5 Crucial SEO Factors for Dental Practice Websites in 2018

Recent research regarding consumer behavior shows:

- The average person spends 116 minutes a day on social media. That's almost 2 hours.
- People use search engines (Google, Bing, etc.) **6.59 billion times a day.**
- 97 percent of consumers **used the Internet to find a local business** this year.

  Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore.

With compelling statistics like these, dental practices will be left behind if they don't have a significant presence in the online marketplace, the digital world where their current and potential patients congregate.

And **the hub of your practice's online presence should be a website**, a piece of digital real estate you own and completely control. Let's look at some of the crucial SEO factors for your dental practice website's success.

User Experience

Ultimately, all the factors we'll talk about fall broadly under the heading ***user experience.*** Google's mission statement is to "organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful," and they strive to "significantly improve the lives of as many people as possible."

So ***if your efforts are filtered through a mindset of helping website visitors to have the best possible experience,*** then better search engine rankings will logically follow. Let's look at specifics.

Fast loading speed

We live in an impatient world. Surveys say that **users expect webpages to load within 2 seconds**, and that they tend to abandon pages that take 3 seconds or longer. If your website doesn't load very fast, you are likely losing potential patients.

So how do you know if your site doesn't measure up, and what can you do to improve it? Besides doing your own testing on several devices, you can use automated tools for objective measurements. As a bonus, these tools can give pointers about possible solutions.

- PageSpeed Insights. This tool comes directly from Google, so you should, at a minimum, run your website through this test. They return scores for your website on both desktop and mobile devices, and they provide suggestions for making improvements.
- Pingdom. Similar info can be found using this free tool from Pingdom. And by clicking on the dropdowns by each score, you can look at suggestions in the areas where your site does poorly.
- GTmetrix. It won't hurt to get your site analyzed by multiple tools. GTmetrix provides more info on your site's performance, including ways for you to understand your scores' meaning.

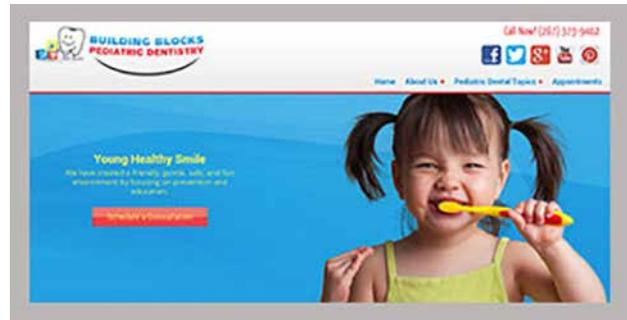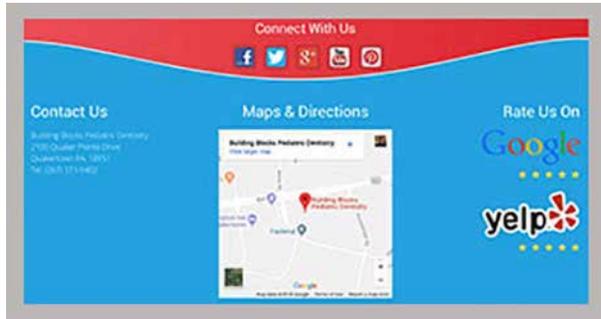Bottom line: *your site needs to load fast to keep visitors from leaving.*

Logical navigation and design

While good design is often subjective, we can distinguish between good and bad design for dental practice websites as it applies to functionality. *Visitors to your site should be able to easily find the information they are seeking.* Some examples:

- The dental website at right shows phone and address clearly at the top of the web page, as well as the dentists' names. The navigation bar has a reasonable number of choices (7), including "Dental Services" which would be an obvious place for potential patients to see if you offer what they are looking for, as well as "For New Patients," another clearly marked category for exploration. In addition, large, easy-to-read links are on the right center of the page to help patients schedule an appointment or read reviews of the practice. **This website provides visitors with a clear flow of information.**

- This pediatric dental practice shows a clean design, relevant for this practice's target market. And while the address isn't seen "above the fold" (without having to scroll down the web page), the bottom of the page, shown in

the second image, has not only the address listed, but also a map, making it **easier for visitors to locate the practice.**

- In contrast, this next dental website **makes new visitors work harder to find the information they seek**. While the phone number is clear at the top of the page, the practice's address is nowhere to be found on the home page, nor on the About Us page, which is normally one of the most-visited pages for websites. The main navigation bar, under the logo/header, has too many options (10) for the available space, resulting in small, run-together navigation links; this can impair visitors' progress through the site.

