

DENTAL PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



February 2021

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10th Anniversary



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HOW IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IS SHAPING DENTISTRY?



Artificial intelligence in dentistry will revolutionize everything we do in dental industry. Since its inception in the 1980s, the field of intelligent systems has come a long way.

The human brain has been one of the most intriguing structures to researchers and technologists for as long as the history dates back.

Over centuries newer technologies have developed based on principles that try to mimic the functioning of the human brain, however even today the machine that can think like a human is still a dream. An enormous amount of modern computer and technologies were inspired by Aristotle's early attempts to formulate the logic and thinking through his syllogisms (three-part deductive reasoning).

In 1950, devised a machine that could decode encrypted messages. It was designed to determine whether a computer exhibits intelligence. Today, we know a similar function as "artificial intelligence" (AI).

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) DEFINITION

AI is a field of science and engineering that deals with the computational understanding of what is commonly called intelligent behavior and the creation of artifacts that show such behavior.

AUGMENTED REALITY AND VIRTUAL REALITY

Augmented reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) must go hand in hand. They bridge the digital and physical worlds. Both of these systems, are widely used in the dental field.

Dentistry is a unique profession in healthcare and is extremely demanding as requires assimilation of large amounts of knowledge combined with the mastery of clinical skill.

With the help of artificial intelligence in dentistry and augmented reality systems, the patient can try a virtual prosthesis, which can be modified until the patient is satisfied and the final prosthesis is made exactly according to these specifications.

The AI systems along with virtual reality have been used not only to reduce dental anxiety but are also regarded as a powerful tool for non-pharmacological control of pain.

Today, the most prevalent subfields of AI include the following:

Machine learning—Machines can use neural networks, physics, and statistics to find insights in data without being explicitly programmed to do so.

Deep learning—This is the learning of complex patterns in large amounts of data. Think image and speech recognition.

Cognitive computing—This aims to simulate human processes through image and speech interpretation and responding appropriately.

Computer vision—This recognizes content in photos and videos.

Natural language processing—This is the ability of computers to analyze and generate human speech.

Because computers are able to process large amounts of data and recognize patterns within that data to accomplish tasks, scientists are already using AI in caries detection.

The applications of these artificial intelligence technologies such as expert systems, the game and theorem demonstration, natural language processing, image recognition, and robotics in various fields such as telecommunications and aerospace have become manifold. Technology has also revolutionized the field of medicine and dentistry over the past decade.

Virtual dental assistants based on artificial intelligence are available on the market today. Like virtual assistants, the software can perform many simple tasks in the dental clinic with greater precision, less workforce, and fewer errors than human counterparts.

In this post, we will share how this technology is shaping the dental industry.

Here are some of the characteristics of AI that offer promising realities in the dental care sector:

SMART TEETH TECHNOLOGY

Smart technology for teeth is completely changing dental care. It could help you to better understand the link between your teeth and overall health.

Artificial Intelligence in dentistry can help formulate smart teeth. Smart toothbrushes, for example, give dentists the ability to check their patient's dental information in real-time. They can get an insight into what goes on inside their patient's oral cavity, such as food intake, brushing habits, and dental issues. The dentist can then evaluate patient data and see what tips and advice they can give to their patients.

DENTAL ANALYTICS

A successful dental practice relies heavily on how effectively you can run your office. Without data-driven dental practice analytics, it would be harder for you to get an idea of how you are doing. The use of dental analytics can help dentists manage their services through software. This technology allows dental professionals to focus on providing the best oral care of their patients while managing their business operations at the same time. This way, there is an assurance that the patient's welfare is prioritized, which would eventually increase your bottom line.

ALERTING THE PATIENTS AND DENTISTS

Artificial intelligence in dentistry can help alert the patients and dentists about checkups whenever any genetic or lifestyle information indicates increased susceptibility to dental diseases. (E.g. periodontal screening for patients with diabetes and oral cancer screening for those who habitually use smoked or smokeless tobacco).

VOICE RECOGNITION

Speech recognition and interactive interfaces allow AI software to help the dentist perform various tasks. For example, the AI software can document all necessary data and present it to the dentist much faster and more efficiently than a human counterpart.

These days, speech recognition technology is universal. Artificial intelligence has already begun to accelerate voice command capabilities. Google Home and Amazon Echo are examples of commonly used voice control technologies that rely heavily on artificial intelligence and speech recognition to meet user expectations and automate daily and home activities within the home.

IMAGING SYSTEMS INTEGRATIONS

Because of its unique ability to learn, AI can be trained to perform many other functions. It can be integrated with imaging systems like MRI and CBCT to identify minute deviations from normalcy that could have gone unnoticed to the human eye. Using AI can also accurately locate landmarks on radiographs, which can be used for cephalometric diagnosis. This happens simply because of its ability to acquire information and synchronize effectively.

Artificial intelligence approaches combined with imaging can diagnose conditions such as oral cancer, with applications ranging from low-cost screening with smartphone-based probes to algorithm-guided detection of heterogeneity and margins of the oral lesion using the optical coherence tomography.

SURGERY

One of the greatest applications of Artificial Intelligence in Dentistry is in the field of oral and maxillofacial surgery with the advent of robotic surgery. A crucial challenge in the field of robotics is simulating human body motion and human intelligence. However, AI has revolutionized the field of surgery and today there are many robot surgeons who perform semi-automated surgical operations with increasing efficiency under the guidance of an experienced surgeon.

Finally, one of the most innovative applications of artificial intelligence in dentistry is seen in the field of "bioprinting", where living tissue and even organs can be constructed in consecutive thin layers of cells that in the future could be used for the reconstruction of hard and soft oral tissues lost due to pathological or accidental causes.

CONCLUSION

It is without a doubt that artificial intelligence systems are of great help in the field of dentistry and dental education.

The field of artificial intelligence in dentistry has grown tremendously in the last decade. Advances in AI such as neural networks, natural language processing, image recognition, and voice recognition have transformed the field of medicine and dentistry enormously.

I encourage you to look into artificial intelligence in dentistry, be an early adopter because this will change the practice and change your life outside of dentistry as well.

Beware of Personal Financial Hazards

Failure to Take Advantage of Tax Efficiencies Available Under the Law: Are You Building Any Sources of Tax-Free Future Income?

Income Taxation

The highly intricate income tax system is very efficient at taxing almost every type of income stream in some way. Some types of income are taxed very heavily every year while others are taxed at lower rates. Without careful planning, sources of tax-free future income might never be created.

Do you have multiple income streams? Which taxes apply to them? Payroll taxes (Social Security, Medicare), self-employment tax, ordinary income tax, capital gains tax, net investment income tax, state income tax, or municipal taxes? Do you have any income that is growing without taxation, any tax-free income? When was the last time your CPA discussed creating sources of tax free income in future years, or have they only focused on reducing this year's income tax burden? Do you have the time to find the tax laws that allow for tax-free future income? Do you know how to apply them? Do you qualify to use those strategies?

Many people don't know how many different income tax laws they are subject to each year so they don't act to create tax-advantaged or tax-free future income. What income tax laws apply to your income sources?

Let's look at a hypothetical example.

Are your income streams subject to multiple types of taxation without any that are income-tax-free?

Karen is a renowned obstetrician and a partner in the ob/gyn group at Metroville Regional Medical Center. She earns \$280,000/year. Karen owns a rental property that produces \$20,000/year in rental income. She earns a couple thousand dollars per year in interest on her checking and savings. Karen's husband, John, is a successful regional sales representative for a national construction supply firm. John's annual wages are over \$180,000.

With household income of almost \$500,000, Karen and John are subject to a lot of income tax liability

All of their income is subject to multiple taxes! A large portion is earned for the government. Think of how

hard it can be to reach financial goals with such high tax friction!

Also, remember that many dollars growing for retirement have to be taxed (investment gains are taxed upon sale or account distribution) and given to the government before you can use what is left over for retirement living and goals.

