

activities. It's very important to keep in touch regularly via print and online avenues.

Having online reviews, especially positive ones, is vital as parents go through their vetting process for the dental office. Reviews should be a part of the practice's social media sites and available on all mobile devices. It should be easy for these parents to find and contact the office, find details that validate the practice's credibility, and get a good feeling about the practice. Including a virtual tour of the office is an excellent tool. This great content should be partnered with a call to action and readily available contact information. Importantly, everything should look modern and use the most current digital tweaks to appeal to millennials.

Because millennials also care about cost, dentists should be clear and transparent when talking about fees and other costs. The billing office should understand the need for such transparency. It's also important to deliver value, offering the best care for the children of these parents.

Clinical Significance

Pediatric dentists must deal with millennials more often than many dentists because they are the parents of their patients. Winning their trust and keeping them as active parent/patients can be challenging. With a good understanding of the most common characteristics seen in persons in this generation, the dentist should be able to maintain this patient base.

Klinghoffer S: The millennial effect. *Dentaltown*, May 2017, pp 98-103

Reprints not available

Online marketing strategies

BACKGROUND

With any online marketing strategy or plan, the dentist should make the effort to understand some basics of website ownership and search engine strategies. If the dentist can answer a few basic questions about hacking, online directories, and tracking results of the marketing effort, he or she will be more secure and confident of the practice's online marketing presence.

HACKING

The website is a dynamic component of the office's online marketing presence. To protect it from hacking, it's important to complete a quick health check every 3 months. Among the questions to ask are whether a backup of the site was done recently, whether plug-ins and other add-ons are secure, whether fill-in forms on the site work and if the people who are supposed to receive messages or e-mails from the site actually do, if the site phone number works, and if the login information to the File Transfer Protocol (FTP), website administrative backend, and hosting platform is available.

All of this information can be obtained through a simple phone call to the company that manages the site. If there has been a recent transition to a new vendor or if part of the website management is done in-house, it's vital to ensure that the answers to these questions are known. This quick health check can avoid security issues, downtime, and having an ineffective online presence.



ONLINE DIRECTORIES

A website is a good start, but the site should be legitimized by setting up accurate profiles on sites such as Yelp, Google Local, Bing Places, Superpages, and Manta. These help to maximize the reach of the website. Specific advantages are as follows:

1. The address or hours for the practice can be verified by searchers, avoiding loss of business.
2. Search engines use such listings as "trust signals" that the site is in good standing. They contain links that go back to the website and important backlinks are vital.
3. The listings build a protective wall when someone searches the site. If a search is done using a search engine, the searcher should see results that are under the control of the website owner.

The directories should be viewed as extensions of the website. Potential customers who search for the dentist's services will find consistent hours, accurate addresses, and working phone numbers. Online directories relate to organic rankings and increase conversions to customers.

TRACKING RESULTS

Measures should be in place to determine the effectiveness of an online presence. These measures will help in determining where to put marketing dollars. Rather than trusting a single entity to

provide such tracking, it's wise to use a combination of tracking tools.

Google Analytics tracks how much traffic the website gets on a daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly basis and is free. These basic tasks are easily set up, but it can also be used to track conversions. However, it's important to first understand the data and its obvious trends. This includes determining when the busiest web traffic occurs each week, the time of the year with the most web traffic, and other information.

If the office runs AdWords, Yelp advertising, or another paid marketing service, it's possible to track and record calls. Like most busy professionals, the dentist may miss calls and lose potential business if phone calls aren't answered professionally or effectively. It's important to take the caller's name, phone number, and e-mail address early in the conversation. Handling callers is critical to building a practice.

Clinical Significance

If you check the website and keep it updated, track your marketing returns, and try promotions and other marketing strategies, it's possible to keep a handle on how online marketing is working. If you decide to turn the whole process over to a professional, it's important to get at least 2 or 3 quotes so you can find the right fit to take your marketing efforts to the next level.

Harbison S: Untangling web marketing. *Dentaltown*, June 2017, pp 82-85

Reprints not available

RELATIONSHIPS

Building relationships



BACKGROUND

Dentistry is a relationship-oriented practice for the most part. Patients see their dentists and dental team as trusted professionals who are dedicated to providing them the best dental care. Building these relationships is more challenging in the current fast-paced world, but also more important than ever. A simple process can be used to help build relationships with patients. The steps include demonstrating interest in patients as individuals, gathering information about them, and gaining a high level of trust.

SEEING PATIENTS AS INDIVIDUALS

Before beginning oral health care, members of the dental team should engage the patient in a friendly conversation. One goal is termed the Golden 10 and is focused on gathering 10 personal facts that will allow the team to quickly make personal connections with patients when they visit the dentist. The facts can be about anything but should help the practice develop rapport with the patient. Any facts learned should be recorded in the patient's file for future reference.

New patients to a practice can experience a range of emotions from a simple need to get on with the hygiene appointment to fear and trepidation. If the staff can learn 10 personal facts, it

may help the patient relax. The relationship can quickly move from professional health care collaboration to friendship with this approach.

GATHERING INFORMATION

The Golden 10 provide a foundational database that staff members can use each time the patient visits. Patients are often flattered that staff members remember such things and become willing to move to a closer relationship. New information can be obtained by simply building on what is already known or may be the result of asking "What's new?" Each time new facts are added, the relationship is deepened, the patient values the office more, and trust is increased.

Clinical Significance

Patients appreciate efforts made by dental staff to take an interest in them as individuals. As a result, they are more likely to remain loyal to the dentist and the team. These strategies help to develop strong interpersonal relationships even in the fast-paced world we live in today.