



How New Patients find their Dentist Today

By Rand Schulman, CEO DMscore and Digital Marketing Pioneer

How effective was your practice's marketing in 2018?

If you don't know, you're not alone. The average small business spends about **6 percent of gross revenues on marketing**, yet **46 percent of business owners don't know if their marketing is working**.

Business owners often struggle to quantify their marketing results because they continue to use outdated marketing tactics like radio advertisements, billboards, and direct mail. Most of these efforts are expensive, rely on a needle-in-a-haystack approach, and are generally distrusted by prospective patients.

“Marketing trends change often. What worked last year, may not be effective at all this year.”

“Business decision makers grow accustomed to marketing techniques,” says DMscore CEO Rand Schulman.

Rand ought to know, as he is a pioneer in Digital Marketing building one of the first Web Analytics Companies.

He says: “Today's Dental Marketplace reminds me of the beginning of digital marketing, when Yahoo, Amazon and Facebook were all just getting started. Back then, we created the early web analytics companies and practices - the tools to optimize their online offering, and now we're doing the same for Dentists and other professionals who are looking for new ways to generate business in this hyper competitive environment”.

At the forefront of leading the way are tools like Solutionreach, DMscore and the best agency practices that can combine to powerfully and clearly build Dental Practices.

Take action on Dental Marketing trends

Dental practices that take action on emerging dental marketing trends are more likely to set themselves up for success in 2019 and beyond. Where to start, however, depends on where you are in your marketing journey. Most independent practices don't have the time to become marketing professionals and many use agencies for the basics.

"Regardless if you use a marketing agency or not, **I think the best place to start is to get an overview of your DMscore and scores of competing practices in your area**", Schulman says.

Rand suggests there are several Digital Dental Marketing trends to implement today:



1. Content Marketing

Content marketing is about building authority for YOUR Dentist and Dental Practice. It's the process of creating and sharing original content to generate specific awareness and interest for a business without explicitly selling any products or services. **It's not cookie cutter content! It must be unique!**

In comparison to conventional outbound marketing, which pushes unwanted messages on prospective patients, content marketing engages patients by delivering value that they seek out on their own.



When you create and share unique, helpful content, you add value to topics patients are already thinking about.

"What you have to do is develop a relationship with patients so they will have dental — and your healthcare practice — top of mind," says Schulman. "You want to be as top of mind as a patient's step count or calorie count, things they think about every day. By adding value to things patients are already thinking about, you become a trusted source and a partner.



Content marketing (aka inbound marketing) generates more than three times as many leads (ie: prospective patients) as outbound marketing, but it costs 62 percent less.

“This makes it an ideal practice marketing strategy for independent dental practices”, says Schulman.

Content comes in many different forms, but two that are ideal for dental practices are videos and blog posts.

a) Blog Posts

Your Dental Practice should have a blog on your website to meaningfully engage patients and gently invite them to take action. You can write blog posts that emphasize the importance of certain annual tests, immunizations, and checkups.

A dentist, for example, might want to share with patients the precise risks of delaying biannual dental cleanings, and another great way to plan out ideal content is to answer typical patient questions in written format.

“ Patients typically have questions like, “Will brushing with a hard toothbrush injure my teeth”?

They’re not waiting until their next appointment to ask your advice, they’re looking for answers in real-time - online,” Schulman says.

After writing your blog post, select an appropriate image to complement your text. Then publish the post, and share it across all of your social media platforms - especially Facebook and Instagram.

b) Videos

Video is a type of content that works especially well for dental practices. Before a prospective patient ever enters your practice, videos can help create a level of familiarity they have with you before they ever meet you.

“You have to engage people quickly online. Being able to succinctly address a dental concern or discuss a trending health story in less than a minute’s time is powerful,” Schulman says.

You can work with a professional videographer to create videos for your healthcare practice, or you can try to do it yourself. Quality videos have become increasingly easy to produce thanks to advances in camera and editing technology and tools like live video. Share your videos on a YouTube channel and on social media sites like Facebook and Instagram.



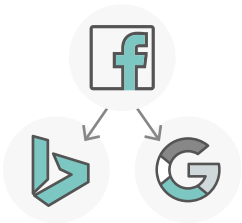
2. Email Marketing

Email is a great channel for healthcare practices to communicate with patients and encourage them to book appointments or take advantage of special promotions.

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Why? For one thing, email marketing has a median return on investment of 122 percent.

Rather than email your entire patient base at once, you should create targeted (best practice terminology for this is 'segmented') lists of people who are most likely to respond to your message. For example, your dental practice would only send a wisdom tooth extraction special and accompanying discount coupon to only current patients of yours who you know still have their wisdom teeth.



