

MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR TODAY'S DENTIST:

INCREASE BUSINESS & PROFITS USING MODERN MARKETING STRATEGIES

A Market House White Paper

Abstract:

In this day and age, dentists need to be more than just good at what they do. They need to stand out amid a sea of competition, and they need to bring in new clients in spite of tough economic times. To thrive, dental practices must retain clients, but they must also acquire new clients. Traditional advertising strategies—print ads, billboards, radio and TV spots—no longer enjoy the success they once did. As a result, dental practices must take advantage of modern marketing strategies. Among these strategies, business websites and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) are the most effective for increasing a practice's client base and making the practice more lucrative.

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The Problem

To maintain a thriving business, a dental practice must retain current clients and continually increase its client base. Yet, with nearly 250 dental offices serving the citizens of Bend, the competition is stiff. In fact, an Internet search for "Dentist Bend Oregon" returns nearly 150,000 results—if a practice does not appear near the top, it may never be found. These realities make it difficult for a dental firm to succeed and prosper.

The Solution

The most effective marketing strategies are those that enable dental practices to increase client retention and to acquire new clients through referrals and, especially, the Internet.

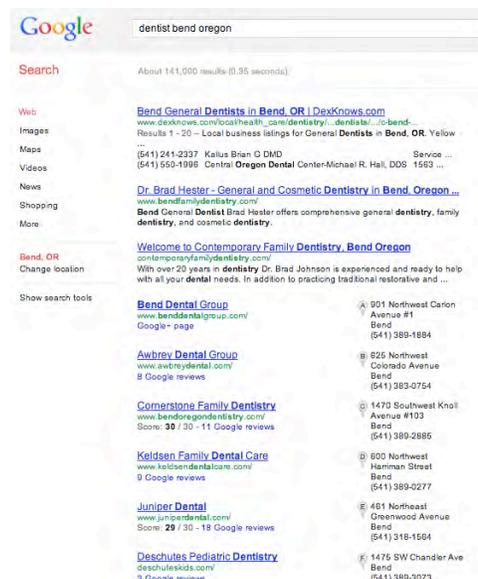
Client Retention

To maintain a healthy business, a dental practice must retain its client base. Dental practices can increase client retention by various means, including the following:

- Branding.
- Build a relationship.
- Email newsletters.
- Other strategies.

Branding

Branding is an often-overlooked marketing strategy. Proper business branding identifies one company's goods or services as distinct from others. Think BendBroadband “the



75% of new patients
return after their
first visit.

85% of existing
patients will
continue returning.

local dog” or, in the dental world, Zooka “super toothcare for kids.” When you put a unique spin on your dental practice it helps you stand out from the crowd and will result in higher client retention and a more lucrative business.

Branding sends a strong message to consumers about the quality and professionalism of your service. On the other hand, when your business has stiff, low-quality, and inconsistent logos, messaging, business cards, letterhead, and websites, potential customers may question your competence. When done right, your brand will be what Central Oregonians think of when they think of dentistry.



thenon-profittoolbox.com

Build a Relationship

Another way to increase client retention is to build a strong relationship with every client. This becomes especially important in light of the statistic that, in business, nearly “70% of people who take their business elsewhere do so because they perceive an attitude of indifference.”¹ The following are a number of proven techniques for relationship building:

- Remember that every encounter counts whether you are in or out of the office.
- Treat clients with respect.
- Listen to your clients. Ask follow-up questions.
- Be one step ahead of potential client issues/concerns.
- Stay on time and on schedule.
- Remind clients of appointments ahead of time.
- Notify clients when they are due/overdue for a visit.
- Regularly perform client surveys.

Email Newsletters

Emailing monthly newsletters to clients is smart business for countless reasons not the least of which is that it helps improve client retention. Regularly emailed newsletters let clients know about the products and services you have to offer. If they know you can

¹ Lonnie Hirsch, “The 9 Essentials of Improving Patient Retention,” <http://www.healthcaresuccess.com>.

provide something they need, they won't look elsewhere and potentially change dentists. Emailing regular newsletters also solidifies your relationship with your clients. When they know what you are up to, they feel engaged and part of a community and they want to remain part of it.

Other Strategies

In addition to the strategies just described, there are a variety of other useful tactics for increasing client retention. Among the most effective, are the following:

- Create a Time Management Plan.
- Have a morning huddle.
- Create a process for call answering and handling.
- Design a reception area that is a "retention magnet" and a "selling machine."
- Integrate with GURU.
- Develop and offer branded swag/gifts.
- Write and use carefully crafted scripts.
- Establish a strong social media presence.
- Coordinate well timed visits by key individuals.
- Set up an auto-responder system.