- And **it should not matter what type of device visitors are using.** Test your site on multiple devices to ensure key information is readable on them all. In the mobile phone image at right, we see both good and not-so-good features of this dental website. On the positive side, the main navigation buttons with their easily understood icons make it clear how to either call or get directions to the practice's office. However, the site's pop-up message and call-to-action buttons on the right and left of the screen make the small screen busy and have the potential to confuse visitors, and may make it difficult to select certain options that are underneath other elements on the page.

Mobile-friendliness

Nearly 60% of all searches are now done on a mobile device. Google announced that soon it will move to a "mobile-first" index. That means that **Google will consider the mobile version of your website the "true" version**, and that's what your rankings will be based upon. So if your site loads slowly on mobile phones, as mentioned earlier, you will drop in the rankings. In addition, if your website hides some of its content for mobile visitors – which is not uncommon – then Google will ignore all that precious hidden content in its ranking algorithm. Or if it's just plain unreadable on mobile, as the next example is, it will drop in ranking.

So how can you tell how mobile-friendly your site is? Use Google's Mobile-Friendly Test.

Using Google's tool shows you what the issues are, and if you scroll further on the page, you get suggestions of how to fix those issues. **Mobile usage is only going to grow, so now is the time to focus on making your website work well on mobile devices.**

Quality content

Quality can be another hard-to-define concept as it relates to dental practice websites. But Google and other search engines have created metrics to help evaluate the quality of content on websites. One article from SearchEngineLand mentioned a post from Google that listed the types of questions their engineers use in creating their proprietary algorithm's quality section. **Ask questions like the following about the pages on your dental practice's website:**

- Would you trust the information presented in this article?
- Is this article written by an expert or enthusiast who knows the topic well, or is it more shallow in nature?
- Does the site have duplicate, overlapping or redundant articles on the same or similar topics with slightly different keyword variations?
- Does this article have spelling, stylistic or factual errors?
- Does the article provide original content or information, original reporting, original research or original analysis?
- Does this article provide a complete or comprehensive description of the topic?
- Are the articles short, unsubstantial or otherwise lacking in helpful specifics?
- Is this the sort of page you'd want to bookmark, share with a friend or recommend?

Planning each page of content on your website to *match visitors' intent*—do they want to **know** something (learn about a procedure), **do** something (make an appointment), or **visit** the office (get directions—helps ensure the content of that page will be considered high quality. If the topic of a page is a particular service you offer, then provide as much detail as possible that would answer the questions a potential patient would have about that service. If a visitor is looking for contact information,

provide several means of contact: phone number, email address, physical address, and possibly online chat or the ability to make an appointment through the website. Helping website visitors find what they seek helps your quality metric.

And while the length or word count of web pages doesn't directly translate into quality, as a general rule, **longer articles are interpreted as having more detail, and therefore higher quality,** than shorter articles. So if you are writing a blog post about a dental topic, it's better to err on the side of longer rather than shorter—as long as it is well written and doesn't contain errors.

Keep up with SEO innovations

We all know that technology changes rapidly, and the methods that worked to get websites to rank just a few years ago don't work anymore. So to keep your dental practice visible to your target market, your website and its content will need to adapt. **Examples of current trends in SEO:**

- **Video content.** Cisco has forecast that by 2021 video will make up 80% of online traffic. Those who ignore video will find themselves dropping in search engine ranking. YouTube, owned by Google, is already the second largest search engine. Searchers often go directly to YouTube for searches. If potential patients want to know what is involved in getting dental implants, would they rather read about the process, or would they rather watch a video that shows the procedure? The takeaway here: get comfortable with creating video content for your website.

- **Voice search.** Research shows that 40% of adults perform at least one voice search a day, and that voice search is growing rapidly. And for people looking for local businesses while they are out and about, voice search makes total sense.

So how can you optimize your website for voice search? The easiest way is to **include both questions and answers in your content.** For example, if you were writing a post about root canals, you could entitle it, "How Do You Know If You Need a Root Canal?" Then answer that question within the text of the post. Or use the question as a header or subhead on the page. That doesn't guarantee a better ranking, but it's likely a step in the right direction.

How do you keep up with SEO trends? You can make time to read some of the top SEO blogs as often as possible. Sites like Google Webmaster Central Blog, Search Engine Land, Moz, Kissmetrics, and Backlinko write about trends in SEO. But that's a lot to read, and many of the articles get quite technical.

If reading about SEO doesn't sound like fun, you can always **find someone who is already reading those blogs.** An SEO expert or service provider that enjoys staying on top of trends and techniques can maximize your dental practice website's visibility in the search engine results while you focus on what you are trained to do: ***meet the needs of your dental patients.***

For a free, no-obligation SEO audit of your dental website, visit **ddsrank.com.**

We help dental practices get found online by new patients.