

# Multiple Pieces of Online Real Estate: The Key to Successful Online Marketing

BY RITA ZAMORA BDS

More than 40% of potential new patients will never consider your practice — unless you provide them with ample opportunity to research you online. This goes far beyond having a traditional website.

Initiative, the Interpublic Group media agency, indicated that many consumers won't make a purchase of anything from shampoo to cars without the ability to do substantial online research. The pricier the item or service, the more research consumers want to do. What does this mean for your practice? It means that potential new patients want to see multiple pieces of online information about your practice. This online real estate may include reviews, testimonials, video, a Facebook business page, website, and more.

Keep in mind, this high level of research is not only being done by those "seeking out the best deal." MarketTools recently revealed a study indicating affluent visitors with annual incomes of more than \$75,000 are most likely to research products online before buying (43%). It's clear that while the power of personal testimonials will live on, consumers now

want to view as much information as possible before making purchase decisions.

## WHERE TO BEGIN - KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE NOW

Do you know what has been said about your practice online? When was the last time you Googled your name? Before you consider building your positive online PR, you should know what already exists on the Internet about you — both positive and negative. I regularly speak with practices that didn't know about a negative online review until a patient or a friend told them about it.

To help monitor if someone has said something negative about you online, you can use the free tool Google Alerts. Many dental practices encourage patients to post testimonials

or comments on public review sites. Meanwhile, one of the most common concerns doctors share is, “How will I know if a patient says something bad about me online?” Let’s face it: Even the best practice is susceptible to an occasional rant.

Google Alerts is a terrific solution. Visit [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts). Enter a variety of search terms, including your name and/or practice name, and simply provide your email address to receive updates. These alerts are a cyberspace monitor that is watching out for your best interests. This solution won’t cost anything, yet it can prove to be invaluable.

Also, make a note on your calendar to have a staff member do thorough searches for you each quarter on the major search engines. Searches of the doctor’s name and practice name should be performed regularly on Google, Bing and Yahoo for example. Often practices will run across something during a manual search of which they would have otherwise been unaware. It makes a difficult situation even stickier when you attempt to respond to a complaint that is months or years old. You must keep up with your online reputation. If you don’t do regular online searches for your name, you will never know what complaints (or compliments) may exist about you.

## **BUILD A BASE OF POSITIVE ONLINE REVIEWS**

There are several proven tactics you can utilize to help increase your positive reviews, including asking patients via word of mouth while they are in your office or using digital tools (like surveys or emails that push to review sites). It’s a good idea to offer patients several options to post online reviews for you. Not every patient will have a g-mail email address and therefore may not wish to take time to review you on Google Reviews. In that case, the patient may be active on Facebook or Yelp and prefer to leave a testimonial for you on those sites instead. Whichever option you propose to patients, be sure to keep the associated instructions simple and clear, and note how long the related task will take. For example, you could say, “Sign up to leave a Google Review it will only take five minutes. We greatly appreciate your time and look forward to hearing your opinion.”

If the thought of asking patients to do this for you is

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unappealing or seemingly impossible, you can consider the option of automated services. Smile Reminder [www.SmileReminder.com](http://www.SmileReminder.com)) is a reputable patient engagement system. It provides automated appointment reminders, along with email services and more. It offers post appointment surveys, as well as the option to send well-designed template emailers to patients, which can be uploaded to certain online review sites or your website, for example.

Today, digital reputations mean everything. So certainly spend some time taking action to grow your positive reviews. However, spend the greatest effort and energy on what’s even more important — showering your patients with pleasant surprises, thank yous, and genuine appreciation. Set your intentions every day on delighting patients and saying thank you. The positive word of mouth and reviews will enhance your online reputation and will provide you with a variety of positive pieces of online real estate.

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### **ESSENTIAL SOCIAL MEDIA REAL ESTATE**

According to Experian Hitwise, Facebook once again beat out Google for the most visits among top-visited websites in the U.S. (Data for the week ending Sept. 3, 2011). If you aren’t already on board with social marketing, you are putting yourself in a position to miss out on traffic from some of the most active platforms on the Internet today. Consider the average Facebook user now spends almost 16 hours per month on Facebook alone. In working with dental practices located across the United States and internationally, I continue to see practices successfully accumulating abundant testimonials on their Facebook pages. Yours could be one of those practices.

Make a decision to create a Facebook business page today. If you already have a Facebook page, review it and see how many testimonials or positive comments you have. If you find feedback limited, implement a plan to encourage patients to “like” your page and share their comments. Facebook recently introduced a “Recommend This Place” option (located on business page walls). When this option is utilized, testimonials are published to your page wall where a copy will remain. In addition, those recommendations are published to everyone in the testimonial provider’s Facebook friend network. So, the added bonus is this action can potentially produce literally dozens or hundreds of pieces of positive word of mouth about your practice.