You Have Options

What if you could use dollars that already had to be taxed today to create tax-free income in the future?

What if there was a strategy to get tax-deferred accumulation no matter what your level of income?

What if your retirement resources didn't all have to be taxed before use during retirement?

What if you could improve the performance of low yielding cash while also protecting your family's future?

What if your strategy eventually returned more than you put in, without tax, while leaving your family a legacy?

What if there was a way to create the dollars needed in the future for pennies on the dollar today?

Let's Talk

There are several powerful strategies that can help you accomplish these, and many other, personal financial goals. Let's sit down and talk and you can decide if any of these strategies might be of interest to you.



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The Top 10 Tips for Successfully Utilizing Temporary and Flexible Staffing

By Melissa Turner, BASDH, RDHEP, EFDA



In the wake of the COVID-19 shutdown, flexible staffing is more important than ever for our dental industry. With dental practice owners and team members navigating new work-life balances while at home—and implementing new clinical workflows and virtual appointments while at work—maximizing the benefits of temporary and flexible staffing is key for the future success of dental practices everywhere.

In the years leading up to the shutdown, dentistry had already seen a steady increase in the use of temporary clinical staff members. Even more recently, dental professionals started to consider temping as a viable career choice, which brings us to the present. Temp staff members are in demand as dental practices learn to rely on dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants, and administrative staff to cover open shifts thanks to maternity leave, vacation, or the last-minute sick leave.

As the world continues to adjust to our new normal, dentistry is adjusting as well. No matter what we've collectively been through in 2020, one thing's for certain: the future of dentistry is bright, hopeful, and full of flexible staffing! Read on to discover the top 10 tips for successfully utilizing temporary and flex staffing in your dental practice.

1. Be inclusive. Topping the list is the idea of having a mindset of inclusivity. Consider temporary staff members as an integral extension of your team. Do you

order one for the temporary staff member. Are you having a birthday celebration over lunch? Go out of

your way to invite the temp too. Whether you use a temporary staff member for one or multiple shifts, treat them as if they are an extension of your permanent team.

2. Plan ahead. Flexible staffing is most notably appropriate when the unexpected happens, such as filling last-minute shifts for team members who are out sick. But the real secret is using flex staffing to *plan ahead* for those times when you or your team *anticipates* a change in schedule—for example, the odd field trip, the all-day wrestling championship, that one day out of the year that's filled with necessary doctors' appointments and school physicals. Many temp workers prefer to fill their schedules weeks or months in advance. Planning in advance allows increased flexibility for your permanent staff, leading to an added bonus of boosting team morale.

3. Communicate clearly. As always, communication is key. At a minimum, connect with your temporary workers the day prior to their shift to confirm arrival times, parking, PPE offerings, lunch break, and other significant details. The more information you communicate to them, the better experience it will be for all involved. Communicating clearly also creates a safe space for the temporary staff member to ask questions when necessary.

4. Optimize your workflow. Optimizing a clinical workflow not only has a significant impact on temporary staff members but on permanent staff as well. Ensuring each operatory is identical in setup and supplies helps when last-minute op switches are necessary. Also, take into consideration traffic flow in the hallways, sterilization room, and at the front desk. Optimizing workflow increases efficiency and helps the temporary staff member easily adapt to a new environment.

5. The power of paper. In a time when digital charts are the standard, it's easy to underestimate the power of paper. When using temporary staffing, be sure to put yourself in their shoes and prevent hiccups before they begin. Print out labels for drawers, cupboards, and counters. Create a paper document that includes an office layout, common passwords, and step-by-step directions on how to take digital images and how to add information to a patient's chart. Above all else, always have a pen and notepad in the op so the clinician can jot

down notes for the time when the unavoidable computer glitch occurs (and it will!).

6. Assign an “anchor.” Think back to when you started a new job. Whether it was a clinical position or working as a cashier at your local grocery store, first days are often dreaded and filled with feelings of being perpetually lost. Keep in mind that temp staff members have chosen a career full of “first days” and often feel as if they are floundering in an empty ocean. The solution is as easy as assigning them an “anchor”—a team member who gives them a tour of the office, shows them the ropes, and serves as a sounding board when and if they have questions. Though anchors work best when they are in the same role as the temporary staff member (i.e., a dental hygienist who is a permanent part of the team should be an anchor to the temporary dental hygienist), the important part is to simply identify and assign a host.

7. Review the schedule. Plan ahead to make the temporary clinician’s day as easy and pain-free as possible. Review the patient schedule prior to the day and write down the expected procedures for each patient, along with any notes specific to the patient. Jotting down things such as “Mary prefers a blanket” or “John’s son is in dental school” helps your patients feel comfortable with the “new employee.” Prevent the avoidable by rearranging schedules so that patients who require complex care are scheduled with a permanent team member. Remember, the faster the temporary staff member adapts to the day, the more comfortable your patients will feel with them.

8. Play favorites. The secret sauce for flexible staffing is to play favorites and use the same temporary staff member repeatedly. Not only does this allow better cohesiveness between permanent and temporary staff, but it can even allow continuity of care for your patients. Clinicians who choose a career in temping often rotate their days through five to 10 dental practices that they know and love! When you invite your favorite temp clinician into your practice over and over again, pretty soon they’ll begin to feel like a natural member of your team.

9. Follow up. Speaking of favorites, following up with a temporary staff member after their shift is a great way for your dental practice to get on the temp’s “favorite places to work” list. Briefly following up and thanking them is acceptable, but don’t be afraid to offer positive

patient feedback or ask if there was anything you could have done to improve their experience at your practice. And if they do provide critique...

10. ...listen closely to your temps! Many temporary staff members will tell you that within the first few hours of working in a dental practice, they can easily give you and your practice pointers that will help improve efficiency and perhaps even your bottom line. Those who choose to temp oftentimes work in hundreds of dental practices over the length of their career and literally see the good, the bad, and the ugly. They witness what works, what doesn’t work, and often learn tips and tricks that they are eager to share with you. Your temporary staff members can make recommendations about the best products and services to use as well as exactly what you should stay away from. And when they do, listen closely to them.

The future of dentistry is bright, hopeful, and full of flexible staffing. Be sure to incorporate these top 10 tips into your dental practice so that you, your practice, and your patients can thrive!



11 Effective Dental Patient Marketing Methods Your Practice Should Use

Disruptiveadvertising.com



All dental practices understand the importance of dental patient marketing. It brings in new patients, and it can even help to strengthen ties with existing patients. Marketing is essential if you want your practice to thrive.

It's easy to know that you *should* market your dental practice. It's much more difficult, however, to know exactly *how* to do that.

There's no one right answer to this, and there's a large number of different strategies you can use. For most practices, using a combination of several different dental marketing methods will yield the best results. Not sure where to start? Let's take a look at 11 of the most effective dental patient marketing strategies you can use to market your dental practice.

1. Get Involved with the Community

It goes without saying that if your practice is in Ohio, you won't really be treating patients in Kentucky. Dental practices, by their nature, are local businesses, and they rely heavily on the local community to provide patients.

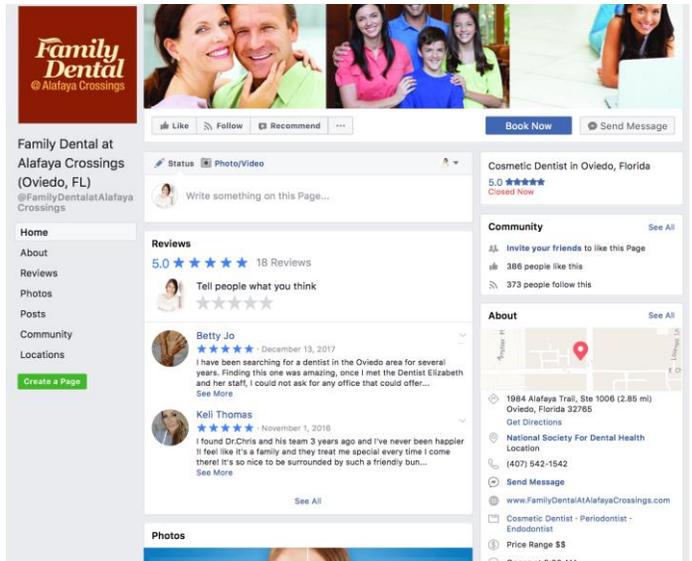
Get involved with your community. This can include anything from attending festivals or sponsoring a little league team, both of which allow you the opportunity to build relationships in person.