Every dental firm must strive to retain each and every client. All of the strategies described above have proven to help optimize retention rates.

New Clients

While client retention is essential, a dental practice must continually bring in new clients. No matter how high your retention rate, clients depart—some pass away, some move, and others change dentists for reasons beyond your control. Without a continual flow of new clients, your business will inevitably shrink.

A well run "morning huddle" is the most important thing you can do to increase office communication and productivity, yet fewer than 10% of dentists have one.

-sidekickmag.com

"A healthy practice should be seeing an average of 25 new patients per month per doctor and should strive for these to be fee-for-service patients."

-sidekickmag.com

The average new patient brings in 43% more money than returning patients.

Dental firms can build their client base in a couple of ways—through referrals and through the Internet. The following paragraphs describe the benefits and pitfalls of each tactic. They show that while referrals are important for finding new clients, the Internet is critical and its power as a tool for expanding a practice’s client base cannot be underestimated.

Referrals

Dental practices have always counted on referrals as a means to increase business, and they will continue to do so in the future. The chief benefits of referral programs are their low cost and their ease of implementation.

A well marketed and executed referral program can provide significant growth in a dental firm’s client base. There are numerous measures a dental office can take to increase referral rates, including the following:

- Branding.
- Add a “tell-a-friend” link to your monthly email newsletter.
- Social media.
- Swag.
- Well designed brochures.
- Impressing current customers.
- Funnel process.
- Reducing barriers.
- Reward programs.

Traditionally, dental firms have relied heavily on client referrals to boost their client roster. In the past, firms counted on referrals for as much as half of their new business.



Now, with the blossoming of new technologies, the most effective means for attaining new clients has changed. Ultimately, the healthy modern dental office should seek to acquire 16% of new clients through referrals and 34% through the Internet.

Dentists will always have an opportunity to acquire new clients through referrals, and they should continually seek to enhance referral rates with the strategies described above. However, to maintain a healthy business, dental practitioners must also implement modern marketing strategies via the Internet.

The Internet

We have just described how a well executed marketing plan can help a dental practice optimize referral rates. But dental firms can reach and acquire a much greater number of new clients through the Internet.

Disappointing Marketing Strategies

When considering marketing options, people typically think of billboards, radio and TV advertising etc.

Unfortunately, dentists frequently find these traditional routes to be largely unsuccessful.

In fact, 2 of every 3 dentists find direct mail to be ineffective, 7 in 10 dentists find phone book advertising to be unproductive, and many consider referring dental websites and TV and radio advertising to be only “somewhat effective.” Given these mediocre results, what is the best marketing strategy?

The most effective way for a business to acquire new clients is through the Internet, but not all Internet marketing avenues are created equal. For example, online phone books, referring websites, and the like all provide a low return on investment (ROI).

66% of dentists find direct mail ineffective.

70% of dentists find phone book advertising unproductive.

Many dentists consider referring dental websites and TV and radio advertising to be only “somewhat effective.”

The Pay Per Click (PPC) model, in which advertisers pay each time their ad is clicked, also falls short. The problem with PPC is that traffic is only directed to your site as long as you are paying. Once you stop paying, traffic stops too. Furthermore, PPC does not generate as many visits to your website as other Internet marketing methods.

The heat map in Figure 1 provides clear evidence that PPC generates significantly less traffic than organic search results. Heat maps display the areas of a webpage that are most frequently scanned by visitors. In this case, it is clear that visitors overwhelmingly looked at the results on the left—the list generated from an organic web search—as opposed to the results on the right—the paid PPC advertisements.

