oralhealth

Top 2019 Trends in Dental SEO

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Search engines like Google work year around to maintain their stellar reputation. They want users to find only quality recommendations on their SERPs (search engine results page). And it seems that 2019 is shaping up to be a big year in the advances of search engine optimization.

You need to be aware of these trends which are making search engines smarter and more skilled at producing highly specific results. Here are the top trends that you should know in order to get your dental digital marketing strategy 2019-ready.

1. ### Featured Snippets

Google constantly strives to alter its look to serve up results in the most convenient and user friendly format. Featured snippets are the latest change where a paragraph search listing comes on top of classic blue-linked listings on the SERPs. This often appears in response to a question and the position has come to be known as 'position zero'.

The most common online dental search queries are in the form of questions. Hence, having your website appear into one of these featured snippets should be your 2019 goal. However, it is easier said than done because 99.58% pages selected for this spot are picked from the first page of listings. You will require an airtight SEO and the latest tools to make sure your page gets up there.

Your SEO strategy should include the correct content structure to jump from the first page of organic listing to featured snippet. You need to understand the function of these prominent boxes and structure your content accordingly. Google wants to sidestep the need to click on an additional link to acquire desired information by answering a question in the fastest way possible.

Take control of this trend:

Pinpoint the knowledge that potential patients might be seeking that would lead them to your website. Escalate beyond standard keyword research and find exact questions that represent informational search intent. You can use various tools for this purpose. Start reshaping your page's written content to fit the questions your patients might ask word to word. Make sure that your content has a simple 40 – 60 words description answering the query which makes it easy for Google to pull the information.

You can make it even easier by using the question in your content. Make it a part of H2 or H3 sub-header which are also called heading tags. For instance, if you are competing for the question 'how to avoid getting the flu?', then make the answer clear by creating an H2 heading that reads 'how to avoid getting the flu in 5 steps'.

2. Direct Traffic

Your reputation shall precede you in most circumstances where acquiring new patients is concerned. However, it becomes more important when you are trying to rank high in search engines. Google bases its decision to list your page or not by basing the decision on internet's perception of the trustworthiness of your brand. Back-linking is a common method of demonstrating your practice or clinic as reliable.

However, it can get difficult to get external sites to link to yours, especially if you have a new practice. The good news is that direct website visits will soon surpass back-linking's influence. It is important to get the name of your practice highlighted through social media and other strategies because patients tend to click straight to the websites they know and trust to be reliable. Your SERPs can climb higher when you have more direct traffic heading your way.

Take control of this trend:

A simple mention of your name and the name of your dental practice is one way to bolster your reputation and brand image, even if it is not accompanied by a link. This means you need to show up in relevant discussion posts and Facebook forums mentioning your practice. Another important way is to maintain an active social media presence, especially when it comes to patient support, patient involvement and overall patient experience.

These signs are considered by Google as a good reason to push your practice high up in the SERPs. Reach out to social media influencers from your dental field to give your practice a digital boost. These strategies will send a clear message to Google that your practice exists and is reliable and trustworthy.

3. Mobile Version of Websites

In March 2018, Google rolled out a new feature called the mobile-first index. Google bots now look at a mobile site before the desktop version. This can have a direct impact on how your site is ranked in SERPs. However, this does not mean that you should not take out a mobile version of your website. That would just lower the position in the SERPs.

Google also launched the mobile speed update right after the mobile-first index. Loading speed is now a factor while calculating the ranking of a mobile website. Your golden SEO ticket to have your dental practice rank high is by launching a lightning fast mobile site.

Take control of this trend:

The first step is to get a mobile version for your desktop only site. There are many platforms where any website you create, automatically generates a fully optimized mobile friendly version. Make sure you include all the best practices for a mobile website to have it perform like it should. You can improve your site's loading time by making some simple fixes like changing your image file type from PNG to JPEG and hiding unnecessary elements.

4. Wide-ranging Video Carousel

Static three-video display by Google is drawing the same interest as featured snippets. This new version allows users to scroll through 8 separate listings which makes video marketing a must for your dental practice. Visual material is known to be more patient engaging than text. Now, you have a better chance of featuring on the wide-ranging video carousel with more slots available.

Take control of this trend:

You need to identify what your potential patients are looking for. The process is similar to ranking in the featured snippets slot. Make sure you carry out extensive and relevant keyword research. Formulate those keywords into intriguing and common questions that patients might search for in

Google's search box.

The final step is to make a video answering the query. Structure the video's title and description to better fit the keyword query. 'How to' videos have had significant success in making their way to rank high in these carousels.

5. RankBrain

RankBrain is the machine-learning AI technology that is deployed by Google to process and organize its multiple search results. This system was launched in 2015 and is now known to prioritize click through rates (CTRs) and dwell time. You need to pay attention to increase both these factors if you want to rank high using Google's powerful algorithms.

Take control of this trend:

You can make more people click on your site by writing a strong title tag that Google loves. Title tags are the information that shows up on the SERPs listings. You need to make sure that you use the most effective combination of the right keywords to get found. At the same time you have to keep it enticing enough to get searchers to click on your page and mark it as the fairest listing of all.

Dwell time refers to the time a visitor spends on your page. This depends a lot on the user experience you offer to your potential patients. You might be of the opinion that font size and image arrangement do have an impact on the way your site is perceived by AI. However, SEO is directly affected by web design and should be taken seriously. You can conveniently measure the impact on the average visitor's browsing time with the design tweaks you make, by using Google Analytics to track your numbers.

6. Voice Search

It is expected that by 2020, almost 30% of web browsing will be done on screen-less devices. This is a major trend that you need to optimize for because scheduling dentist appointments among other things is something users would prefer to be completed with a voice command. However, voice search technology is still in its initial phase and each year brings new developments where SEO is concerned.

A recent study of Google Home results found that voice search highlights those suggestions that are already   ranking high on the SERPs. This is even more relevant for those pages that have landed a place in featured snippets. You can make voice search more effective by using FAQ style content on your web pages, where you list out a question in headings tag before moving to answering them.

Take control of this trend:

Everything you do by way of SEO to land your page in featured snippets will help with voice search as well. You need to work with target keywords to adjust to how a patient might inquire by speaking rather than writing. This results in patients getting specific about their inquiry. Hence, you should focus more on long tail keywords. Your potential patients are more likely to turn those long tail keywords into questions when using Siri or Alexa.

You need to make sure that you organize your content in a way that proves to Google that your dental practice has the most relevant answer to a patient query. It is recommended to use H1, H2, or H3 headers on a FAQ page or forming blog posts around popular questions in your field of practice.

Final Thoughts

Optimizing your site for search engines is essential to get seen by target patient audience. You should aim to commit to these trends if you want your site to be ahead of competition. By following the action items on these trends you can make sure that your dental website is on the cutting edge of SEO in 2019.

About the Author:

Naren 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 180+ full time marketers, www.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 to speak one-on-one with Naren.

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