You can even teach a class on dental hygiene at an elementary school, or share your knowledge at the local University. This lays an excellent foundation for how the community will view you, and it gives you a chance to engage in some word-of-mouth and direct marketing.

2. Build a Community on Social Media

Social media gives your practice another excellent way to reach out to potential patients and build or strengthen relationships. This goes for existing patients, too.

Now, when someone follows you on social media, they won't only be hearing from you once every six months—they'll have a constant source of communication with you year-round.



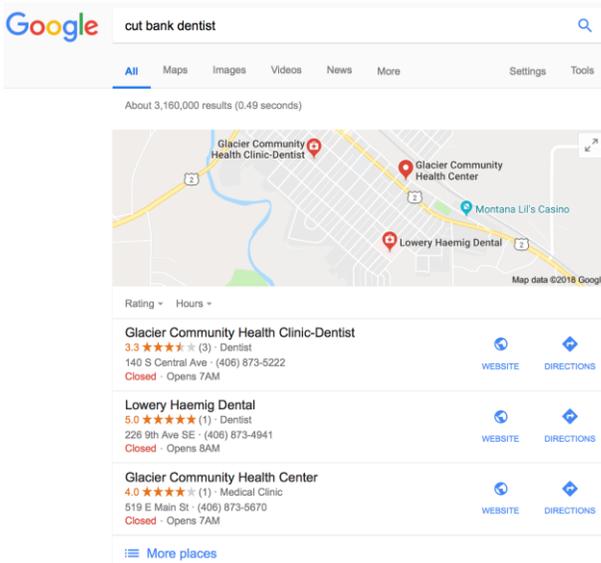
Facebook is an excellent platform that dental practices can use to build online communities of their patients.

In addition to staying in touch and generating conversation, you can also provide updates and information (including contact information) and you can collect reviews from existing patients. This can provide new patients with more potential touchpoints, and a better immediate first impression whenever they find you.

3. Focus on Local SEO

Search engine optimization for all essential dental terms can help your business, but local keywords will be what really brings you new clients. Who cares, after all, if a patient in New York City finds your site if you're based on Arizona?

No one. That's who.



Local SEO is the way to go for dental patient marketing. This means that you'll want to rank for terms like "Chicago dentist" instead of just "dentist," or "best Chicago orthodontist."

Not only will this help you find your target audience who is Googling for exactly these terms, it will also give you an edge in voice search, where users ask Siri or Alexa to help them find a local dentist "near me."

4. Create a Strong, Well-Designed Site

There's about a 70% chance that a potential patient's first interaction with you will be on your site, so it *must* make a good first impression. Your site needs to look professional, be well-organized for easy navigation, and be thorough in the information it offers visitors.



5. Use Content Marketing to Offer Value

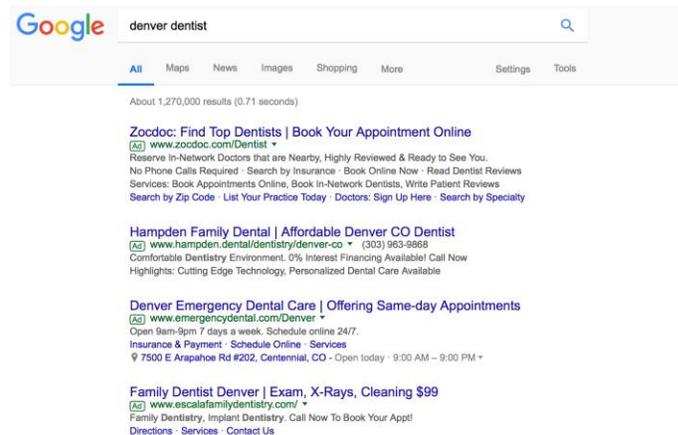
Content marketing is the practice of using content like blog posts or ebooks to bring visitors to your site, build relationships with them, and eventually convert them into patients.

On-site content marketing in the form of a blog or FAQ gives you an opportunity to regularly add new content (and keywords) to your site, increasing your overall ranking and sending more traffic to your site.



6. Run AdWords Campaigns

Google AdWords is a strong pay-per-click platform that allows you to have your ad displayed to users who are searching for certain keywords. If they're looking for "Orlando dentist," your ad for your Orlando practice could pop right up.



When using AdWords campaigns, you'll definitely want to be targeting location-based keywords in order to increase the relevance of your ad placements. Use your descriptions and headlines to highlight unique offers, or other features of your practice that set you apart.

7. Postcards & Mailed Offers

A dentist office has a big advantage over plenty of other businesses; they know that their audience will be local. Because of this, if you send out post cards or mailed offers to people within a set radius of your office, you know that you're guaranteed to hit your target audience. Everyone needs good dental care, after all.

In addition to sending out rounds of postcards every so often to attract new patients, you have a few additional strategies you could use to target specific high-value potential patients. This includes:

- Sending brochures about upscale cosmetic procedures to high-income neighborhoods, where the homeowners are more likely to be able to afford them
- Including a flyer with a discount in the welcome packet that's given to new homeowners after they change their address. If they've just moved to the area, after all, they don't have a dentist yet

8. Appointment Reminders

Growing your practice isn't just about attracting new patients. Maintaining relationships with your existing patients matters just as much.

Sending them appointment reminders—or reminders to schedule their appointment—is a great re-engagement method and a sure-fire way to make sure they're getting the care they need.

Appointment reminders can come in the form of:

- Emails
- Texts
- Phone calls (this may be the least preferred method)
- Post cards (there's always the risk these get lost or delayed in the mail)

Many practices use a combination of a physical reminder, like a postcard, with a digital reminder like an email or text.

9. Newsletters

Newsletters are a bit like content marketing, only the blog post is delivered right to your patients' inboxes. It's about reaching out to them instead of hoping they come to find you. Newsletters should contain snippets of valuable information that your audience will *want* to see.

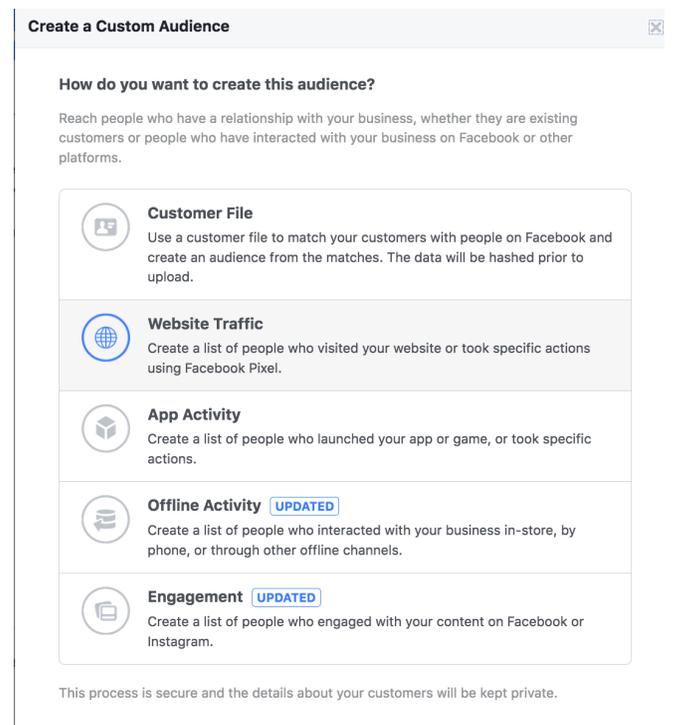
After all, if they don't, you'll go the way of the unsubscribe button before you know it.