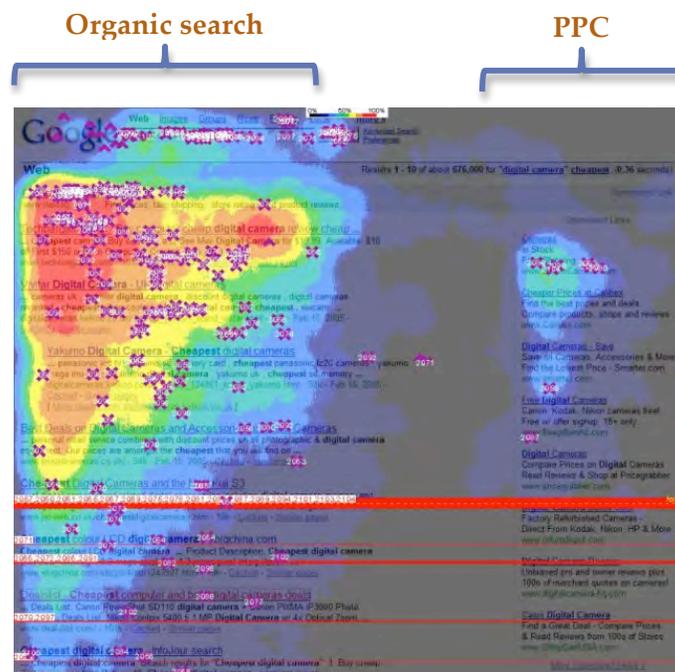


Figure 1 - Heat Map

The heat map in Figure 1 shows plainly that a dental office will get the most Internet traffic when its website ranks high in an organic Internet search. To rank high in an Internet search, businesses must implement various Search Engine Optimization techniques.

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving a website's visibility in a search engine's natural, unpaid search results.

Keywords

One way to make websites visible in search results is to load webpage content with words that people commonly use to conduct a particular search. For dentistry, the most popular keyword phrases and the number of local searches made using each phrase are as follows:

<i>Keyword Phrase</i>	<i># Local Monthly Searches</i>
dentist bend oregon	320
dentists bend oregon	170
bend oregon dentists	140
bend oregon dentist	140
dentist in bend oregon	110
bend or dentist	110
bend family dentist	110
dentists in bend oregon	110
bend dentists	110
dentists bend or	91
bend dental group	73
cosmetic dentist bend oregon	36
family dentist bend oregon	36
dentist in bend or	36
bend dentistry	28

Websites

Of course, once your website begins to appear in search results, it is important that you have a quality website. Websites should reflect your company branding. They must also be well structured and carefully designed. Websites should be easy to navigate and should offer information that is valuable, clear, and easy to find.

The Benefits of a Well Designed Website
• Provides a good impression of your dental practice.
• Effectively targets prospective patients.
• Provides informational resources to prospective patients.
• Provides promotional opportunities for your dental practice.
• Enables you to reach more people, more quickly, with less effort.
• Increases rate of patient conversion by making your practice more visible and accessible to the public.

- Improves sales by providing a knowledge base of procedural demonstrations, before-and-after-photos, etc.
- Enables 24/7 searchability and accessibility to business information.
- When linked with social media networks such as Facebook, it connects you with current and past patients, potential clients, and builds relationships.

Visibility & Ranking

When websites are optimized using SEO techniques they will rank more often and more regularly in search engine results. Visibility is important because the higher a site ranks on the search results list and the more frequently it appears on search lists, the more visitor traffic it will receive. Notice, for example, how many more people viewed areas near the top of the heat map in Figure 2 (as noted by “x’s”) than those that viewed areas toward the bottom of the list.

Figure 3 reveals this pattern even more clearly and demonstrates the importance not just of ranking high in search engine results but of ranking number 1. As Figure 3 demonstrates, the number one ranked result received more than 56% of visitor clicks, whereas the number 2 ranked result received less than 14%. Indeed, the number 1 result received more clicks from visitors than results 2-10 combined.

A number 1 ranking translates into more clients and a more lucrative business. If your dental practice ranks number 1 for even a single popular search, you can

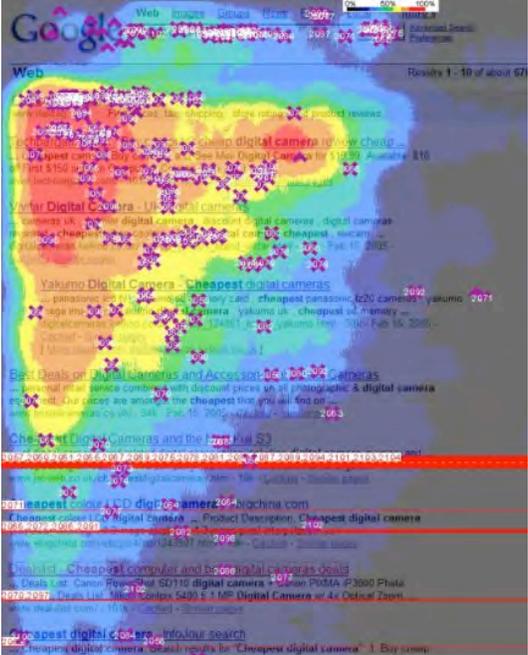


Figure 2 - Visitor Traffic

	% of Clicks	% Time Spent
1. Something something something something something	56.36	28.43
2. Something something something something something	13.45	25.08
3. Something something something something something	9.82	14.72
4. Something something something something something	4.00	8.70
5. Something something something something something	4.73	6.02
6. Something something something something something	3.27	4.01
7. Something something something something something	0.36	3.01
8. Something something something something something	2.91	3.68
9. Something something something something something	1.45	3.01
10. Something something something something something	2.55	2.34

Figure 3 - Click Distribution

expect to see roughly two-hundred new visitors to your website every month. If only 2% of those visitors become your clients, you would gain 4 new customers per month. Given the average initial customer value of \$900, those 4 new customers would increase your monthly income by \$3,600.

