

5 FACTORS OF DIGITAL MARKETING SUCCESS



smileMARKETING
New Patient Dental Websites





INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a crowded space. And day after day it becomes more and more congested.

This has led to a small minority of dentists capturing the *lion's* share of new patients from the Internet.

Are you in that coveted minority? If you're seeking out more new patients, then you're not. You're losing to competitors who are dominating your patient-drawing area.

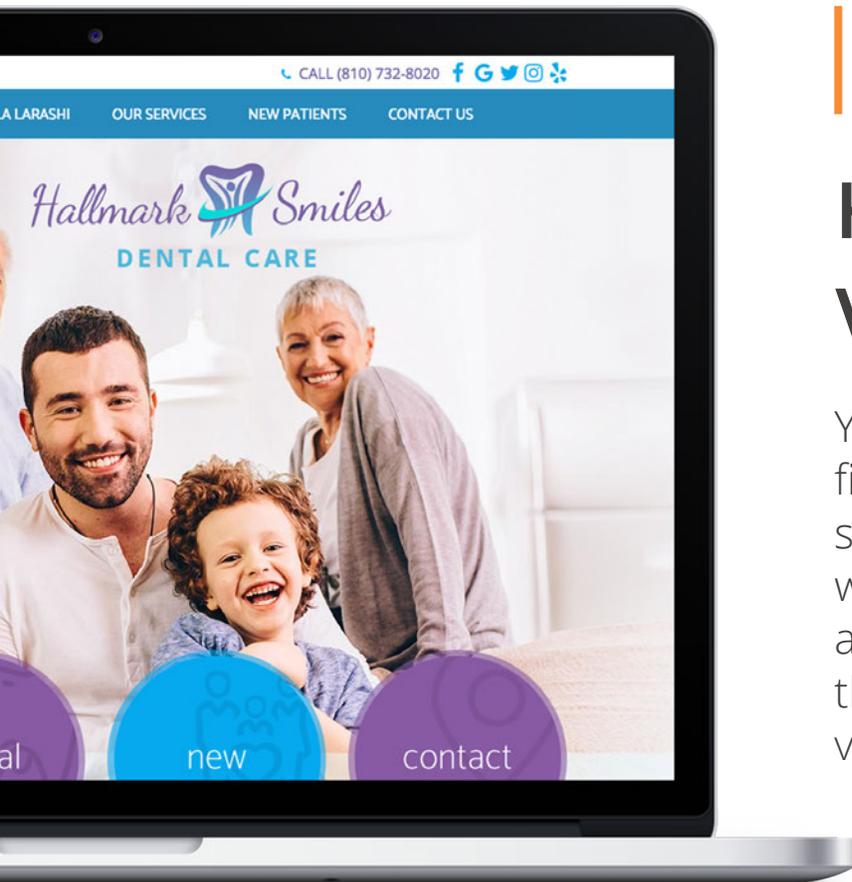
Smile Marketing has over a decade of experience managing the online presence for thousands of practices. This experience has helped us create a blueprint for how digital marketing helps dentists get and keep more new patients.

It comes down to five factors:



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01 | High-Converting Website

Your website is typically the first thing prospective patients see. Most designers treat a website like a piece of “digital art,” belaboring the tiniest details that do little to convert website visitors into new patients.

This misplaced attention overlooks a simple fact:

Great website design **alone** doesn't produce new patients.

Sure your website should look contemporary, inviting, and beautiful. But it also must be engaging with compelling content and a patient-driven digital marketing strategy. It must capture a prospective patient's attention the moment they arrive.

Ultimately, it should answer one question:

“

Why should I choose ***you*** as my dentist?

”



First, there are the technical aspects of website design:



It should load quickly



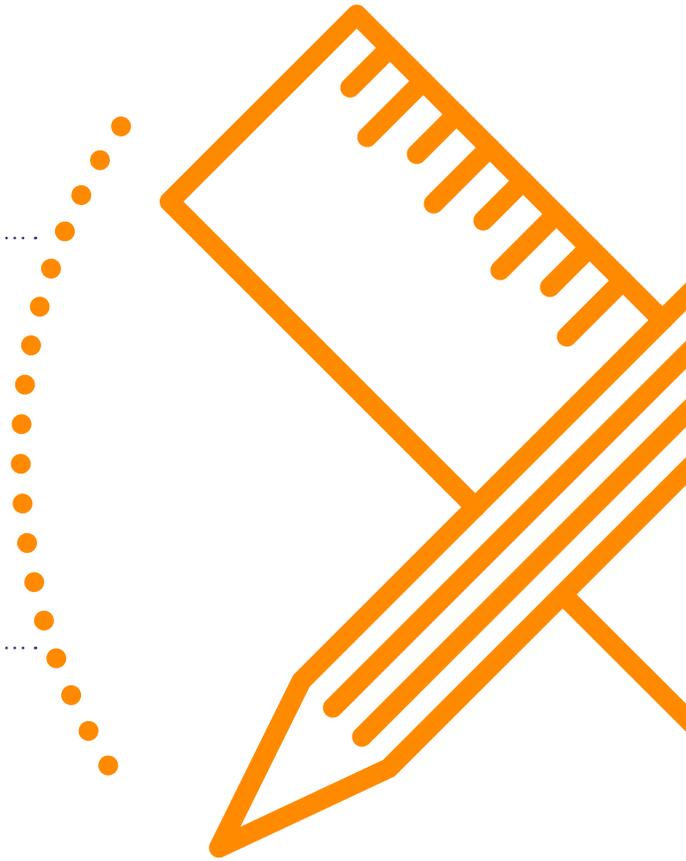
It should be mobile-friendly,
responsive to all devices



Pages should have
reasonable word counts



Content should be browsable
with headings, bullets, and
short paragraphs



Now, any website designer can achieve this. In fact, with the right software, you can do it yourself – with very little cost.

Seen the Wix commercials? If you want, you could head on over to [their website](#) and start creating your **free website** today. If all you're looking for is a "digital business card," we actually *recommend* this avenue. It's the perfect solution for practices that need a nice-looking website that contains their address and contact details.

In other words, if your patient schedule is already full – and you don't have the funds to invest in marketing – then Wix may be your best solution.

If, however, your schedule *isn't* full (and you want it to be) Wix will leave you right where you are now - in that dreaded majority of dentists who are losing out to the elite few.

Because the reality is “free” websites don't produce new patients.

A conversion-friendly website begins with something we call the “New Patient Journey.”

We've crafted this philosophy using something called “heat mapping” – which observes precisely where visitors navigate on a website. Using this software, we've analyzed thousands of client sites to see what converts site visitors into patients.



In short, the New Patient Journey combines these **conversion factors**:



Your homepage must connect with visitors the moment they land on it.