When sending newsletters, it's a good idea to ask patients to opt-in and to send it infrequently enough that no one will send you to spam. Again, if you make this valuable, people will be happy to see it in their inbox.

10. Remarketing Campaigns

Remarketing is the practice of reaching out to users you already have an existing relationship with and trying to get them to take a specific action. You can use remarketing to get users to book their six month check-up, or to connect with potential patients who checked out your site but didn't convert.

Facebook Ads is one of the best platforms for remarketing, giving you the option to retarget based on specific activity on your site or by uploading custom audiences.



The screenshot shows the 'Create a Custom Audience' interface on Facebook. At the top, it says 'Create a Custom Audience' with a close button. Below that, it asks 'How do you want to create this audience?' and provides a brief explanation: 'Reach people who have a relationship with your business, whether they are existing customers or people who have interacted with your business on Facebook or other platforms.' There are five options listed:

- Customer File**: Use a customer file to match your customers with people on Facebook and create an audience from the matches. The data will be hashed prior to upload.
- Website Traffic**: Create a list of people who visited your website or took specific actions using Facebook Pixel.
- App Activity**: Create a list of people who launched your app or game, or took specific actions.
- Offline Activity** (UPDATED): Create a list of people who interacted with your business in-store, by phone, or through other offline channels.
- Engagement** (UPDATED): Create a list of people who engaged with your content on Facebook or Instagram.

At the bottom, it states: 'This process is secure and the details about your customers will be kept private.'

You can even use remarketing to promote new products or cosmetic procedures to existing customers, like if you add Invisalign to your line-up or have a new, safer tooth whitening procedure.

11. Diversify Your Keywords

Keyword research is obviously essential if you want your site to stand a chance to rank well in the search engines. And while you should absolutely be shooting for the basics like "Washington dentist," you should also think outside the box, too. Diversify your keywords.

ENHANCE YOUR HEALTHCARE PRACTICE AND FEATURE YOUR EXPERTISE

UTILIZE ONE OF OUR COMMUNICATION PLATFORMS



VIDEO EMAIL MESSAGING

Include a professional video presentation in your email campaign to your database or email lists that we can provide to you.



DIRECT MAIL

Our group can design your direct mail piece, produce it, provide your targeted mailing list and handle all the mail processing. Let us help you produce an effective direct mail campaign with our turn-key service.



PODCASTS

We can develop and produce podcast programs featuring you in this growing popular platform to showcase your expertise.



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Our leadership team have been producing seminars and conference programs since the 1980's. Let us utilize our expertise to produce seminars or conferences for you to use as an educational or business development tool.



PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

Our group can arrange speaking engagements, create publicity for your projects, issue news releases and develop stories about you and your practice to submit to media outlets and web sites.



NEWSLETTERS OR PUBLICATIONS

Our group publishes several magazines, periodicals and newsletters in many cities in the United States. With our diverse experience, we can create any type of your own branded publication for you.



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We can develop and produce podcast programs featuring you in this growing popular platform to showcase your expertise.



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Human Resources Questions for Dentists:



COVID-19 Testing of Employees

Rebecca Boartfield and Tim Twigg

The HR experts at Bent Ericksen & Associates regularly answer questions from dentists about the HR effects of COVID-19. This dentist asks about testing his employees. *Rebecca Boartfield and Tim Twigg are human resources experts with Bent Ericksen & Associates who deal closely with dentists and are familiar with their HR issues. The questions related to COVID-19 started arriving the moment dental offices were told to close. We feature two of the common questions. [Click here](#) to read more questions and answers from dentists who are learning as they move forward.*

QUESTION: Tell me all about COVID testing for my employees.

ANSWER: As COVID cases rise and people socialize, you are likely to be confronted with a situation in which having your employees get tested seems like the right path to take. Before going down that path, know this: *Employers do not have an automatic right to require COVID testing.*

Employers cannot require antibody tests.

COVID testing is not something employers can take lightly or without proper planning. Employers cannot simply, on a whim, require employees to get tested. This must be done judiciously. If an employer requires COVID testing for any employee, the employer must ensure that the testing procedure is legally compliant, reliable, and effective. In part, employers must:

- Select the right test
- Document the process
- Obtain written authorization
- Ensure confidentiality

Determine how a positive test will be handled
When a situation presents itself in which COVID exposure or practice safety is a concern, *do not jump to immediately requiring a test.* COVID-19 testing is not 100% reliable. It is possible for an employee who is infected with the virus to test negative, and for an

employee who does not have the virus to test positive. COVID-19 testing should not provide employers with a false sense of security; even if all employees in the workplace have tested negative for COVID-19, the best methods for preventing COVID-19 in the workplace are maintaining physical distancing, proper hand hygiene, wearing face coverings and personal protective equipment, and following the CDC's cleaning and sanitation protocols.

If exposure is a concern, keeping the employee home for a period of time, monitoring symptoms, and having the employee manage his or her own health-care needs (seeing a physician, seek a test, etc.) is likely the best choice.

If or when you do require a COVID test, then following must be considered:

Who pays for the COVID test?

As always, "it depends." If an employee initiates the test entirely on their own, or their treating physician orders it, or the employee is instructed to get tested by the health department, then the employer is off the hook. *If you, as the employer, require a COVID test, then you have to pay*

1) for any out-of-pocket costs associated with getting the test (see below regarding health insurance), and

2) the employee's hourly wages while traveling to the clinic, waiting in line, being tested, and returning. *Language is important.* If you say someone "should" get tested, you "encourage" them to get tested, you say "it would be a good idea to get tested," or you make a negative test result a requirement for returning to work, this is the same as you "requiring" the test. *Be proactive about testing:* Do your research now. Figure out where testing can happen in your area and how it works.

Pick one or two labs with good reputations. Establish a working relationship. When your employees are seen there, the bill should be sent to your office. Decide how employees will report their time to you (paper timesheet or digital time clock.) If you are requiring the test, your office provides a group health insurance plan, and employees just have a copay for COVID testing, you would be responsible for the copay and not the entire test. If you are requiring the test and your office does not provide health insurance, then employees should *not* be using their personal health insurance for the COVID test. Your office should be paying for 100% of the cost.

It takes nothing away from a human
to be kind to an animal.

— Joaquin Phoenix



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Best Dental Practice Management Software of 2021

By Brian Turner, Jonas P. DeMuro, techradar.com



The best dental practice management will make running your dental practice more efficient and cost-effective.

Dental practice management software offers a much more specialist suite than general [medical practice software](#) for doctors and surgeries. While there are similar functionalities in terms of administration, dentists and orthodontists require their own set of clinical management tools and features.

This not least requires the ability to work with dental plans, x-ray sensors, intra-oral cameras, panoramic and cephalometric units, so dental practice management software can't be seen as its own niche as much as a special variant on a theme.

Key features of a dental practice management platform will include the ability to cover administration, such as a calendar and a way to schedule, track, and manage appointments. A [billing software](#) section records fees and automate claims with insurance companies, as well as track payment status and automate billing reminders as required. There will often also be a patient portal for self service and provide a direct point of contact with customers.

However, the main requirement is the ability to work with patient records and charts, and often include some form of graphics or modeling software to plan and record treatments. This will often need to be integrated with imaging equipment and x-ray sensors to make it easier to keep patient records comprehensive and up to date.

As with a lot of other modern software, most of the best dental practice software runs as [Software as a Service \(SaaS\)](#), meaning that it runs in the cloud as an app, meaning you can access it through a browser

regardless of your device, and also means it should be mobile friendly. Here then are the best in dental practice management software platforms.

