



# What Gets Published in *Dentaltown*?

Discover how articles are planned and selected—and how to pitch one of your own

Most content published in *Dentaltown* magazine comes from members of the Dentaltown community. In every issue, Townies contribute articles about topics in their respective areas of expertise, whether they're dental professionals, industry advisers or key opinion leaders.

To discuss how the *Dentaltown* team decides what to publish each month, editor and creative director Sam Mittelsteadt stopped by the *Dentistry Uncensored with Howard Farran* headquarters to record a podcast with me. Our hourlong conversation, recorded in late December, covered several topics, including the most important things our readers expect to see in an article and the best way for anyone interested in being published to “pitch” a piece to the editorial team. Here are some highlights.

**Dr. Howard Farran:** What makes a good article? If my listeners are thinking, “I’d love to write an article,” what would you tell them?

**Sam Mittelsteadt:** The first thing that comes to mind is: How interesting is this story? A member of our editorial board will look at each piece from the clinical point of view, and I’m looking at it from the publishing perspective.

At my first newspaper reporting job, I had submitted what I thought was a great story—even the transitions were beautiful. But when my editor turned it back, she’d had written at the top just two words: “So what?” I hadn’t included any element explaining why what I’d written about was important to the readers. We look for that at *Dentaltown*, too. If someone says, “I filled a filling!” our reply would be, “What would our readers find

interesting about that?” If readers likely would say, “I do that kind of stuff every day,” then they wouldn’t be interested in that article unless it involves some unique element. Did something go wrong? Was it your very first one? Did the patient freak out? What is the lesson that was involved?

**HF:** You’ve been working at *Dentaltown* for almost two years now. What surprised you the most when you entered the dental world?

**SM:** We ran a story by an oral surgeon that I will remember for the rest of my life. A woman had cancer in her mandible; the surgeon took out her fibula, placed implants on it, then cut that part out, grafted it onto her chin and, like, sewed her up. Which is a cool story ... but I didn’t realize the photos would be embedded in the Word doc, as I started reading it at 8:15 in the morning, eating breakfast at my desk. I had to read the article with my hand over the photos the first few times I went through it.

**HF:** You would not believe some of those cases on *Dentaltown*! But you should never put up pictures like that on your website. I go to some dentist websites and I personally love it—I’m drooling!—but I know potential patients are bouncing off that website in less than a second, because the pictures are gory. Your website pictures have got to be pretty—bleaching, bonding and veneers.

**SM:** That’s “code switching.” How do you communicate with each of your audiences? You shouldn’t put bloody, up-close progress photos on a consumer-facing website, but that’s exactly what we expect for an oral surgery case in the magazine. Professional dentists don’t



## Hear the entire podcast online!

This article includes just some of the highlights of Dr. Howard Farran’s conversation with *Dentaltown* editor and creative director Sam Mittelsteadt. To download the podcast, watch the video or read a full transcript, go to [dentaltown.com/thegenuinearticle](http://dentaltown.com/thegenuinearticle).

by Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, publisher, *Dentaltown* magazine



## Have an idea for an article?

To send the *Dentaltown* editorial team an idea for an article, visit [dentaltown.com/submit-article](http://dentaltown.com/submit-article) and follow the prompts.

want to see only the “before” and “after” shots; that doesn’t tell them everything that happened.

**HF:** If someone is interested in being published, how does the process start?

**SM:** Shoot us a quick email that says, “I’m interested in writing an article about this topic,” and list out the bullet points of the angles or the topics you’d like to

go into. What, specifically, are you going to talk about? Any topic can go in many different directions. Rather than cover something once broadly—and wipe out our ability to cover it again in two or three more issues—I’d rather you be very specific, very deep. Don’t try to write “everything you need to know about” something; tell me about one thing, in detail.

It’s like telling somebody, “You should bake an apple pie.” You can’t just tell people they need to bake an apple pie; you need to give them the recipe to make an apple pie. In the dentistry perspective, if you’re writing about a closure, don’t just say “I did the closure”—you have to explain how you did this closure. What materials did you use? How long did that take? Did you screw up when you did it? How did you recover? All those things are details that make your story uniquely yours—and that’s what readers want, because they want to know what they’re up against if they try it in their own practices.

Potential authors should take a look at what we’ve published over the past year, to avoid pitching an article about something we’ve just covered. If you’re interested in doing something about improving your social media presence, know that we’ve already had Mark Zuckerberg’s father—who’s a dentist and a Townie—do an article about boosting posts on Facebook. Someone else wrote about Healthgrades. Instead of “how to improve your social media presence,” try “five tips for improving the videos on your patient website.” (But don’t try that very idea—we’ve done it.) Very specific advice, not generalities, is what’s going to help our readers.

**HF:** Is there anything else?

**SM:** Three more big things:

1. **Write the way that you speak.** Imagine that you’re talking to an educated peer, at a party. (Use contractions!) We’re not creating encyclopedia entries. You should be having fun writing about this, and that’s something that we want to make sure comes through.
2. **Back up your claims.** Use footnoted references to industry-accepted materials.
3. **Don’t try to pass off anything that’s already appeared elsewhere.** We don’t accept previously published content, even if it was on a blog or a LinkedIn post. ■

## > See Howard Live!

Howard Farran, DDS, MBA, is an international speaker who has written books and dozens of articles. To schedule Howard to speak at your next national, state or local dental meeting, email [rebecca@farranmedia.com](mailto:rebecca@farranmedia.com).

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