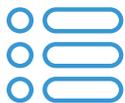
Your site should contain the five most important pages: *Homepage, Doctor[s] Bio, Contact, About, and Services.*



Custom content should be persuasive and tell visitors why they should choose you.



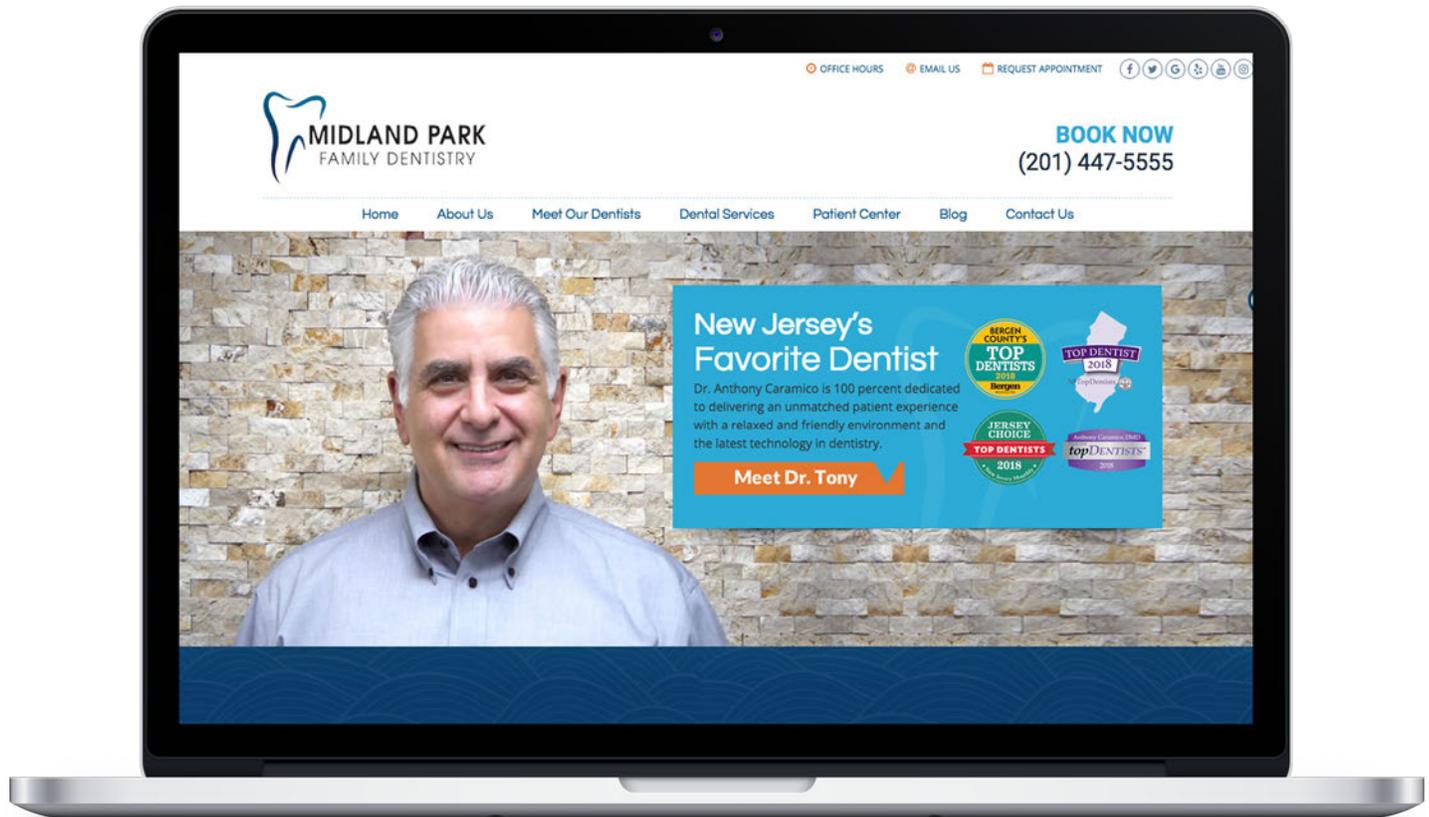
Professional, custom photography of you and your team that makes your website genuine and authentic.



Content should be browsable with headings, bullets, imagery, and short paragraphs.



Calls-to-action throughout your site should lead visitors to schedule a consultation.



There's a common theme among these conversion variables. If you want to convert more new patients you must connect with prospective patients *emotionally*, not *robotically*.

Patients want to see *you*, not a photo-shopped model sitting on a dental chair. They want to learn about *you*, not about the process of performing a root canal (that's what Wikipedia is for).

Anyone can build a website. But few can build one that resonates with patients.

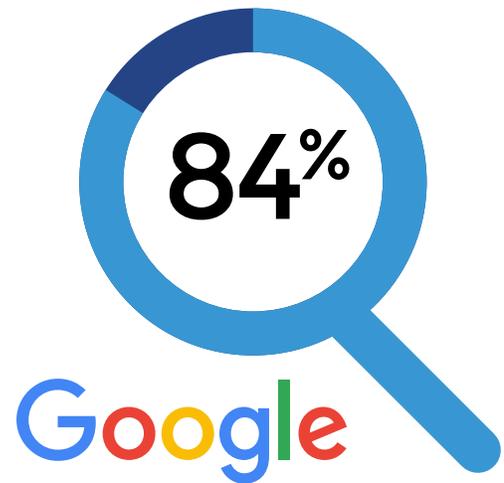
And there lies the problem.

A website marketing to eager apparel shoppers is far different than a website marketing to anxious dental patients.

| 02 |

Website Traffic

Once you have your website designed, the next step is to drive traffic to it. In analyzing thousands of client sites, we've discovered that 84 percent of new patients start their online journey with search engines, namely Google (sorry, it's not Facebook).



Website traffic comes in two forms: Organic traffic and paid traffic.



ORGANIC TRAFFIC

is free visibility that displays below the paid results at the top of a search. Visibility depends on competition and how well your website is optimized for Google, Yahoo!, and other popular search engines.



PAID TRAFFIC

is paid visibility that displays at the top of the search results, where you pay a fee each time someone clicks on your ad.



Both forms of traffic are crucial to building your digital footprint.

Timing is the key difference.

Building a steady flow of organic traffic can take time, but once you have momentum, it can create a growing pipeline of new patients.

Meanwhile, paid traffic can start generating new patients the moment you activate your campaigns. It's, what we call, the "new patients on-demand" approach.

