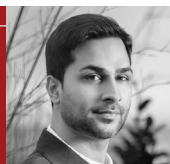


Building your online marketing

In the highly competitive arena of dental health, online marketing can help set you apart, **Shaz Memon** says

Shaz Memon

Creative director of Digimax and Digimax Dental



Dental marketing activity can range from the sparse to the sporadic to full-speed ahead – within a very short timeframe and in one practice.

As a small business operating in the highly competitive arena of dental health care, the marketing of a practice brand is often left wanting.

Frequently side-lined in favour of issues more worthy of their attention, practice principals will focus on the areas of the business more akin to the practice of dentistry.

The need to stay up to date with clinical innovation, new infection control protocols, the demands of regulators, staffing issues and stock-taking all demand attention. In fact, the list of 'more important things to do' is seemingly incessant.

But dentistry is an industry fast becoming shaped by its successful marketing – and the canny dentists among you are those already sharing Instagram makeovers, Facebook patient feedback and 'dental tips' tweets.

Like it or not, dentistry has entered the realm of beauty as well as having a firm footing in health – and the more elective cosmetic treatments you offer are growing commodities for nurturing a successful business.

Your online profile

With the rise in popularity of aesthetic dentistry comes new patient interest that more often than not begins in the digital world. Practitioners need a chameleon-like ability to react to this interest and offer patients added value in their search for the dental practice best suited to their needs.

Whilst word-of-mouth recommendations still have value, they are now frequently sourced online.

Dental practices should have an established, attractive and functional website that is highly valued because of its valuable content. And this should be supported with social media activity that is meaningful and consistent in both its frequency and its brand messaging.

The secret of good dental marketing is activity that elicits responses and engagement and is worthy of sharing. Successful marketers have an innate ability to have their finger on the pulse of what it is patients want.

The reality is that this is most likely due to one simple act and that is to coincide posts with key dates in the calendar. With the canny use of relevant hashtags and mentions, posts are instantly shareable and current.

In other words, forearmed is forewarned and by having insight into upcoming events and then planning content to coincide with these dates, your dental marketing team can maximise interest in what you wish to share.

Active social media

It is no longer enough for your brand to tweet the generic 'make sure you change your toothbrush every three months', post, the same 'before and after' images of a case study you were once proud of on Instagram or talk about your brand's opening hours on Facebook.

We are now living in an online world hungry for new knowledge to share, fresh images to inspire and current information to repost.

'Stale' social media activity will only serve to frustrate an audience eager for something new, fun or informative.

Worth noting is that consumers not only love sharing personal accomplishments on social media, but they also enjoy getting responses for the milestone by brands.

Some 41% of millennials would include a brand on a life milestone just to say thanks. According to Instagram, at least 80% of its users already follow a brand on the

network (sproutsocial.com, 2018).

Milestones such as weddings, summer vacations, Christmas celebrations and Valentine's Day are perfect dates onto which you can 'hook' your brand messages.

Talk about teeth whitening and fast braces in the months leading up to the wedding or festive season, offer pre-holiday dental care tips and warn of the dangers of dental tourism, raise awareness of the downside of sugary treats at Easter or Halloween and blog about the importance of fresh breath confidence as 14 February approaches.

Additionally, there are a huge number of national and global health awareness days (not just dental) that offer the perfect opportunity to raise awareness of oral health issues.

Building relationships

Building customer relationships and strengthening the brand are both key to a practice's financial success and dental marketing does both.

Whether your social media activity is left in the hands of a team member or outsourced, the planning of your posts will gain traction and lead to more patients in your chair.

Creating links within posts is a crucial part of the process. Links should be connected to external sources, developing credibility, as well as to pages on your practice website.

Let your imagination run riot – even if it is a tenuous link to the European Day of Languages and a tweet on how a smile is the same in every language

Dates for your diary

January

Dry January: alcohol-related educational posts. Raise awareness about tooth erosion

1 January – New Year's Day: new starts and resolutions for the sake of health and wellbeing. New smiles and makeovers. New commitment to oral health hygiene.