At that rate, the new business generated by your number 1 ranking would pay for website and SEO costs in the first quarter. Nothing offers the advantages and ROI for a business owner like a well ranked website.

Number 1 is a powerful position, and it doesn't happen by accident. It happens through SEO. When you have a beautiful, well designed website and your site ranks number 1 in typical keyword searches you are positioned for success—your dental practice will retain more clients, get more referrals, and, most importantly, win new clients through the Internet.



Next Steps

Market House is a professional marketing company devoted to the growth and marketing needs of professional practices in Central Oregon. At Market House we have effectively positioned our clients for success.

For example, we designed a website for our client Bryant, Emerson, and Fitch and used our SEO expertise to position the site at number 1 and number 2 in search results for the most popular searches and at number 1 for nearly 100 different keyword searches (see Figure 4). We would like to do the same for you.

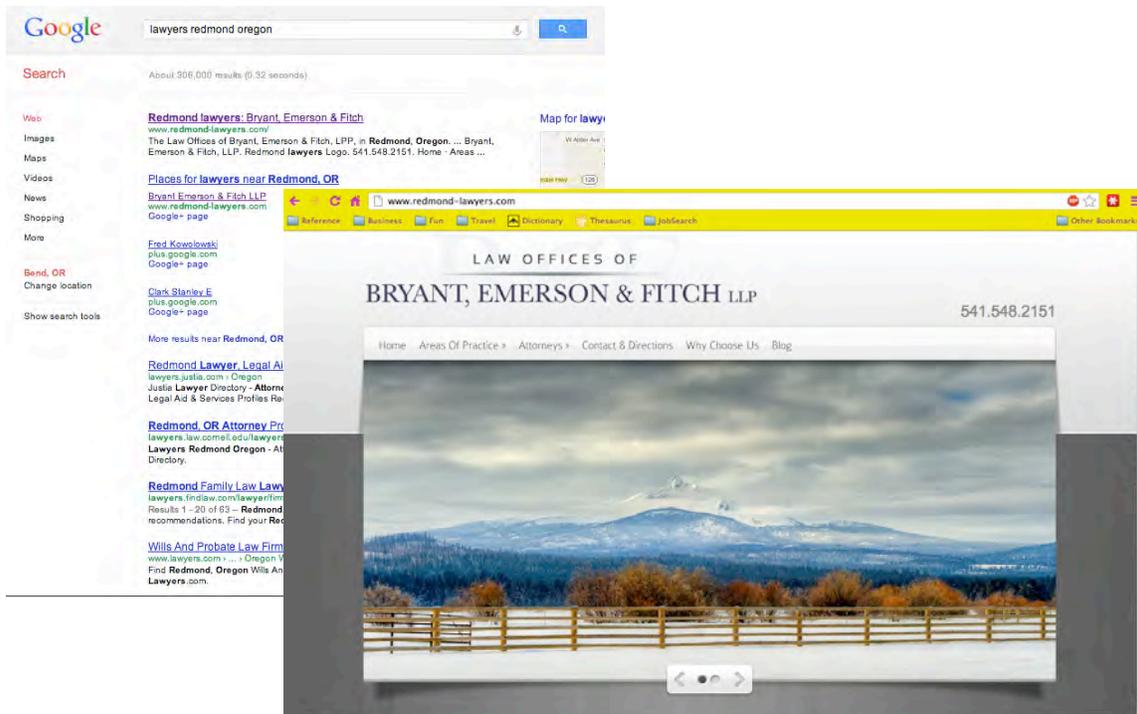


Figure 4 – BEF Website & Ranking

We have distributed this white paper to dental offices throughout Central Oregon in order to provide information and assistance to those wishing to improve business on their own. However, if you would like to take advantage of our experience, proven track record, and professional capabilities, we would like to take your business to the top. For reasons of integrity, however, we can only work with one dental firm in the area so please do not wait to contact us.

Call or email today to discuss your needs and how we can help.

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