Keep in mind, while it is “free” to open a Facebook business page, it’s important to note that your accounts will require time and effort to maintain. Time is money, therefore you’ll need to have a plan in place before implementing these “free” tools.

The most important thing to keep in mind with Facebook is systems. Although social media may seem like a task that can be done “whenever you have time,” it will only prove cost effective if you are organized.

### **A FEW TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND FOR FACEBOOK:**

- Determine who in your office will be responsible for

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asking patients for Facebook “likes.”

- Determine how you will promote your Facebook community.
- Determine how much time you want to dedicate to these tasks each week.
- Schedule specific days/times to handle this marketing.
- Repeat, repeat, repeat. If asking for patient “likes” does not become a habit in your practice, your Facebook community will perish.

Marketing on Facebook can provide your practice with excellent online real estate on the most popular social networking platform in the U.S., Canada and the U.K.



### MORE KEY SOCIAL MEDIA REAL ESTATE

YouTube is the second most popular search engine in the English-speaking world. Not only that, but YouTube is owned by Google — which may explain why well-tagged videos appear so high in Google searches. Couple that with the fact that 65% of online surfers will view video to completion, compared to less than 20% who read text only material to completion (Online Publishers Association and Adweek). It is easy to see

why video is one of the smartest online real estate investments you can make.

Although there are excellent options to invest quite a bit into well-done videos, a cost-effective way to use YouTube is to open your own YouTube channel and create your own videos. You can also upload any videos or footage you may have on file. Often practices will have a copy of a video clip, interview or patient testimonial they could upload.

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS TO KEEP IN MIND IF YOU PLAN TO IMPLEMENT VIDEO IN YOUR MARKETING:

- Make sure the video representing your practice has adequate audio. One thing people won't put up with is shoddy sound.
- Consider who will star in your videos. Will it be you, a team member, or a patient sharing a testimonial?
- What will your videos say? Think about providing content regarding frequently asked questions, such as:
- What sort of relaxation options do you offer for nervous patients?
- Will a deep cleaning hurt?
- What can I expect at my child's first pediatric dentistry visit?



- Will you make the video yourself or hire someone? While you may invest more to hire a professional, it can be well worth it if you are looking for the best in quality.

Remember even if you decide to “do it yourself,” you can benefit from a bit of professional editing by asking them to add your logo, music and a bit of polish.

Video can work 24 hours a day, seven days a week for you, which is another reason why it’s wise to dedicate a portion of your online marketing budget here. Another huge benefit video has to offer is the fact that it can be syndicated. Your video can be shared on sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, your website and more. Once you handle the initial task of sharing, your videos will be populated all across the web ... multiple pieces of online real estate working for you.

## TRACK WHAT’S WORKING

Now that you have created several additional pieces of online real estate, it’s important to address the question: “Which pieces of online real estate/marketing are most effective?” In other words, how will you know what is working and not?

A great free tool from Google that you can use is Google Analytics. Google Analytics is a free service that will help you with tracking. The service generates detailed statistics about the visitors to your website. Ask your webmaster to set up Google Analytics for your website. You’ll have the option to log-in or get reports regularly emailed to you. Google Analytics can track visitors from referring sites (such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, etc.), search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing, etc.), as well as key words, display advertising and pay-per-click networks. In addition, you’ll find it interesting to see which web pages are most often visited and how much time is spent per visit.

If you have invested time and money into building up your online real estate, you will want to know exactly where new patients have found you. An effective way to track what is really working is to interview patients about where they found you. Because of the ever-increasing budgets that are being dedicated to online marketing, many offices are implementing a patient interview process to ask patients, “Have you seen us on Facebook or have you seen our videos on YouTube?” This gives patients a better opportunity to specify exactly where they found you, and it also serves as a reminder of your presence in these social platforms. Don’t rely on someone to tell you Facebook referred them. Even if your intake form asks, “Who referred you to our office?” chances are new patients will recognize their personal friend as the referral source rather than Facebook — especially if you offer recognition for referrals.

As valuable as a personal referral remains, potential new patients have become voracious online researchers. As you continue to grow your online real estate, remember it is equally important to monitor your online reputation. Continue to strive for testimonials and positive word of mouth on multiple review sites. In turn, remember social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube can help amplify your word of mouth on two of the most popular sites on the Internet. Remember to track your efforts, check your Google Analytics reports, and never lose sight of the importance of interviewing patients about exactly where they found you. Follow the advice above and your practice will be well positioned to attract new patients from the most highly visited online real estate platforms.

