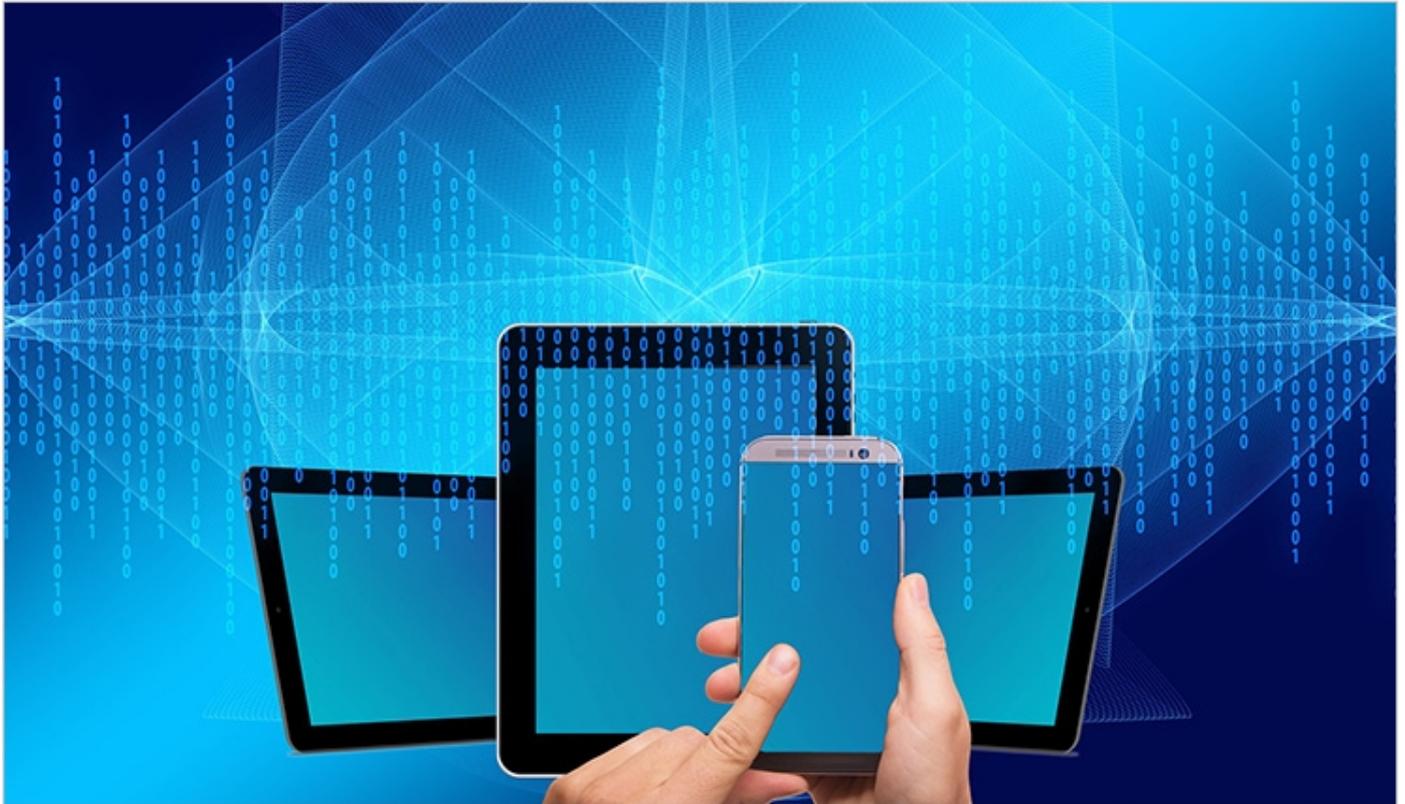


The Top 7 Digital Marketing Predictions for Dental Practices in 2017

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2017 is just around the corner, and the big question for dental practices is how it will shape the digital landscape. The biggest disruption could come in the form of Trumpcare. Will the President-elect introduce minor changes to the Affordable Care Act, or will he completely revamp the American healthcare system?

