

Do You Need to Adjust Your Dental Marketing Strategy?

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Do you feel like the world has turned upside-down in the past few months? If so, you are not alone. Odds are, most of your patients – as well as fellow dentists – would agree. Even as most medical practices reopen for non-urgent care, it is far from a return to normal. From patient policies to clinical procedures, virtually everything has changed. You might be wondering if your marketing strategy needs to change as well. The answer is “yes and no.”

What has changed

- **Perceived safety** – In the past, a medical office felt like a very safe place to be. The risk of infection remains very real until – and possibly after – a vaccine is developed. People are going to be nervous, and they will be more interested than ever in safety precautions.
How to address it: Convey trustworthiness, emphasise your medical expertise and commitment to safety, and communicate your coronavirus-specific protocols. Help patients feel safe returning to your practice.
- **Financial challenges** – Cost has always been among the greatest barriers to care, and it is now more complex than ever. With many businesses shuttered or operating at a reduced capacity, millions have seen their incomes interrupted, decreased, or eliminated. Because the loss of employment typically means the loss of insurance, many people are suddenly without coverage or transitioning to public assistance.
How to address it: Now is the time to promote in-house savings plans, discounts, third-party financing, and other assistance for uninsured patients. If you accept Medicaid, or a wide variety of insurances, make sure it is mentioned on your website. People will be looking for a dentist with options that fit their new situation.
- **Telehealth is here to stay** – Expect an increased demand for telehealth services, even after people feel safe returning to the office. They have experienced the convenience of medical

consultation from the comfort of home, and the benefits of fast answers in emergencies. Many of them will not want to give up that convenience.

***How to address it:** Do not think of telehealth as a temporary measure, and certainly don't discontinue it just because your office is reopening. Embrace it and promote it.*

- **Trends and patient preferences are changing** – The demand for cosmetic treatment will probably continue, but people are more likely to seek subtle changes and a natural appearance. Plastic surgeons noticed early on that the public, unable to visit barber shops and beauty salons, was becoming accustomed to natural appearances, causing the overdone, “Hollywood-perfect” look to fall out of favor. Other fields of cosmetic medicine, including dentistry, will likely see the same trend.

***How to address it:** Review then photos on your website and in marketing materials. Are the smiles too perfect? Do the people look like models in a staged setting? Choose your images and marketing messages carefully. You want to showcase beautiful results, but not unnatural ones. Opt for relatable, realistic images.*

What has not changed

Consumer trends, clinical safety protocols, and even the furniture in your reception area are different. Of course, you need to adjust your marketing strategy to keep up with the changing times. However, you do not need to dismantle it and start over.

In reality, the core principles of good dental marketing will remain unchanged, before, during, and after a crisis. Now is a good time to remember the old maxim, “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” If your plan is built on a solid foundation, then you are well equipped to endure the unexpected – even a global pandemic. This includes:

- **Integrity** – Devious SEO techniques, questionable claims, and intrusive marketing tactics might work for a short time, but they will catch up with you. Focus on building a sterling professional reputation because it is the foundation for enduring success.
- **Value** – Whether you are creating a video, blog, or even social media post, it should provide value. Several months ago, a reminder to take time from your busy morning for brushing and flossing might have been valuable. Now, tips for avoiding cross-contamination from storing toothbrushes in a common area might be valuable. The topics may change, but the importance of value does not.
- **Quality** – Search engines and humans alike are seeking good content. No matter if the trending search term is “COVID-19” or “teeth whitening,” do not stuff it in an unrelated

article just for clicks. If you want to target a search term, take the time, and make the effort to create quality, engaging, educational content.

Conclusion

Yes, you should adjust your marketing strategy, and you should keep adjusting it as the situation evolves. That is true of the current pandemic, and anything else that affects your patients of practice. In fact, the best strategies are fluid, because technology and public trends are always evolving. However, a solid foundation and focus on long-term goals is equally important.

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.

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