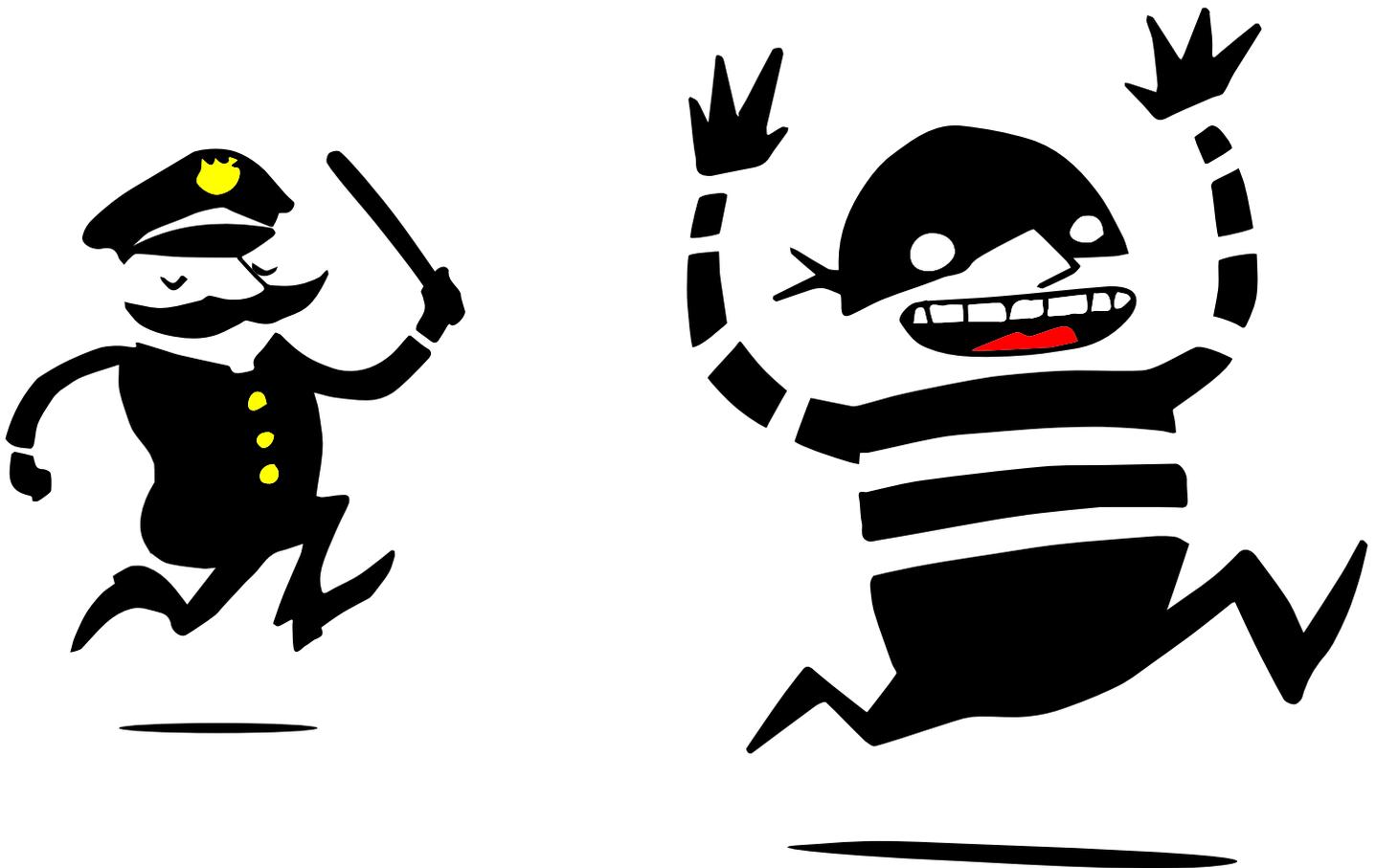
Organic traffic largely depends on how well your website is optimized for Google.

When it comes down to it, SEO isn't a dark art, something that only a select few can understand. Many agencies might claim so to justify exorbitant fees. But how to effectively optimize a website is well known in the online marketing industry.

That being said, it requires a strategy that is custom to your practice. There are a host of good SEO providers out there. There are also plenty of not-so-good providers, shady characters that will guarantee Google rankings (which, by the way, violates Google's terms of service) just to earn a quick buck.

If you're looking for an instant rankings boost, a short term-minded SEO contractor might achieve this for you. But they are likely using unapproved tactics that'll potentially get you blacklisted from Google within months or even weeks.

So when it comes to SEO, let the *buyer beware*.



Following the more technical aspects of SEO (on-page optimization, link building, meta tag descriptions, etc.), great SEO begins with great content.

Sure, Google is based on a computer algorithm. But it's a very *intelligent* algorithm, designed to serve the best, highest quality results to every search performed on its engine.

Google can determine content quality based on engagement metrics, such as:

-  How quickly a visitor leaves your site after arriving
-  How many pages they visit
-  The amount of time spent on the site
-  Whether or not they click on links
-  If they are a new or returning visitor

So if visitors aren't engaging with your site, Google has likely concluded, "Sorry, your content is lame and you're getting a demotion."



The other side of this factor is paid traffic. Where organic traffic is the *marathon*, paid traffic is the *sprint*. Rather than earning traffic over the long-term through Google, paid traffic allows you to buy visibility. In essence, you're purchasing Google real estate.



Google AdWords is the most common way to buy traffic. It has three key benefits:



Attract new patients from adjoining suburbs



Target patients searching for adjunctive services



Control your new patient flow by adjusting your budget

Like third-party SEO providers, there's no shortage of AdWords providers. And when it comes to choosing a provider, the same goes ... let the buyer beware. About 80 percent of businesses using AdWords report **unsatisfactory ROI**. This is especially true in the dental field, as very few providers specialize in dental paid advertising.

It's the same story. Providers take a cookie-cutter approach and apply it to every client they sign on.

Even worse, they might use "AdWords Express," Google's stripped-down, do-it-yourself option. It's unbelievably simple. Seriously, you can [sign up today](#) and get a campaign running in a whopping 10 minutes.

The problem with using a PPC provider without experience in the dental field (or giving AdWords Express a go yourself) is budget inefficiencies. You could blow through thousands of dollars and gain only a handful of new patients – a disastrous patient acquisition cost.

So, what makes a ***patient-converting*** paid search strategy?

Let's consider what ***doesn't***:

- 0 1 | Poor ad text that hurts your click through rate
- 0 2 | Ads that aren't relevant to your landing page and the keywords you're targeting
- 0 3 | Not testing and optimizing your campaigns on a regular basis
- 0 4 | Taking a generic approach to keyword research (i.e. not specializing to the dental field)
- 0 5 | Missing a call to action in the content of your ads (i.e. "Schedule an appointment")
- 0 6 | Geographic settings that target patients too far outside of your jurisdiction

All in all, a profitable PPC strategy is dental-specific and integrates seamlessly with your website.

| 03 |

Social Media

We'll start with this:
Facebook *does not* produce new dental patients.