While it is difficult to say how things will play out for the nation's healthcare system under a new administration, the one place where we can safely make predictions is the digital landscape. A lot changed in 2016, and based on those trends, here is a compilation of some of the major areas of focus for dental practices as we step into 2017.

Mobile in 2017

Mobile communication hardly needs any introduction or explanation. The mobile domination that began in all seriousness in 2013 picked up steam in 2014 and 2015 and turned out to be one of the biggest areas of focus all through 2016. Your dental website and blog, your email and social campaigns, and any other marketing media you use have a higher chance of attracting audience attention if it is optimized for mobile devices. This narrative is going to continue in 2017 and beyond because the small screen is the screen of choice for most people.

Personalization is the New Marketing Mantra

Brands such as Amazon and Sephora have been killing the art of personalization. It's not about being on a first-name basis with your patients or using their names in marketing emails. Personalization requires a deeper and better understanding of audience behavior. If you know the spending habits of your audience, and if you know their preferences and the kinds of devices they use, among other things, targeting them becomes easier. Instead of carpet bombing them with marketing messages, use personalization to connect and build better engagement with current and potential patients.

Content Marketing Strategy

The days of random and scattered content are long gone. Digital consumers want content that is personalized to their needs and expectations. The most effective content format is original, value-based and informative, and easy to understand. Pieces that are customized to these guidelines are the ones with highest engagement potential. Mix up your content marketing strategy to include articles, blog posts, social posts, and visual items. Also, be sure to back your content strategy with an editorial calendar, as it allows you to keep track of how your content is performing.

The Power of the Influencer

YouTubers, Instagrammers, and bloggers are the new social engagement favorites for brands. Products or services that are endorsed by “influencers” naturally find favor with digital consumers. The reason why influencer marketing is set to make big strides in 2017 has a lot to do with the fact that digital natives, in particular millennials and Gen Z, tend to avoid or completely reject traditional advertising.

The arrival of the influencer in this scenario can be a welcoming marketing option for dental practices that want to connect with audiences who favor social proof in the form of endorsements from their favorite social media star or a reputable industry influencer. Dental practices can use influencer marketing to showcase the value of their content and their services in a way that is both educative and entertaining.

Coordinated Cross-device Marketing

Marketing today happens on multiple platforms, is delivered in multiple formats, and is consumed over multiple devices. Desktop and mobile broadly define the device types that are widely used to consume digital content. This means that optimizing for different screen resolutions and sizes is crucial. This also means dental practices need to ensure their marketing happens in a coordinated and consistent manner. In addition to optimizing for multiple devices, it is important for practices to track metrics, which are crucial to understanding how far their marketing strategies are delivering on set goals.

Video Supremacy

Video has been the digital darling for a long time now. Social visual channels such as Snapchat are on the rise, and for good reason—people love videos! However, even traditional social channels such as Facebook are increasingly focusing on video engagement and delivery over their platform. That is the kind of reputation video commands in the digital space.

Most patients will prefer watching a video on a dental procedure over reading about it in an article or blog post. For dental practices, the benefits of video marketing are numerous. The engagement potential of videos is high, they are easy to create, and they come with great social sharing potential, which makes them a crucial aspect of healthcare marketing in 2017.

Native Advertising for Dental Practices

Native advertising is an effective option for dental practices that want to create a buzz for their brand name. With native advertising, practices can benefit by generating “impressions” and click-backs to their websites. The pull with native advertising is that it is featured in places that a practice does not own, which means the reader does not have to worry about reading practice-specific marketing rhetoric.

The publication, blog, or news aggregator site publishes the sponsored content, which shows up in the audience feed. If readers then find the content to be engaging, they have the option of either clicking on the URL or further engaging with the practice. Native advertising can be used to educate potential patients, raise brand awareness, or highlight a particular product or service in front of target audiences. It can also help practices address the “spam” factor, which unfortunately and quite often overshadows useful content across the web.

Conclusion

Standing out from your competition is important. But it is equally important that you use your marketing to give your business better definition and engagement potential if you want to retain your patient base and make your practice attractive for potential patients. Customize your marketing plan based on audience preferences, and make the most of these strategies and trends in your 2017 marketing mix.

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 more than 140 full-time marketers, ekwa.com helps dentists who know where they want to go get there by dominating

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