

The New SEO

How to get your dental practice found in today's digital environment

by Lauren Glass



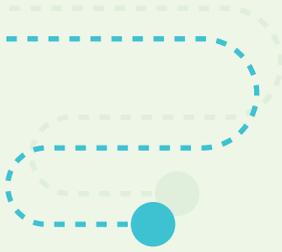
Lauren Glass has been with digital marketing company G/O Digital for the past four years and is a product manager in Phoenix. Lauren graduated from Arizona State University with a bachelor's degree

in marketing and is passionate about all things digital, particularly as it relates to search.

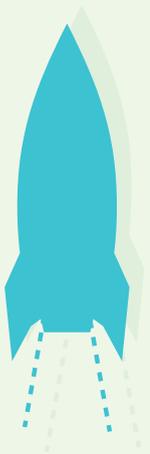
Search engines are getting smarter. Gone are the days when keyword stuffing was the secret to achieving first-page search listings; now, relevance has a whole new meaning in the digital world, and advances like semantic search¹ and machine learning² are improving the way search engines return results.

If you manage a website in the dental industry, you already know your audience has very specific and unique needs that bring them to your practice. Search engines know this, too, and have evolved to better understand the online behaviors that precede the act of typing in a search query.

So, how can you put yourself in the best position for search engines to see you and, in turn, be seen by the people who matter in your area?



Anticipate the needs of your audience and you'll deepen your relationship with your existing clients by providing valuable information, and prove to potential new patients that your dental practice is staffed by quality experts in dentistry.



Get your contact info ducks in a row

Crossing your T's and dotting your I's consistently can score major points in the ranking game. Has it been a few years since you conducted an online audit of your business information? Better check in with the biggest online directories to make sure all your listings are correct. A quick sweep of Google, Bing, Yahoo, Yelp, the BBB and Facebook (plus any other social outlets you may have) will cover most of the places your audience will find you.

Remember, Google doesn't act alone; it relies on other online directories to gather your business information. If, for example, you have an old phone number on your Facebook page that doesn't match what you've got on your other business pages, you'll be flagged and likely drop below your competitors in search rankings. A little due diligence goes a long way, especially if you have multiple practice locations.

Consistency also matters now more than ever thanks to the "internet of things" revolution. Voice search technologies such as Google Home or Amazon's Echo allow users to find you faster than ever before—as long as you're among the first results these devices find to relay to their users. One-fifth of all Google searches were made this way last year,¹ and in moments of urgency (say, a child's tooth getting knocked out in a basketball game) you want to make sure you're found first.

Give searchers what they're looking for

While keywords are no longer the primary SEO factor influencing where your business ranks in a search, content continues to be crucial to your website's success. And the creation of that content is not a "set it and forget it" proposition—it requires constant attention to shape it around the needs of clients.

When users land on your site, they should be able to find exactly what they're looking for, right away. Chances are they're not typing the exact name of your dental practice into their search bar; they're likely searching for

answers to things like symptoms they're experiencing, a procedure they're considering, or product recommendations such as a toothpaste brand or electric toothbrush.

If your site holds the answers to these organic search questions, you're more likely to be found in relevant searches. Use your Google insights to see search trends and learn what type of content is earning the most traffic—then, design a content strategy around those key topics. Anticipate the needs of your audience and you'll deepen your relationship with your existing clients by providing valuable information, and prove to potential new patients that your dental practice is staffed by quality experts in dentistry.

Having a user-friendly, mobile-ready website is also a key factor in helping your website dominate the search results page. Visitors should be able to find pertinent information such as location and phone numbers without having to click through multiple pages. Part of your digital audit should include an independent assessment by an outside reviewer to make sure the navigation is logical and everything (links, articles, maps, etc.) is in working technical order.

Plant the seeds of change now—then wait for your SEO to bloom

SEO algorithms are ever-changing and often secretive. While you may not always know exactly what the engines are prioritizing, you can be sure that plugging content with irrelevant terms or slacking on consistencies between online media directories will only serve to give competitors the advantage.

Remember that changes you make may not show their effects for several months or more.⁴ The rewards of smart SEO take consistent, ongoing effort. Remain patient and trust that you're doing the work that will get you noticed by the right customers when they need you most. ■

References

1. <https://www.godigitalmarketing.com/learn/blog/brand-building-the-seo-shift-has-anything-really-changed>
2. <http://searchengineland.com/new-model-seo-ranking-269419>
3. <http://searchengineland.com/google-reveals-20-percent-queries-voice-queries-249917>
4. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshsteimle/2015/02/07/how-long-does-seo-take-to-start-working/#cc2858e464c8>