While it may be the “sexiest” marketing channel today, social media is not the patient-producing miracle it's propped up to be. Remember, Google is the number-one source of new patients.

That being said, social media is an integral part of your online presence. But you must manage your expectations and gear your strategy around them.

facebook®

Facebook has a host of benefits. But the notion that Facebook delivers new patients is arguably the biggest misconception in the online marketing world today.

Your website is where the magic happens. It's where prospective patients can learn about you, your techniques, and your practice philosophy.

We market for dentists all day long. And based on our analysis, we've found that Facebook delivers **a mere two percent** of all new patients.



Where *does* social media deliver?

Social media is best viewed as an *internal* marketing tool. It's a way to stimulate community and nurture existing patient relationships, allowing you to boost profitability in three ways:



PATIENT RETENTION

Staying in touch with patients who follow you encourages repeat office visits



UPSELL OPPORTUNITIES

Educating patients on their oral health allows you to upsell your services



MORE REFERRALS

An active social presence boosts top-of-mind awareness, which reminds patients to refer you when the time presents itself

Referrals play into social media in a powerful way. After all, where do many referrals come from? Oftentimes, it's an inquiry on someone's Facebook newsfeed:

"I'm looking for a new dentist, does anyone have any recommendations?"

You want to be one of those recommendations.

How do you achieve your social media marketing goals?

At Smile Marketing, we've found that clients who benefit most from social media follow these best practices:



BRAND YOUR PAGE

Just like all your marketing materials, your social media should have consistent branding. If someone visits your Facebook page after visiting your website, they should know immediately that they're in the right place.



BE ACTIVE

A social media page that lays dormant shows a lack of commitment. Commit to posting on a regular schedule (daily or a few times per week).



BE CREATIVE

One-line posts of text don't keep followers engaged. Add beautiful photos to make your content stand out. Follow the 80/20 rule: 80 percent fun and educational (like a health tip or fun fact); 20 percent promotion (like a call for patients to schedule an appointment).



PERSONALIZE

Your social presence should showcase your personality. Breathe life into your page by keeping patients in the loop. Have an upcoming event, or a new staff member? Let your followers know.



INTERACT

Once someone "likes" your page, they can leave comments on your status updates. Furthermore, they can review your practice - for all the world to see. Monitor this activity regularly and respond when necessary. Remember, the purpose of social media is to be social.

Social media is just one component of digital marketing. But it's not the first, nor is it the last, patient touch point.

It aides the conversion process, but it's hardly the hero. Unrealistic expectations, proposed by sales-hungry social media agencies, have created this fallacy.

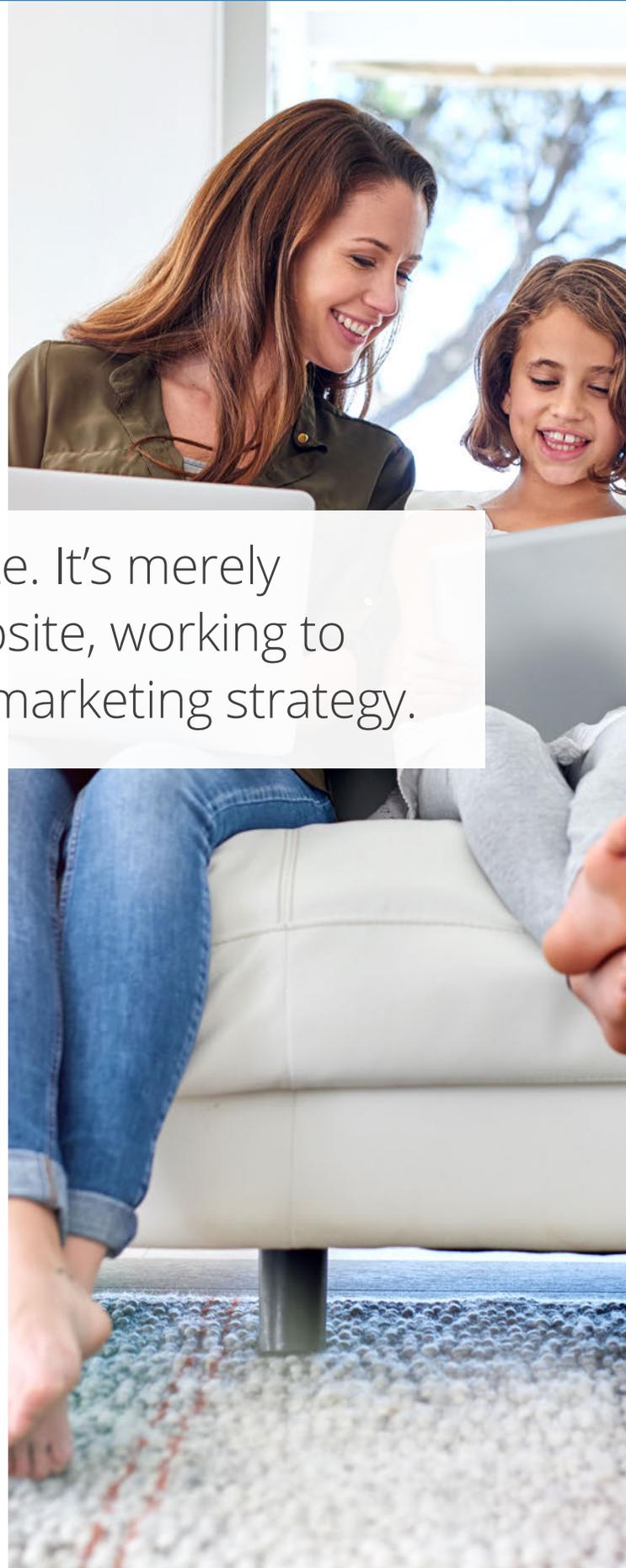
Facebook isn't your website. It's merely an **extension** of your website, working to complement your overall marketing strategy.

Say a prospective patient finds your website on Google. They learn about you and then decide to click to your Facebook page. A dull and desolate page can reflect poorly on your practice.

Ultimately, when a young mother visits your Facebook page they're asking: "*Do I like these people?*"

And then they stumble upon your anti-social Facebook profile that's been silent for the past three months...

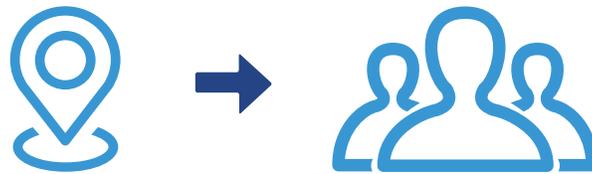
Not good.



As noted, social media is an internal marketing tool.

However, there is a way it can produce new patients. You just have to pay for it.