1. ACE Dental

The scalable dental practice solution

REASONS TO BUY

+Upfront pricing+Choice of tiered plans+All plans include prescription writing

REASONS TO AVOID

-No mobile apps

[ACE Dental](#) is strong on the clinical side of things. As part of their electronic dental record, there is 3D Restorative Charting. This allows for entry of a treatment plan, with the teeth represented as on an odontogram. The 3D presentation also makes it possible to document movement of teeth such as drifting, or a rotation issue. Perio charting is also enabled for comprehensive documentation.

The front office, critical to any dental practice, is also managed well with ACE Dental. For example, appointment scheduling is easy to use with plenty of useful features, such as having patient images displayed in the appointment block. Changes can also be done with the ease of a drag and drop maneuver. There is also support for appointment preblocking to facilitate making appointments when the dentist is available. The business side of things is also supported via ACE Dental. Checkouts are streamlined to get patients out of the office faster. It is common for dental practices to treat multiple family members, and to address this is the Patient and Family Ledger, so appointments can be coordinated between multiple family members.

Overall, when compared to the competition, ACE Dental does show their decades of experience in this segment, and offer a dental practice management software package that is more than competitive.

2. DentiMax

REASONS TO BUY

+Imaging tool integration+Clear pricing

REASONS TO AVOID

-Limited features on cheapest plans

[DentiMax](#) provides cloud-based dental practice management software as well as imaging software and

radiography sensors, all of which can work easily together. DentiMax includes a standard range of practice management features for paperless administration, not least patient charts with realistic tooth display, as well as insurance verification and e-prescription functionality. It also includes some nice customizations, not least the ability to set up your own home screen with shortcuts links to areas of the software you're more likely to need. You can also customize patient listings with column and display filters as required.

The company also develops its own imaging software, which can work with a large range of x-ray sensors, intra-oral cameras, panoramic and cephalometric units, as well as its own in-house x-ray sensors. Any of these can work with the DentiMax practice management software to allow images to be saved directly into a patient's records.

There are four different plans available, with the cheapest plan excluding some of the charting and administrative tools.

3. Denticon

A leading cloud-based dental software provider

REASONS TO BUY

+Perio charting through speech+In-house business services team+Advanced macro charting with pick lists

REASONS TO AVOID

-Lacks mobile apps

[Denticon](#) is strong at its clinical approach, showing the benefit of a cloud-based architecture, as it allows for a single patient record, which is dubbed a 'Concept of one.' This allows for several providers, across multiple office locations to be able to access the record.

Also, entering data into the patient record electronically is frequently a challenge when chairside due to infection control issues. Denticon fosters this activity by staying a step ahead of the clinician, with appropriate and helpful prompts, and "Context-specific tools and menus," that ease the process along. Also, for perio measurements that can be difficult to input with the multiple measurements of the gum pockets along all the surfaces of the teeth, Denticon has a 'Voice-activated perio' function to capture the data accurately and quickly without slowing down the exam. Workflow also gets streamlined, for efficiency and less burden on the clinician. Advanced macros can be

created for repetitive tasks, such as treatment plans and progress notes. There are also available drop down menus that then provide a 'Pick list' to make it easier to input the commonly used fields.

Overall, Denticon represents a powerful solution for dental practice management, that is especially suited for more complex practices with multiple providers across several locations.

4. Dental Intelligence

Intelligent productivity management

REASONS TO BUY

+Automated tasks+Team analytics+Ready reports+Streamlined workflows

[Dental Intelligence](#) isn't so much a practice management platform as much as a productivity suite that integrates with one, to provide auto-generated reports and analytics. The aim is to make it simpler and easier to manage your practice efficiency and make it more profitable. It's a cloud-based solution that runs from a mobile app, making it easy to access from anywhere, whether in the office or on the go.

Each morning the software provides a review or performance the previous day, and a plan of action for each team member for the day based on set goals and KPIs. It also autogenerates call lists for appointment confirmations, hygiene recare, unscheduled treatments, and collections, to ensure that unscheduled appointments are never missed and which due payments need to be chased up.

Dental Intelligence also provides a smart caller ID to work with your phone system, so that when a patient calls from a number on their records, a pop up will appear providing basic information on the patient's last visit date, along with information on due appointments or payments. There's also a smart scheduling feature that aims to fill empty slots with due appointments and keep track of outstanding invoices. It can also compare the performance of different team members for training and development purposes.

No pricing information is provided, but potential customers are invited to try a free demo first before contacting sales for a price.

5. Curve Dental

Get away from straight and narrow practices

REASONS TO BUY

+Good range of features+Price plans not limiting+Imaging customizations

[Curve Dental](#) also provides a cloud-based practice management suite that aims to make work easier for assistants, hygienists and dentists. Scheduling is made simple with drag and drop functionality, and uses color coding to make it easier to identify appointment types. Dates and times can be blocked out according to your needs. Images, patient history, and treatment options are available with a click of the mouse.

Charts are provided in a clear user interface with realistic tooth modeling and color coding for treatments so its easy for all staff to follow. Imaging is an integrated feature of the software, and it's easy to manipulate these to examine them better. You can also set up

preferred manipulations and filters by default, making it easier to get at the information you want more quickly. Measurement tools also work easily and seamlessly with your images, which are saved and synced in the cloud.

The billing feature is set up to simply payments and adjustments, and provide patients with easy to follow statements. Recall and insurance management are built in to make reimbursements easy to manage, with payments automatically applied to the insurance portion or the patient portion of the treatment record. There are four main plans available, most of which cover the same features, with the main variation being access to automated reminders, custom forms, and native imaging. However, for pricing you will need to contact Curve Dental directly. Be aware that there may be set-up and training fees on top of any monthly payments.



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FROZEN: THE HOOPS MARY HAD TO JUMP THROUGH WHEN JOHN DIED

By Stacey Riley Walters, Esq

John unexpectedly died of heart failure after contracting a respiratory virus. He left behind his wife of 36 years, Mary, his son and his two grandchildren. The day after the funeral, Mary received a call from the funeral director. He informed her that the check she wrote to them was returned for insufficient funds. When Mary called the bank, she found out that the joint checking account she shared with John was frozen because of his death. Mary was very upset because this was her account too, not to mention the fact that John's will left everything to Mary! When Mary spoke to the bank concerning this matter, they told her that joint accounts are equally owned 50/50. In the event of one account owner's passing, the account does not automatically pass to the surviving owner, and unfortunately, John did not set-up the account with a right of survivorship. The banker went on to explain that until Mary started the Court Probate process, and jumped through the necessary hoops, there was nothing the bank could do about the frozen account. The saddest part...that was NOT the only asset FROZEN when John died.

This is an all too familiar scene for a lot of families in North Carolina. Most people do not realize that whether you die with a Last Will and Testament or without a will, the only way your non-beneficiary assets can be divided and transferred to s is through a legal process called Probate. The Estate division of the County Court in North Carolina where the deceased resided is the governing body. Probate is usually necessary for assets you own individually, jointly owned assets with no right of survivorship, and assets that do not have named living beneficiaries.

Probate starts with gathering a large amount of information that is needed to complete a myriad of



court forms which must be completed in the Probate process. This process can have 8-12 steps, and can take up to a year or longer to complete.

So where does Mary start?