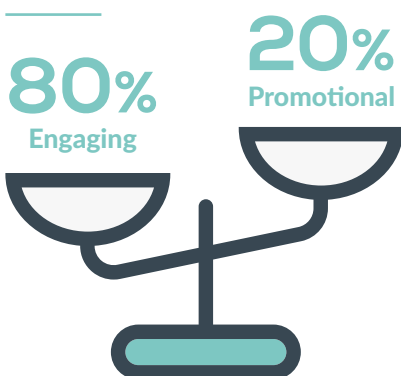
3. Social Media Marketing

About 2.6 billion people use social media worldwide to share their thoughts and life updates, connect with family and friends, and uncover news and information that's relevant to them.

Dental practices can realize a number of business benefits from social media.

Primarily, social media helps practices reach new patients by increasing their online footprint and providing them a platform to share their expertise and insight. Creating social media profiles and sharing information related to your specialty and practice can help increase your ranking on Google, Bing, and other search engines. And social media profiles help new patients find your practice when they use Facebook and other social sites to search for information related to your specialty and practice.

Effective Content Distribution by Type



Develop a schedule to help you post on social media consistently. **In general, about 80 percent of your content should be information new patients will find helpful or interesting and 20 percent should be promotional.** Only share information that is relevant to your practice and specialty and that comes from credible sources.

Include relevant hashtags, and make your content actionable by including links where new patients can find more information, whether it's on your website or another site. Also include actionable phrases like, "Visit our website for more information" that clearly tell patients what to do next.

Be prepared to engage with patients via comments and direct messages.

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Prospective patients might ask about insurance, services, and parking. They might also ask questions about symptoms they are experiencing or even request an appointment.

Although you should not diagnose or treat a person on social media, you can encourage them to book an appointment.



4. Online Advertising

Dental practices can have great success promoting their practices in 2019 with targeted advertisements. Targeted advertisements are those that use data or keywords to reach a specific audience. Instead of sharing information with a large general audience, target advertisements help you reach the exact people you want to attract to your healthcare practice.

Two types of targeted advertisements to consider for your healthcare practice are Facebook targeted advertisements and paid search advertisements.

Facebook targeted advertisements

Facebook boasts nearly 2.27 billion monthly active users. Facebook users openly share their demographics, location, and interests with the social media site, which means healthcare practices can target their advertisements with incredible precision.

A Dentist who wants to increase her number of Invisalign, for example, can target women ages 22 to 35 who live within 10 miles of her practice and have “liked” pages like Elle, Vogue and Redbook.

On Facebook, you can also advertise to users who have viewed your competitor’s websites. Thanks to cookies – little digital breadcrumbs that keep track of our online whereabouts – Facebook knows exactly what websites its users have visited.

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When purchasing Facebook ads, you can specify that your ads be shown to users who have researched your competitors.

Facebook also allows healthcare practices to upload email addresses for advertising purposes. You can use email addresses to target current patients, as well as their Facebook friends.

Paid search advertising

Another form of targeted advertising to consider for your healthcare practice in 2019 is paid search. Paid search are paid listings that appear at the top of search engine results pages (SERPs).

Paid search works like an online auction. To have your ad appear in search, you bid on keywords that prospective patients might use to find a healthcare practice like yours. A dentist in San Francisco, for example, could bid on [best Dentist SF]. Whether your ad appears – and where it appears – depends on how much money you bid as well as its quality score.

Paid search ads are typically pay-per-click (PPC) – which means you only pay each time a person clicks your link – or cost-per-thousand impression (CPM) – which means you pay the amount you bid for every 1,000 impressions. An impression is a single display of an ad on a webpage.

Although paid search does not target prospective patients using highly specific data like demographics, it can still be incredibly effective in driving patients to your healthcare practice because it targets people who are actively seeking healthcare services. As an added bonus, paid search is a great way to instantly boost where your healthcare practice appears in search engine rankings for competitive keywords.

It's important to monitor changes to your DMscore, just like your Credit Score.

Dental practices that have a robust patient database and established online presence – including an optimized website and active social media presence – can likely get started on implementing the trends outlined in this white paper today.

Those that do not, must get these necessary marketing tools in place before they can do anything else. A business that tracks their marketing performance through DMscore's indicators can effectively plan and prioritize the components of this bootstrapping process.

If it sounds overwhelming, Schulman says you can take it one step at a time.

“ You don't have to do everything today, but you need to start somewhere today!

“Start by quickly getting your DMscore to see how you're doing in your local area. You could try to do these marketing tips yourself, or you might want to talk to several DMscore Preferred Partners to see if they can help. It's up to you!”

About the author

Rand Schulman is a serial entrepreneur leading several IPOs and exits, and is a pioneer in digital analytics and big data. He's the CEO/ founder of the first SaaS-based web-analytics company, Keylime, acquired by Yahoo! and the founding CMO of analytics company WebSideStory through its IPO, (now Adobe Analytics). He has been a director and executive officer of numerous other data & digital intelligence companies including UNICA (IBM). Rand is a co-founder of the Digital Analytics Association, and teaches analytics at well-known universities.