February

9 February – Toothache Day: FAQs about toothache and what to do

14 February – Valentine's Day: importance of attracting partners with a healthy smile and how to achieve fresh breath confidence

National Heart Month: the relationship between oral health and heart health. Reminder to visit dentist regularly

23 February-2 March – National Eating Disorders Awareness Week: educating patients on the possible oral health risks of an eating disorder.

March

2-9 March – National Sleep Awareness Week: talk about the importance of a good sleep and how dentists can address sleep apnoea as well as offer snoring solutions

8 March – No Smoking Day: smoking cessation and importance of oral health check. Invite patient in for oral cancer screening

20 March – World Oral Health Day: often has a key message so keep an eye out!

31 March – Mother's Day: never too old to fix a smile. Importance of taking extra care with teeth during pregnancy and looking after baby's teeth as soon as they erupt

April

Easter – repeat message about frequency of acid attack with sugary 'treats'. Suggest alternatives to chocolate eggs

Wedding planning season – smile makeovers, orthodontics, teeth whitening and oral hygiene

7 April – World Health Day

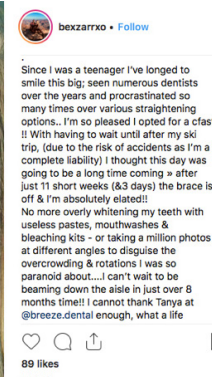
23-27 April – National Stop Snoring Week.

May

May-June – National Smile Month. Key oral health messages and some practices hold events throughout the campaign.

June

Pre-summer holiday tips: visit a dentist before you jet off. Don't fly with toothache. Why dental tourism is a bad idea



Having a consistent marketing schedule makes it easier to retain readership.

Whilst the list of dates in the below 2019 calendar we have put together for you is by no means exhaustive, it may offer a little encouragement when it comes to dreaming up some relevant and engaging posts.

So, let your imagination run riot – even if it is a tenuous link to the European Day of Languages and a tweet on how a smile is the same in every language, don't be afraid to have fun. Plan ahead and don't forget to use relevant hashtags when mentioning the important date or event. **D**

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FOR MORE INFORMATION about Digimax Dental, visit www.digimax.dental, email hello@digimax.dental or call 020 7060 2345. Address: 113 Crawford Street, London, W1H 2JG.

10-16 June – Men's Health Week: usually focuses on key issues so keep an eye out!

16 June – Father's Day: Never too old for a new smile. Talk about men's health and links to oral health

22 June – National Kissing Day.

July

16 July – World Kiss Day or International Kissing Day.

August

6 August – National Fresh Breath Day

19 August – World Photography Day: a great opportunity to encourage patients to share their smiles and for you to showcase those you have created!

September

Back to school: when did you child last see a dentist?

Healthy lunchbox suggestions

Mouth Cancer 10k Awareness Walk

29 September – World Heart Day.

October

Go Sober for October – alcohol-related educational posts. Raise awareness about tooth erosion

Stoptober – smoking cessation advice and raise awareness of what cigarettes can do to the mouth

1 October – International Coffee Day: how to avoid teeth staining and what your practice offers as a solution (Airflow perhaps or a professional clean and then teeth whitening)

4 October World Smile Day: celebrate the Smiley with suggestions about ensuring a confident one

31 October – Halloween: warnings about sugary treats and alternatives.

November

Mouth Cancer Acton Month – oral screening awareness and risk factors

November (Men's Health Awareness Month): often focuses on key issues but raise awareness of why it is important to regularly visit the dentist

11-17 November – National Recycling Week: show your followers how much you care about the planet and talk about the ways you practice 'green' dentistry – many patients buy into ethical businesses.

December

Christmas: vast opportunity to mention all the treatments you offer, the opening times during the holiday period and spread general goodwill!