Social platforms like Facebook offer a paid advertising solution that is ideal for attracting potential patients who have never heard of you. With its unique ability to target specific user demographics, Facebook is a **cost-effective way** to customize ads for a particular audience.



It couples interests with location so you can target only those who may need dental care near you. Are you a pediatric dentist? Set your target audience to young mothers and fathers. Screening patients for oral cancer? Target users by age.

When running Facebook ad campaigns for our clients, the most impactful strategy we've found is something called "remarketing." With remarketing ads, we tell Facebook that we want to serve ads only to people who've already visited a client's website.

It's brand marketing on steroids.





| 04 |

Online Reviews

Think your “real world” reputation is the only reputation to keep tabs on? Far from it.

Today’s digital-driven world has made your online reputation just as important – if not *more important* – as your real world reputation.

Any dentist can claim to be “the best.” But not every dentist can have a robust portfolio of five-star online reviews. When it comes to attracting strangers from the Internet, your online reputation can make or break you.

Positive online feedback from Google and other review sites aids new patient conversion. Getting **5-star reviews** on websites like Yelp and Google will not only boost traffic to your website, they'll help turn digital visitors into real-life patients.

Meanwhile, consistently poor online feedback will ship prospective patients straight to your competitors.

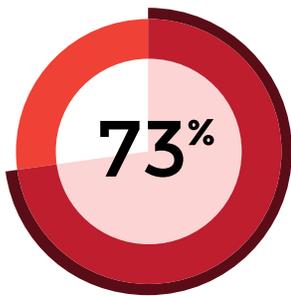
Think about it. If you're searching on Google for a landscaper, who are you going to choose: the 2.8-star guy who provides terrible service or the 4.7-star guy who turns a barren lawn into a beautiful landscape?



Your digital reputation can be an **excellent marketing tool**. And it's becoming increasingly important as dentists become more tech-savvy. The social proof that online reviews reveal help patients make decisions quicker and with greater confidence.

According to the local search service Bright Local, people are evolving in the way they view a business' reputation:

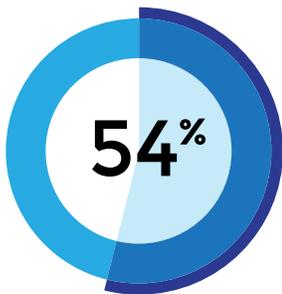
BrightLocal



73 percent of consumers say that positive reviews increase their trust in a business



58 percent claim star ratings are the most important element of an online review



54 percent will visit a business' website after seeing positive feedback on review sites



90 percent read less than 10 reviews before forming an opinion about a business



And most startling of all...

Over 80 percent of consumers trust online reviews as much as they trust a personal recommendation.

So, how do you manage your online reputation? Two ways:



Handle negative reviews with meaningful responses



Attract more reviews in a compliant manner

First, how to handle negative feedback... We suggest dentists take the following steps after getting a negative review:

- 01** First, put your ego on the shelf. A poor review, while not optimal, is often seen as an outlier if all your other reviews are glowing. In fact, some suggest that a poor review helps validate your positive reviews.
- 02** Next, respond to the review by writing a professional, *non-emotional* response acknowledging the reviewer's concerns and indicating you will be contacting him or her to discuss the matter.
- 03** Take the discussion offline. Contact the reviewer via phone to discuss the concerns one-on-one.
- 04** If the conversation goes well, the reviewer may agree to remove the negative review. If not, other prospective patients who see the review and your response online will see that you're a kind professional who takes patient concerns seriously.

Due to regulatory guidelines and strict terms of service, gaining positive reviews can be challenging. Faking reviews or paying some contractor 50 bucks to post on your behalf can usher in grave consequences (possibly a blacklist on your account).

One compliant way to secure reviews is through online new patient surveys.

Not only do new patient surveys offer valuable information about your practice, they encourage feedback during the most critical time – when an appointment is fresh on the patient’s mind.

Diagnosis _____

Date of filling _____

Doctor _____

New Patient Survey

Of course, you need the technology to implement these campaigns effectively. For instance, the Smile Marketing [New Patient Survey](#) is proprietary software that automatically gathers reviews on dentists' behalf – in a manner that adheres to Google's and other review sites' guidelines.

Here's how it works:

- 01** Add a new patient to your Smile Marketing website dashboard.
- 02** A welcome email and survey are automatically submitted to the new patient.
- 03** Throughout the survey, the patient will select an emoticon that best describes their experience.
- 04** After selecting their answers, the patient is able to provide a brief review.
- 05** The software determines the patient's level of satisfaction, and if they had a positive experience, the patient is encouraged to review your practice on popular review sites like Google, Yelp, and Facebook.

| 05 |

Email Marketing

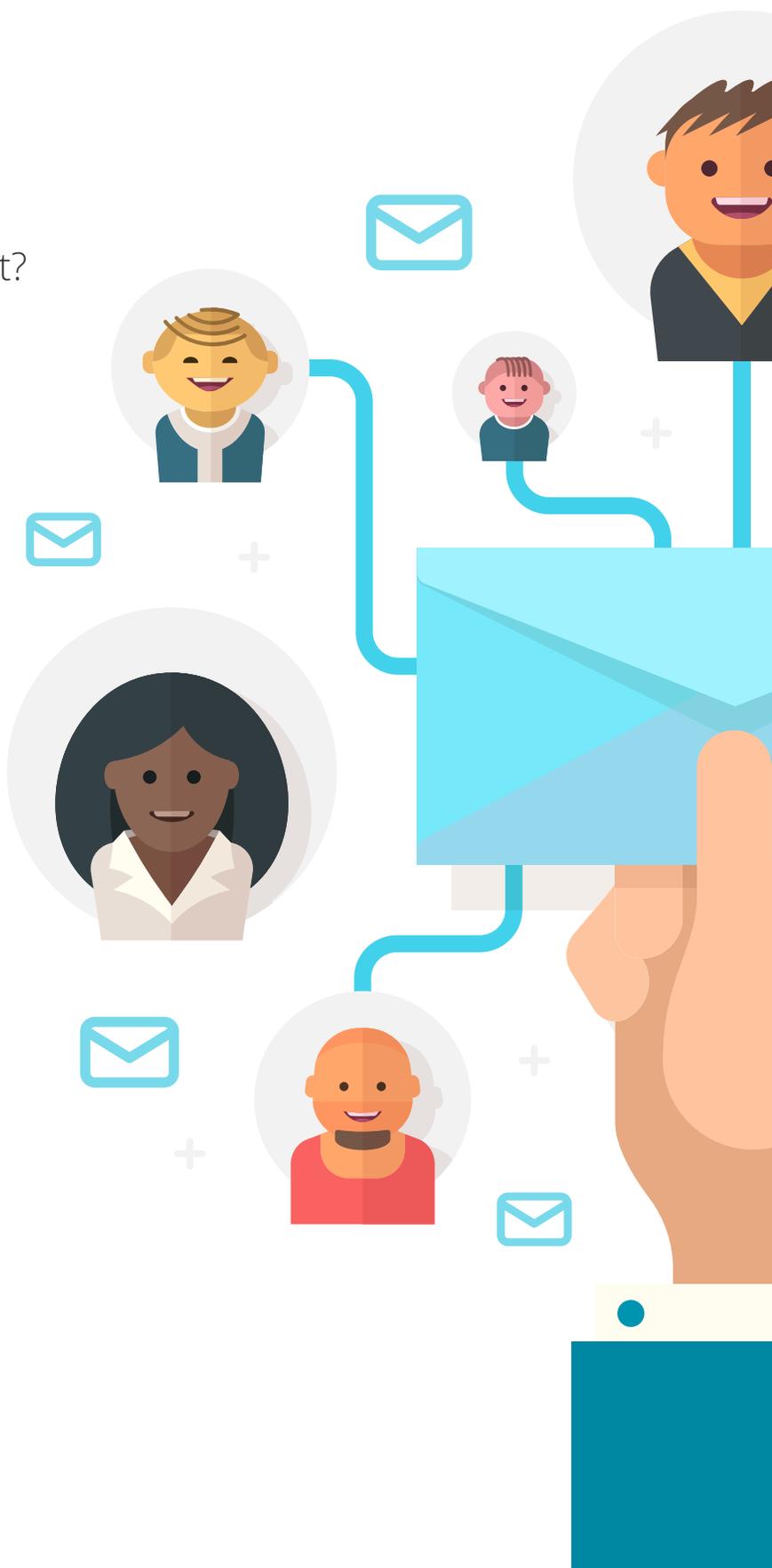
Think email marketing is a dying art?