MARY'S WALK THROUGH THE MANY STEPS OF PROBATING JOHN'S ESTATE:

- Mary hired an attorney since the clerk of court cannot advise people on how to complete the legal forms or on how to proceed with handling probate.
- After that, Mary went to the bank where she asked for a certified bank check to pay the court filing fee of \$120.
- Next, Mary had to meet with the clerk of court, in person, in order to file the application to open the estate and to be legally qualified to serve as Executor of John's Estate.
- Once Mary qualified to serve as the Executor of the estate, she then had to navigate through all of the following steps at the direction of her lawyer:
 - Obtain a tax ID. for John's estate for tax reporting purposes.
 - Open a bank account in the name of John's Estate.
 - Draft and mail letters to all of John's known creditors, to notify them of his death.
 - Draft the court mandated notice to creditors, and then pay for the notice to run in the local newspaper for 4 weeks so other potential creditors can make a claim against the estate for any outstanding debt owed by John. This step is required by law.
 - Inventory the estate assets and determined the value of each at John's date of death.
 - Travel back to the courthouse 90 days after opening the estate to file the proper court form that lists all of John's assets and their values on his date of death.
 - Pay Inventory costs to the Court based on the total value of the assets.
 - Pay all the estate debts owed to John's creditors, including commissions the court awards to an Executor which can be up to 5% of the total estate assets plus debts.

- Keep a detailed accounting of all transactions, receipts and money paid into the estate and debts paid out, as the court will not close an estate unless it balances out to the penny.
 - Prepare the annual accounting as required and travel back to the courthouse *again* so the Probate clerk of court can review and approve the accounting as balanced, as well as pay any additional costs the court calculates as being owed at that time.
 - Pay the lawyer who guided and assisted her to successfully complete her fiduciary duty as executor once the Court approves the petition for legal fees. (NOTE: a lot of lawyers will forgo this technical step and require a large retainer up front, which they bill against throughout the probate process for their services.
- PLUS, Mary had even more to do to meet the probate requirements before everything could be finally distributed to her (or named the heirs) and before the Court would allow the estate to be closed as completed.

TRUTH: 67% of Americans* do not even have a Will, but never fear- the State has a plan for you!

When a person dies without a will determining who is entitled to inherit the assets comes down to each state's "intestacy" laws. Sometimes, it is the state where the decedent lived, which determines the heirs. Sometimes, it is the state where the physical property of the deceased is located at the time of his death. In more complex cases, sometimes both states will be required to make that determination. The order in which heirs inherit from a decedent's estate when there is no valid will is called "intestate succession." State laws prescribe a list of next of kin who have the "first right" to inherit the assets of the estate. A surviving family member who is further down the kin list, typically, will not inherit anything if the "first right" heirs are still alive.

Here is an example of how an intestate probate — one without a will — is typically distributed under the North Carolina intestacy laws:

MARRIED PERSON DIES WITHOUT A WILL- The surviving spouse may only receive approximately half of their deceased spouse's assets, after collecting the year's allowance and the first \$100,000 in assets of the estate. He or She usually receives the entire estate if the decedent leaves no living children, grandchildren, or parents (the surviving spouse's in-laws), but only after all the debts of the deceased spouse are paid off. Yep, not at all like most married couples would expect!

Let us help you in your time of need or to help you put the perfect plan in place! Our caring and compassionate Lawyers will customize your wishes to make things simple and easy for your family, ensuring they do not have to suffer through a time consuming probate process, saving them both time, money and the stress of it all, while ensuring your wishes are met.

To learn more, look us up on the web at www.twestateplanning.law or call (888) 787-1913 for a free virtual consultation or request a free legal guide.

*Forbes "American's Ostrich Approach to Estate Planning" April 4, 2014

** The above summary is general information. Do not rely upon the above for definitive legal advice. In accordance with N.C. State Bar Rules, note this contains dramatizations. Not all scenarios represent actual people or real events



North Carolina licensed Attorney Stacey Riley Walters is a North Carolina native, who graduated Magna Cum Laude from Elon University. She attended Thomas M. Cooley Law School and has been in practice for more than 20 years. The cornerstone of Stacey's practice is planning for the unexpected after she was unexpectedly blessed her disabled daughter. She focuses solely on Estate Planning, Wills, Probate Avoidance, Trusts, Special Needs, Probate and Trust Administration. Stacey has served on UNC Children's Hospital Family Advisory Board, Make-A-Wish Foundation and has participated with the Triangle Down Syndrome Network. Stacey is member of the National Association of Elder Law Attorneys, the Society of Financial Service Professionals, and Elder Counsel.

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[3] Business Email Promotion

We will create an effective email template and send it to 500 businesses and offices in your immediate area for you to generate new business from the owners and employees who can visit you before or after work or at lunchtimes. \$149.00

[4] New Resident Intro Certificate



We will create and mail a full color introductory gift certificate on your behalf to new residents each week by first class mail to connect them to your business before they do business with one of your competitors. You can choose the zip code[s] you wish to target and also the home value range. Six months [26 weeks of mailing] \$199.00

[5] Neighborhood Marketplace

Participate in Our Neighborhood Marketplace publication. This is an 11 x 17 size publication folded in two and mailed to 5,000 residents in your immediate area. You can feature your business with a quarter page ad for \$199.00 or a half page ad for \$299.00. FREE Bonus – When you participate in our Neighborhood Marketplace publication you can also participate in our six-month New Resident Intro Program [see #4 above] at no extra charge.



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Top Dental Industry Trends in 2021

by Tyson Downs



Creating and Maintaining a Trustworthy Persona

A [Pew Research study](#) from 2019 revealed that the tendency to trust in medical and scientific experts is often affected by politics. Certainly, 2020 has proven that to be true and we expect that it will continue to impact dentistry as we head into 2021.

Dental practices must establish trust with patients and maintain that trust over time. Without trust, practices have difficulty attracting new patients, and given the overall decline in dental spending that is anticipated to continue in 2021, attracting new patients may be a real challenge for dental practices in 2021.

Education Will Increase New Patient Registration

Many adults avoid seeing a dentist because they are worried about their ability to pay or unsure whether their insurance will cover the treatments they receive. Others avoid dental care because they fear pain. Personal safety and COVID-19 transmission play a role as well.

Part of attracting new patients is finding ways to demonstrate your trustworthiness and expertise through any fear or reservations that potential clients may have. Some ways to do that include creating videos, blogs, and other educational content to inform patients about what to expect if they choose your practice.

Why Adults Avoid Going to the Dentist

A new year means new opportunities to promote services and products to adults who have been avoiding

making a dental appointment. It's not uncommon for adults to postpone treatments due to an inability to pay or a belief that they don't need treatment. In addition to needing routine care, these patients may require catch-up care as well.

Online Review Management

[Patient referrals](#) and reviews are some of the most powerful marketing tools you have. You need to be using your online review system to its maximum potential and encouraging patients to leave you online reviews. Reviews are important because they help you build authority and trust.

Let's start with some statistics. Here's what you need to know about [what your patients think](#) about online reviews.

83% of consumers say they don't trust advertising at all. By contrast, 91% of all millennials say that they read and trust online reviews. More than half of consumers say they won't choose a business if it has less than a 4-star rating, and 90% say they need fewer than 10 reviews (and as few as four) to form an impression about a business they're considering.

Some dentists don't bother monitoring online reviews because they think if a patient has a problem, they'll hear about it. But in today's business world, you need to be vigilant about how you treat your patients, or else they will end up complaining online.

Having as few as four negative reviews can decrease sales by up to 70%. [94% of consumers](#) say that a negative online review has convinced them not to visit a business or service provider. There are no statistics available specific to dental practices, but it's a safe bet that having negative online reviews could be driving patients to your competitors.

The same above survey found that 53% of consumers expect businesses to respond to negative reviews, but that 63% say that no business has ever responded to a negative review a patient has left. In 2021 dentists need to think not only about negative reviews but about how it will be perceived if patients see a response was not given to negative feedback online. 43% of all those surveyed say they are more likely to visit a business that responds to negative reviews than one that doesn't. The takeaway here is that reviews matter and your engagement with those reviews into 2021 will impact the success of your dentistry business. Patients are leaving reviews for medical providers more now than

ever before, and you can take advantage of that by monitoring your reviews.

