



Creating a Blog for your Dental Practice

Joel Harris, CEO of ADA Intelligent Dental Marketing, explains the relevance of having a blog and how to better connect with your patient base.

Blogging is the new national pastime. There are personal blogs, social blogs, and professional blogs. Whatever the topic, someone has probably blogged it. Creating a blog for your dental practice is an excellent way to differentiate your dental practice from the masses.

As a dentist, a blog makes you seem up-to-date and relevant. It makes you seem human and personable and most important it is an excellent way to build awareness for your practice, which leads to more patients, which leads to more case acceptance, and... well I think you get the picture. Here are a few great tips for building, maintaining and promoting a dental practice blog.

#1: Define your blog

First of all it's important to define your purpose in creating a blog for your practice. Although the obvious answer seems to be "to get more patients", it's important to look at the kinds of information that can be published on a dental blog. It's also important to remember that unlike most blogs, your postings are really only important to individuals who live within driving distance of your practice. For these readers, articles on dental health will be important but postings about your team members,



your equipment, successful cases and even favorite patients are great ways to make a dental blog, fun and worth reading.

#2: Create visual appeal

Good content isn't the only thing that matters. Your blog should also be visually appealing. Use tasteful colors, modern font styles, and clean graphics. Avoid dark backgrounds, overly fancy typefaces, and other elements that will make your blog hard to read. And don't forget the power of great photos and images. Clinical illustrations and before and after cases are obvious choices but don't forget informal snapshots to lighten the mood and keep your site from feeling like a medical journal.

#3: Use the proper tools

I highly recommend using one of the popular blog systems like Blogger or Typepad. These two systems

as well as others are extremely easy-to-use and make you look professional and polished. Building a blog from scratch is for nerds and people with extra time on their hands. Most dentists are neither.

Once your blog is up and running it is easy to link your blog's web address to your practice website (hopefully you have a practice website) so patients and prospective patients can easily find you online. Most blogging systems are free to use if you allow ads to show up in your blog, but for about \$8 per month you can have the ads turned off which I highly recommend. Nothing is more annoying than cluttering a great blog with obnoxious ads that have nothing to do with your message.

#4: Engage your readers

Tell your readers who you are behind your mask and something about yourself and your team members. Be human by posting things about your family and hobbies. Don't get too tacky, but it never hurts to make a blog informal and fun. Get your team involved in the process. It's a great team building exercise and it will also take the pressure off you as the dentist to do all the writing and content gathering. Although it seems obvious don't forget to keep the humor clean and don't use your blog as a political or religious platform.

#5: Keep it concise

Some of the best posts aren't particularly profound or long. Don't think you have to wait until you have something brilliant to say before you write an article or put off posting because you don't have time to write your complete thoughts on periodontal disease. Most readers have short attention spans and crowded schedules

themselves and would prefer to read a short, catchy post rather than a long, complex one. Again, mix up the clinical content with light postings and you'll give your readers the perfect balance of serious and fun. Too much about plaque and halitosis or too many cookie recipes

from your office manager will kill the site. Look for a balance and you'll be more successful.

#6: Promoting your blog

Obviously, Search engines and blog syndication are overkill for a local dentist's blog. But, make sure your direct mail, website, newsletter, business cards and every marketing tool available to you promotes your blog. This is another reason that managing a list of patient email addresses is so critical.

If you've done a poor job in the past of promoting your practice, begin today! The future of den-

tistry is exciting and your patients and members of your community will value access to the easy-to-read information and professional insights you can publish in a great practice blog.

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Joel Harris is a co-founder and President of ADA Intelligent Dental Marketing located in Salt Lake City, Utah. His company provides powerful marketing tools to help dentists grow their patient base, increase the profit and improve their image. Joel is also the author of the book, Breakthrough Dental Marketing.