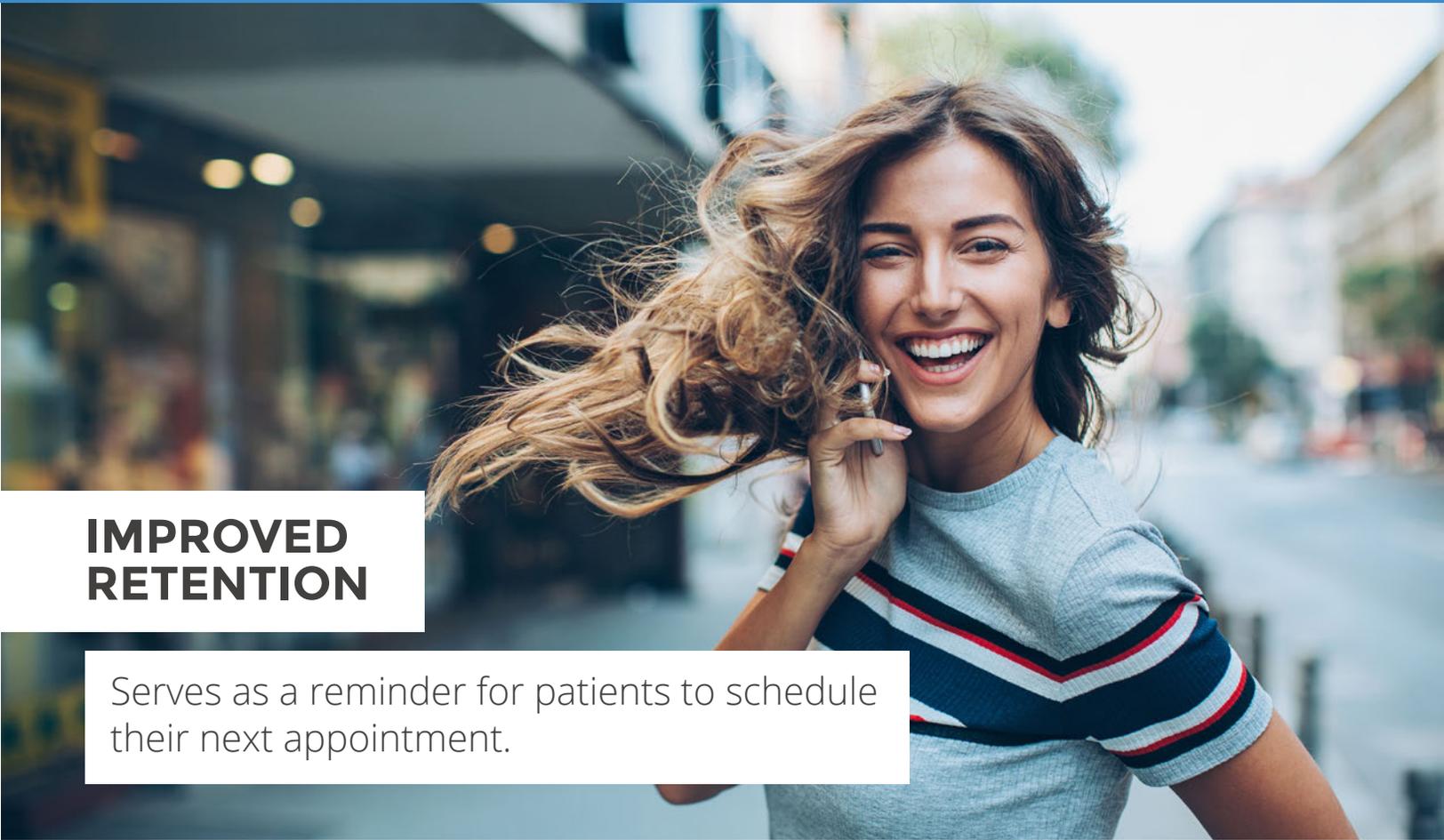
No. It's as powerful as ever.

In fact, email marketing delivers better ROI than any other digital marketing channel (indeed, *more* so than Facebook).

So how does it benefit your practice?