For this reason, online review management for dentists is something that you need to include in your marketing strategy.

The bottom line: you should monitor your online reviews. Some of the most popular review sites are Google, Facebook, and Yelp. For dental reviews, you should also check out 1-800 Dentist, CareDash, and Dentists.com.

You can even get ahead of the trend by getting in the habit of asking patients to review your practice when they check out after an appointment. Training your staff to ask this of patients can increase your positive reviews and help you monitor and improve patient satisfaction.

The Rising Value of Convenience

We have seen a burgeoning movement to treat dental patients like consumers. It's a recognition that in most cases, patients have many options when they choose healthcare providers. For that reason, we anticipate that 2021 will continue the trend toward prioritizing convenience for patients.

Today's patients expect to be able to access services around the clock, get help when they need it, and communicate directly with dentists. That's why convenience is one of several hot topics in dentistry and one of the latest trends in the dental industry.

Convenience in dentistry could mean any of the following things:

An online portal that allows patients to schedule appointments online, ask questions, and fill out intake paperwork at their leisure.

Expanded office hours to allow patients to come in at the times that work best for them, including evenings and weekends

Allowing patients to pay online or from their mobile devices

Adding additional services to give patients an all-in-one stop for their dental and oral health care needs

We recognize that convenience for patients may come at the expense of convenience for you, but the reality is that there's a reason that convenience is one of the ongoing trends in dentistry. Your competitors are likely addressing convenience as the 800-pound gorilla in the room and you'll need to do the same if you want to keep up.

Some of the keys to providing convenience include call tracking and website maintenance because both of these things empower patients to manage their dental health.

The Continued Use of 3D Printing in Dentistry

Not only is 3D printing still on the rise in the dental industry, but it's also up and coming in technological sectors and the business world alike.

2020 saw an increase in the use of 3D printing by dentists and that's a dental industry trend we expect to continue throughout 2021. 3D printing uses innovative materials such as resins, and also increases the speeds of creation for custom dentures, crowns, and more. With 3D printing, these can now be made in minutes instead of in days or weeks.

While 3D printing has been around for years, the possible applications are still coming to light in the dental industry. What started as a lab tool has blossomed into something that can be used in all aspects of general dentistry, implantology, prosthodontics, and even to create custom devices to help patients with sleep apnea.

When it comes to 3D printing, a resin is commonly used in dental practices because it:

Provides an excellent finish with the capability to produce the fine feature details that are required for dental devices

Has the potential to be used for both short-term and long-term dental solutions

If you don't have a 3D printer in your practice, now may be the time to think about investing in one. Before long, dental patients will expect quick delivery of prosthetics made with 3D printers and you will be better served once you embrace this technology in your dental practice.

Use Facebook the Right Way

The biggest and most persistent change that continues for dental professionals is that if you want your posts to be seen, you will need to pay to boost them. You can still maximize your reach on Facebook by taking some time to analyze the performance of your past posts and figure out who your target market is. Choosing the right content to boost along with the right days and times to boost it, can help you make the most of your Facebook marketing budget going forward.

Take Advantage of Stories

More and more dental practices are using Facebook Stories and Instagram Stories to connect with their target audiences. So-called ephemeral content is useful for marketing because it encourages potential patients to engage with your content as quickly as possible since it won't be around forever.

Social media stories can be used to announce changes in your practice, promote new technology, or provide information about you and your staff.

Optimize for Voice Search

The dental industry is quick to embrace technology when it can be used in treatments – 3D printers are an example – but the dental industry can be notoriously slow in staying on top of digital trends. One of the most important new trends in dentistry in 2021 is continuing to optimize for voice search.

The research shows that 50% of all searches will be voice searches by 2020. We don't have final figures for the year yet, but there is also an estimate that 55% of all households in the US will own a voice speaker by 2022. This means that dentists must embrace voice search and find ways to optimize for it.

Some of the key things you can do to get your website voice search ready include:

Focus on natural-sounding language

Assume that most queries will be questions

Optimize for long-tail keywords, including questions

Answer questions clearly and concisely on your website

Think about user intent and provide the best user

experience possible

Remember that web users can be impatient. When they ask a question, they expect to be able to find the answer quickly and easily. If your site doesn't provide this, they'll move on to one of your competitors' sites.

Personalized Content

Personalization is a big trend in marketing in general. 98% of marketers believe that personalization is a key driver of success. There are few "products" that people feel more of a personal connection to than healthcare, so it's not surprising that dental practices are embracing both automation and the personalization options that come with it.

Personalization can take many different forms. You might personalize content by:

Using subscribers' first names in email greetings

Allowing visitors to your website to choose content (another word for this is adaptive content)

Targeting potential patients with specific ads based on their behavior on your website or on their location, age, or past visits

Creating groups on Facebook and sharing targeted content that's tailored to the preferences of the group's members

The more your target audience feels that you understand their needs when it comes to dental care, the more likely they are to choose your practice the next time they need a dentist.

Focus on the Patient Experience

Personalization isn't the only way to make your patients feel special. Even though there is a need to fill dental health gaps in North America, dental competition can be fierce. Overcrowding and population issues in certain areas mean that dentists must see many patients in a day. With the knowledge that consumers are particular about which health care providers they choose, some dental practices are becoming hyper-focused on creating a special experience for their patients to differentiate themselves from their competitors. Offering spa services is one way to pamper your patients and make them feel valued. This was a trend going into 2020 and we expect that to continue. It might seem odd to think of a visit to the dentist as being luxurious, but there is a growing trend toward things such as concierge service and massages to make patients feel comfortable.

You may also decide to try some of the following ideas to help patients look forward to visiting your practice: Adding video content in your waiting area, including a mix of entertainment and educational content for patients of all ages.

Allowing patients extra with their dentist to talk about their dental history, treatment, and future, at an additional cost. (This option could be part of a larger concierge service package that you offer to patients). Creating a system to contact patients when you're running behind – something that can minimize their time in your waiting room

These are just a few examples to consider. The key is to find ways to make your practice stand out from others in your area. The additional services and perks you offer should be tailored to your patients. For example, a family dentist might focus on making the waiting area kid-friendly and providing services to help parents prioritize their kids' oral hygiene.

Offering luxury services can help you increase patient loyalty and attract patients who are willing to spend money on optional cosmetic treatments.

Emotional Dentistry

A lot of dental marketing focuses on patients' smiles, and for good reason. We are emotionally attached to our smiles. When we don't like the way our teeth look, we tend to be less expressive and less likely to smile. That brings us to one of the most intriguing dental industry trends. New technology is making it possible for dentists to engage in emotional dentistry, where patients whose teeth need to be repaired can, with the help of software, visualize their smiles as they will be after dental treatments are completed.

Emotional dentistry helps to improve the patient experience. Dentists who specialize in cosmetic dentistry, emergency dentistry, and orthodontics are the most likely to benefit from investing in emotional dentistry. When used properly, it can help calm patients' nerves and make the process of receiving dental care less intimidating than it would be otherwise.

Laser Technology

One of the most exciting patient care trends in the dental industry is the rise of laser technology. Before laser dentistry, routine dental care such as filling cavities and repairing damaged gums required invasive and often painful treatment. The potential of experiencing pain is a deterrent to patients who are nervous about visiting the dentist and can cause them to delay care.

Technologies are best when they address problems that can hold dental practices back, and laser technology is no exception. Laser dentistry can eliminate cavities with little or no pain. It can also kill bacteria in the cavity, making it less likely that a patient will experience complications as a result of tooth decay.

The advantages of laser dentistry inpatient care are:

- Decreased need for sutures
- Less bleeding
- Little to no pain
- Reduced risk of infection
- Faster healing

If your practice uses laser dentistry for routine procedures, you should mention it on your website and in your social media marketing. This is an especially good tactic if you want to attract new patients since the promise of painless dental treatments can help reluctant patients get over their fear of going to the dentist.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) use is on the rise in nearly every industry, and it is one of the dental industry trends we expect to see in 2021 and beyond. While there are certainly some concerns about using AI inpatient treatment, when implemented properly it improves the patient experience. It can also help your dental practice provide top-notch patient service around the clock.

