively communicate the purpose of your website and present all the options available. Visitors usually reach the homepage first, and draw an impression about the entire website from that page. It should rely more on headlines, images, videos, icons, and menus to grab the reader's attention, rather than going heavy on text.

3. Cumbersome navigability
Your website should avoid pop-ups and flash-based introductions that take time to download. These can be unnecessary hurdles that annoy readers who have very little time to navigate and want to get straight to the point. The website must open quickly, and provide intuitive and obvious paths to help visitors get to the content they're looking for.

4. Excessive use of images, videos, or graphics
Anything that drags down the speed of your dental website is probably going to work against you. It is important to use images, videos, and graphics judiciously for optimal user experience. Very high-resolution images or heavy video files may take time to download, which could disrupt a reader's flow. Readers should have a choice of whether to view a video or not, and the video should not begin automatically as the page downloads.

5. Mobile device incompatibility
According to the 2013 Pew Internet Survey, 52% of smartphone users in the U.S. access health-related information through their phones. Google recommends webmasters make their websites mobile device responsive. It can be a fatal error to continue with the old website that fails to provide a thorough experience for mobile phone and tablet users.

6. Poor text readability
It's important to use the right font sizes for headers, menu items, and body text. Each piece of information must be segmented under its appropriate category. Background color, font color and style, and color contrast should enhance the readability of the text, not undermine it. Wrong placement of icons, menu items, or images can break the flow of content readability. This can disenchant even the most avid readers who otherwise want to receive new dental.

7. Absence of site map and site search
Many dental websites make the cardinal mistake of missing out on the site map. Some of the website visitors may like to begin at the site map, while others may try to locate a relevant section from the map. If the map is not available, it may put off an enthusiastic reader who can't find the right information quickly. An internal search button is an excellent option to help readers search for specific dentistry-related information on your website.

8. Unreliable third party content
If your website provides readers with access to third party content, such as dental news or blog posts from another site, it is crucial to determine the reliability and efficiency of the content. Poorly loading third party content can slow down the speed of your website and cause distraction for the readers. It may also impact the search engine visibility of your website.

9. External links opening in the same window
This is one of the most elementary rules of retaining your website visitors, and yet a large number of dental websites mess this up. External links should open in a new window, so that when readers click on the link, it does not take them away from your website. This simple error is costly in terms of reader retention and engagement levels.

10. Broken links and poor HTTP 404 message
Having broken or outdated links that don't work on your website is one a glaring mistake, but a surprising number of websites still make this error. It diminishes the professional value and image of your dental website if it contains broken links and displays a 404 page too often. However, this can happen even to the best websites. This potentially negative user experience can be offset to some extent with a creative and useful 404 page.

These 10 common mistakes are easily avoidable. It would be a sin to let your website lose its impact, rankings, or traffic due to such careless errors. If you're concerned about the traffic flow or search engine rankings of your website, it may be a good idea to undertake a professional site audit. You may consult a dental Internet marketer to conduct an objective analysis of your website and point out any potential errors that may be hampering performance and goal achievement.