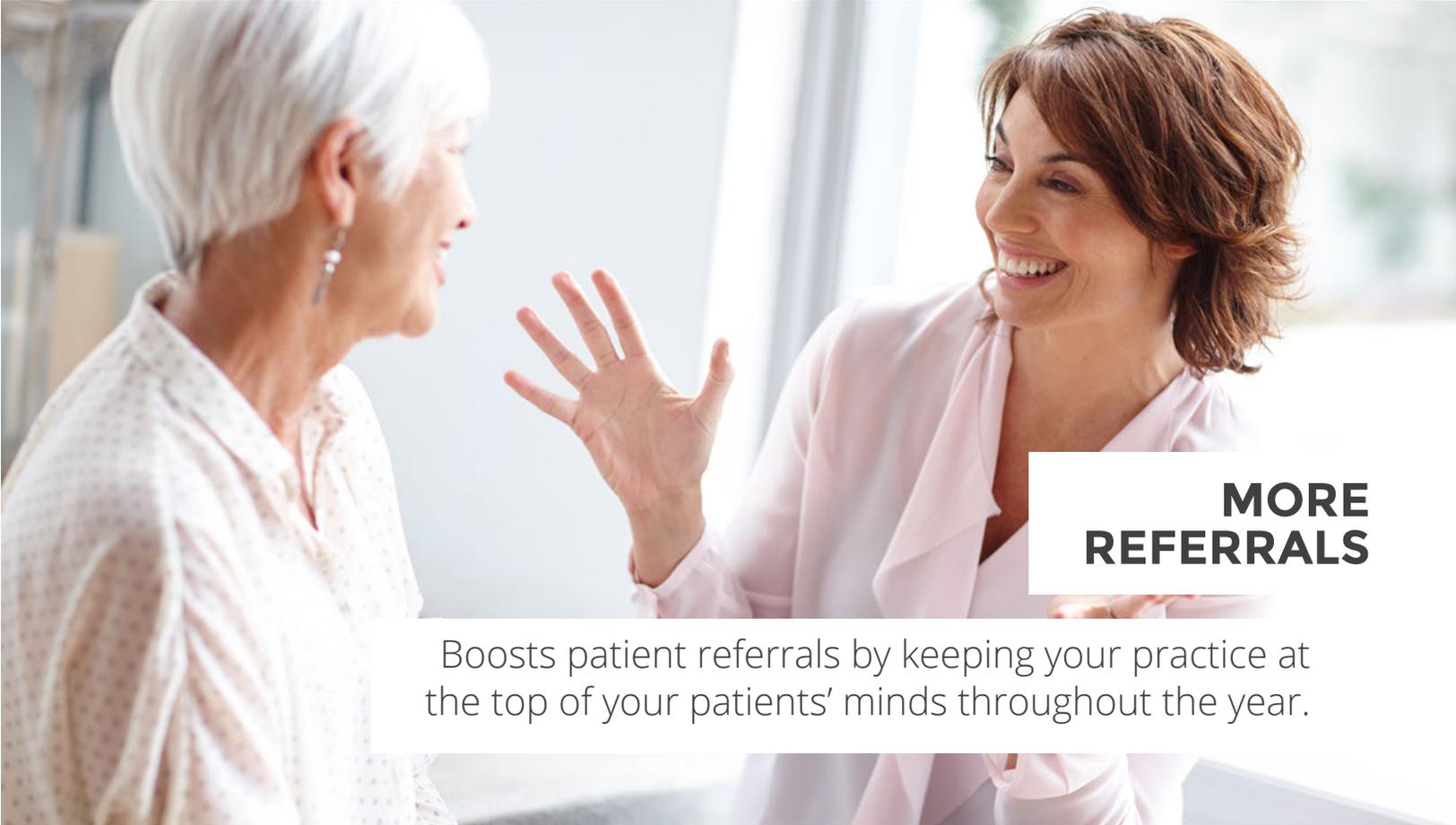
Email serves as both an internal and external marketing tool, allowing you to nurture current patient relationships and new patient leads. Like other channels (i.e. social media), email marketing has two key benefits:





**IMPROVED
RETENTION**

Serves as a reminder for patients to schedule their next appointment.



**MORE
REFERRALS**

Boosts patient referrals by keeping your practice at the top of your patients' minds throughout the year.

With the right software, you'll be able to automate and send targeted email campaigns to a segmented list of patients. If you plan on sending birthday or seasonal greetings, this is essential. After all, you don't have the time (unless you're short on patients) to send individual emails to your entire patient roster.

Here are four types of campaigns to consider.



NEWSLETTERS

Monthly practice newsletters that keep patients engaged by educating them on dental health.

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

Birthdays are a time of the year when people tend to reflect on their health. Send greetings on your patients' birthday to remind them to think about you.



SEASONAL GREETINGS

New Year's and other popular holidays offer another reminder to patients to schedule a visit and promote your practice.

TARGETED CAMPAIGNS

Sending relevant email messages to a segmented group of patients can encourage repeat appointments and prompt an existing patient to refer you.

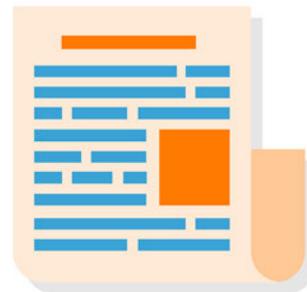




While email marketing may seem relatively easy (just type and send, right?), there are several best practices to follow. Without them, your campaigns will fail.



So here are several guidelines to follow when writing and formatting your emails:



Subject lines

The subject line of your email is your first impression. A compelling subject line is essential to compete against the countless other emails patients receive each day.

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Branding

Your emails should align with your brand's overall look and feel. Meaning, your logo, colors, and social media pages should be consistent across all marketing channels.

Educational

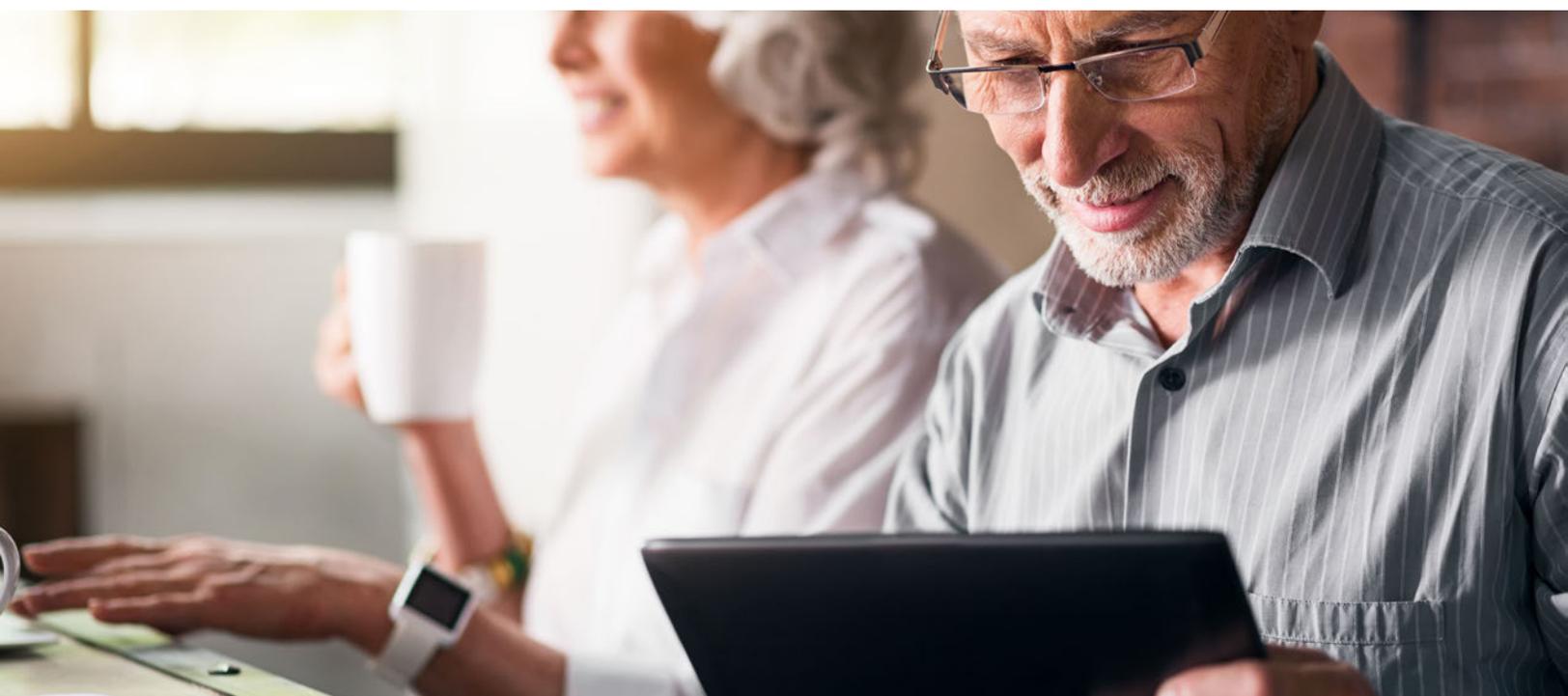
Your patients' inboxes are already flooded with salesy overtures. By offering tips on how to maintain their oral health, you'll provide value to patients showing them that you're not simply a bill collector.