Patient interactions aren't the only potential use for artificial intelligence in your dental practice. It can also be used for things such as diagnostics, virtual dental assistants, and even smart toothbrushes, which can give a dentist information about their patients' oral hygiene habits and point in the direction of potential treatments.

If you decide to incorporate artificial intelligence into treatment and the patient experience, you'll need to prioritize HIPAA compliance. Ensuring that you educate both existing and new patients about how you intend to protect their privacy when using artificial intelligence in your practice. We expect to see the dental industry embrace artificial intelligence in 2021 and beyond.

Telehealth and Live Video

One of the dental trends that have been most useful during the COVID-19 pandemic is telehealth. Dentists and other healthcare providers have turned to technology to help them interact with patients when the patient cannot safely see the dentist in person. The increase in teledentistry thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the ADA to issue a complete policy on both teledentistry and live video. If you decide to see patients virtually, it is your responsibility to provide a consistent level of care, to document procedures properly, and to protect patients'

privacy by using HIPAA-compliant video conferencing software.

Compared to other trends in dental industry technology, there is a limit to what you can do with teledentistry. For obvious reasons, you cannot provide direct care remotely. You can, however, offer consultations, offer self-care advice, and ascertain whether an in-person visit and treatment might be necessary.

Telehealth can be useful for evaluating new patients and minimizing the time that they spend in your office.

13. Nontraditional Diversified Services

While dental hygiene and dental treatments are still and will remain the primary focus of most dental practices, there is a dental industry trend toward offering nontraditional diversified services to patients. Some examples include Botox and dermal fillers to smooth wrinkles, and even small stitches to tighten skin.

As many as 18% to 20% of all dentists in the United States may have received some training in these nontraditional cosmetic procedures, but they're not a good fit for every practice. If you specialize in family dentistry, for example, your cosmetic offerings might begin and end with tooth whitening.

However, dental practices that offer a wide range of cosmetic dentistry procedures might find nontraditional services to be one of the most appealing new trends in dentistry. It's something that could mesh well with personalized and concierge services, too.

Text Message Marketing

You are likely seeing text marketing more and more. You probably don't even think about how much it's grown because it's just so convenient. Why text message marketing? Text messages are far more likely to be opened than emails, with 82% of mobile users saying they open every text message they receive. One of the dental industry trends that we suggest you implement is using text messaging to send appointment reminders. 80% of patients say they prefer to confirm appointments via text but only about 20% of businesses do so. The same is true of promotions, which only 17% of businesses do via text message.

Considering that one of the biggest headaches for dentists is canceled or missed appointments, it's

surprising that more practices haven't adopted SMS marketing. You can capitalize on this dental industry trend by:

- Collecting mobile numbers from new and existing patients.
- Adding a field on your intake form to allow new patients to opt-in for text messaging.
- Implementing appointment confirmations and reminders via SMS messaging.

New services such as Switchbird allow you to build your text list, and let's patients and potential patients to text you, and you can set up a chatbot to answer their most frequently asked questions.

Considering the number of dental patients and dental practices that rely on technology, it is surprising that more dentists aren't incorporating text messaging into their digital marketing strategies.

Dental Group Practices

The average dental school graduate carries \$292,169 in student loan debt. That's a huge dollar amount and a huge burden. It's also a clear indication of why group practices are one of the latest trends in dentistry. It is expensive for new or established dentists to open a dental practice. Commercial rent prices are always high and it can be out of reach for an individual dentist to afford to pay rent, buy and maintain equipment, and pay their staff.

That's where group dentistry comes in as a dental trend. By banding together with other dentists, it's more affordable to open a practice, attract new patients, and maintain an attractive and welcoming dental office that's equipped with the latest technology.

Going Green - Natural Dental Products

Dentists and other healthcare professionals are as concerned about the environment as anybody else. One of the dental trends that we expect will gain momentum in 2021 and beyond is green dentistry: the use of natural products that have a minimal impact on the environment.

The ADA has created a list of ways that dentists can make their practices more environmentally friendly.

They include:

- Using organic or environmentally friendly scrubs

- Reducing or eliminating the use of aerosols
- Designing practice layouts to maximize natural light and ventilation
- Using eco-friendly sterilization products and procedures
- Using natural cleaning products in the office
- Stocking all-natural oral care products and encouraging patients to use them

A lot of patients, particularly those who are Millennials or in Generations Y or Z, are likely to prioritize businesses that align with their beliefs. Making your practice green can help you to attract new dental patients to your dental office.

Augmented & Virtual Reality

As we mentioned above, many adult and young patients may dread a visit to the dental office. As dentists, you naturally want to create a soothing and welcoming atmosphere for all patients, particularly those who are anxious.

One of the dental trends that can help with the issue of patient anxiety is the use of augmented or virtual reality. There is research to indicate that using VR can reduce pain and anxiety in patients. In some cases, it may even eliminate the need for pain medication or sedation.

Just as some dentists have found that offering sedation dentistry is a good way to attract patients who might have anxiety related to dental care, virtual reality can be a tool to help patients overcome their fears and engage in better oral hygiene.

Patient Support Chatbots

It wasn't that long ago that chatbots seemed as futuristic as flying cars. As we head into 2021, estimates are that up to 85% of customer interactions will happen without a human agent by the end of the year. 37% of consumers are willing to use a chatbot to get quick service in an emergency.

Many dentists have been slow to use chatbots because of concerns over patient privacy and HIPAA regulations. However, technology has kept up with the demands and it is now possible for dentists to launch a dental chatbot while still preserving their patients' privacy.

Experts believe that the healthcare chatbot market will be worth more than \$700 million by 2025.

Chatbots can be used by dentists in a variety of ways, including:

- Appointment scheduling and cancellations
- Symptom reporting and early diagnostics
- Medication assistance
- Oral health guidance

Chatbots may be installed on your website and some patient portals come with chatbots included. You may also want to include a chatbot on your social media sites, Facebook in particular. They provide a safe way to enhance dental care and provide quality patient experience.

Emergence of Dentistry Apps

You already know that your dental website is the hub of your online presence and no trends can change that. However, consumers increasingly expect the businesses they frequent -- including dentists -- to incorporate mobile apps into their digital marketing.

There are many reasons to create a mobile app for your patients. The app can help you:

- Provide information about oral health and dental care to your patients.
- Offer loyalty programs that incentivize patients to try new services or refer their friends to you.
- Inform your patients about new technology, including 3D printers and laser technology, that can help them receive better care.
- Streamline the process of booking appointments or rescheduling if necessary.
- Provide better overall service to new and long term patients.
- Keep patients in the know about trends and other information that may be useful.

Creating a mobile app can help you connect with patients between visits, provide better care in and out of the office, and generally create an experience that's convenient to your patients' needs.



THE FACES OF WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Shortcuts don't lead to the best financial planning, and that's why Chornyak & Associates doesn't use them. Developed over 40 years, Chornyak uses proprietary processes and systems to research, analyze, select and monitor recommended investments. With a thorough understanding of each client's financial picture, Chornyak builds comprehensive planning strategies to help achieve their dreams.

It takes more time to ask lots of questions, gather detailed information and act as a true partner, but Chornyak believes that's the best way to be sure every financial decision supports their clients' goals and desires with broad diversification and proper investment allocation. This disciplined approach is based on one simple belief: investors rarely reap above-average returns by taking unnecessary risks.

Chornyak manages over \$1.1 Billion in assets for over 1,000 individuals and businesses nationwide. The Columbus firm grew its business through referrals from satisfied clients who recommended its customized, comprehensive financial planning to friends and colleagues.

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