Readability

Make sure your emails aren't too text-heavy. They should include at least one image, with headings throughout to make the content more readable.

Consistency

The timing of your communications should be consistent. For instance, your newsletter should be published around the same time each month. Avoid large gaps in your publishing schedule, so your patients know when to expect your next newsletter.



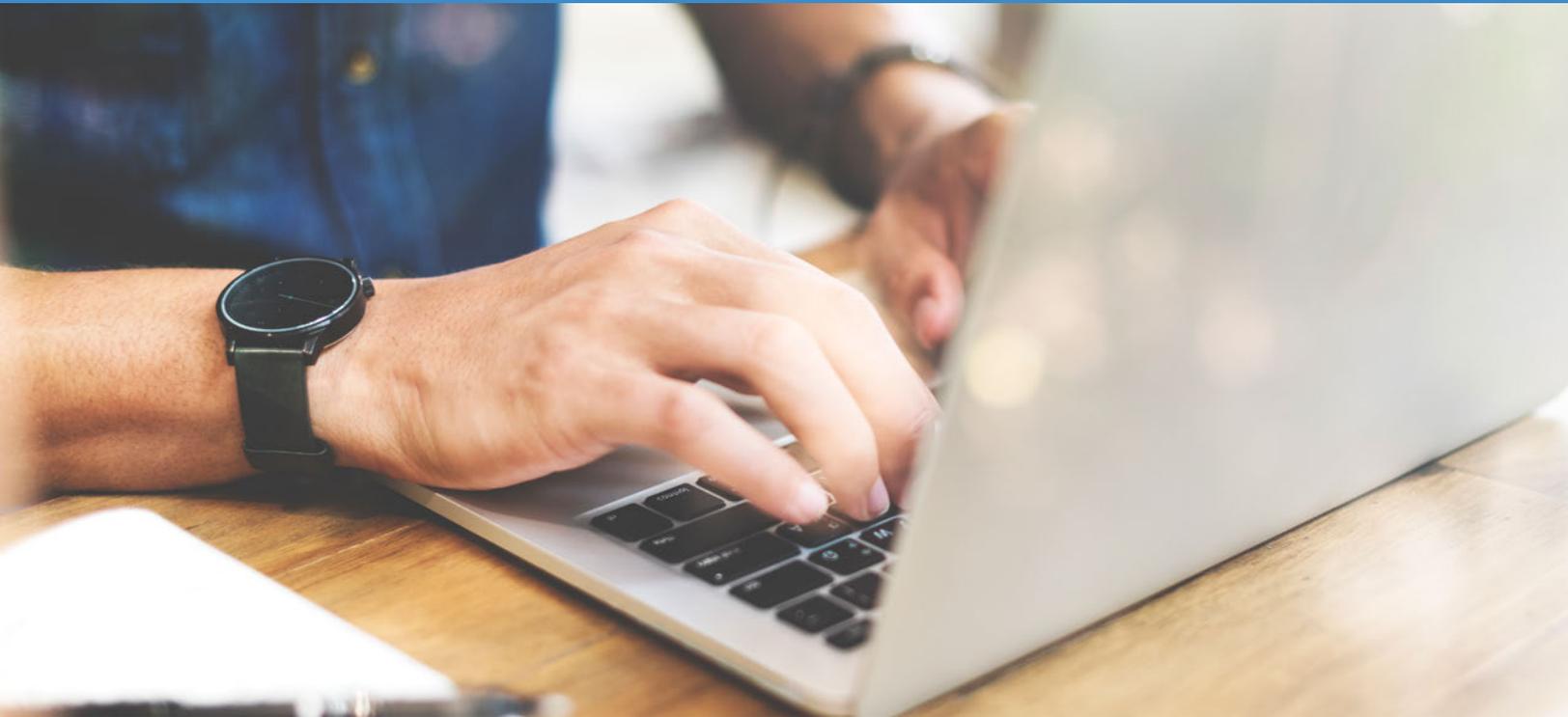
Drafting an impactful email marketing campaign isn't easy. After all, it's more than just writing and clicking the "send" button. The ultimate goal is to get your email campaigns **opened, read, clicked** – and, ultimately, **converted** into patient appointments.

If you can't achieve those metrics, you're wasting precious time.

Be sure to invest in the right software or provider before embarking on these initiatives. Manually sending newsletters, birthday, and holiday emails isn't practical.



Automating your emails and sending targeted campaigns to existing patients will improve patient retention and fill your schedule with more referrals.



CONCLUSION

The moral of the story is this: You can be a DIY website designer. You can create a virtually *free* online presence.

But if you want an online presence that's more than just a digital business card, then an integrated digital marketing strategy is essential.

If the latter is your goal, get a **complimentary 5-Factor Review** of your online presence – a live, no-obligation evaluation that customizes “The Five Factors of Digital Marketing Success” specifically for your practice.

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This complimentary review includes:



An objective analysis of your current practice website and strategy



Several suggestions for improving your site



Tips for taking the first step toward achieving your new patient goals

**Request your evaluation today:
www.smilemarketing.com/eval**