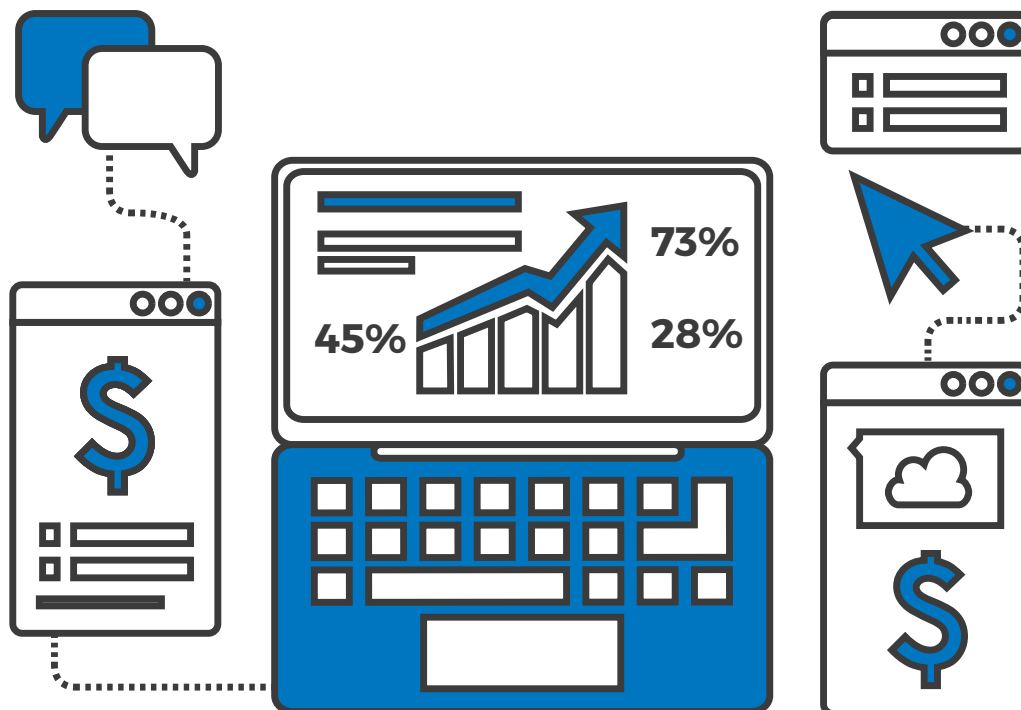


Get the Buzz on SEO



Introduction

We often hear from our clients that they want to be on page 1 of Google and that means they need to do SEO. But effective and successful SEO encompasses so much more than that. Search engine optimization (SEO) is a long-term strategy for improving a website so that it is more visible in the un-paid or organic search results. SEO is to marketing as oral and maxillofacial surgery is to dentistry. There is so much that goes into it: image and video optimization, internal and external link building, content development, removal of indexing barriers... **Sound Greek to you? Keep reading to learn the ins and outs of SEO.**

Chapter 1: What is SEO?

Search engine optimization (SEO) is an online marketing tactic that focuses on increasing your web presence and boosting visibility of your practice's website in the organic, non-paid areas of online search engines.

Search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo! are powerful forces in driving traffic to websites across the Internet. Because there is so much information housed in search engines, websites can get lost in the cracks or buried below other results. SEO helps to push your website to the top of applicable search results and ultimately increase attention around your services and offerings.

SEO encompasses various tactics, methodologies and strategies, all geared toward improving your website's rankings, driving traffic to your website, and gaining leverage across search engines.

In its most simplified state, SEO takes into account these three aspects:

- The quality of traffic visiting your website
- The quantity of traffic visiting your website
- The organic listings for which your website is appearing

There are many influencing factors to SEO, including, but not limited to:

- The content on each page of your website
- The external links (those not on your website) that are connected to your website
- The structure of your website and ability for search engines to understand it
- Alternative text for when search engines cannot read the images on your website
- Blog entries
- Online directories

Search engines are constantly switching up their algorithms, which makes keeping up on "SEO Best Practices" a full-time job.

If you have questions about SEO best practices, contact an SEO expert for answers.

Chapter 2: Is SEO Right for Your Practice?

Are you feeling a sense of urgency to start SEO for your practice website? Go through these scenarios to ensure that you are ready to get started, and not just feeling pressured by advertisers and confusing SEO audits.

Have you created your marketing plan?

Effective marketing isn't made up of one or two tactics. It's a compilation of brand awareness, traditional marketing tactics, internal marketing programs and online marketing strategies that are designed to work together to bring in new patients.

Are your local listings at least 75% complete?

Go to <https://moz.com/local> for an audit of your listings' completeness scores. Having online listings that have all your data (website address, phone number, address, etc.) are very important for dentists because they are a proven route to attracting new patients.

Do you need new patients ASAP?

SEO is a long-term marketing strategy and a process that can take up to a year to start driving worthwhile results. We recommend more direct marketing tactics such as Google AdWords or direct mail for quickly getting new patients through the door.

Are you rebranding, purchasing another practice, or opening a new practice?

These situations call for local SEO because there is a significant amount of information about your practice on the Internet that you want to get ahold of before you end up with a costly mess. Make sure that you can access your practice's maps and online directories so that you can change the data when the time comes. You don't want to have opened a new practice with your old address all over the Internet.

Is your priority achieving #1 rankings?

While rankings are an indication of a working SEO strategy, they aren't the metric on which your strategy should be focused. Google even says that "no one can guarantee a #1 ranking."

Do you understand SEO?

Many dentists blindly venture into SEO without fully understanding the scope of work and how it will actually impact their practice. By educating yourself on SEO best practices, you can hold your SEO provider accountable and, more importantly, ensure that you are building an SEO machine that results in new patients.

Need guidance? Contact an SEO expert for help.



Chapter 3: SEO FAQs and Myths

There are many SEO “facts” that circulate the Internet. Dentists are constantly inundated with marketing offers and exposed to new trends concerning search engine optimization. It is easy to get caught up in all of the excitement. Many of these SEO facts are actually not facts at all. Here are a few SEO myths:

- *SEO is one-and-done.* Continuous and constant SEO management is critical to achieving a successful online presence. Search engines like Google and Bing are constantly changing their algorithms. Your website, and each individual page, are in constant competition with millions of other dental websites. The content of your website should always be up-to-date and accurately reflect your dental practice, the services you offer, your team, your hours, etc.
- *Being # 1 in search results is all that matters.* There are so many varying factors that impact the ranking of search results. Search results vary from person to person, depending on each individual’s search history, location, exact keywords, etc. Having high-quality, pertinent search results based on keywords is much more beneficial and important to the long-term success of your online presence.
- *SEO is a quick fix.* There are several “black hat” techniques that may appear to be quick fixes for your website’s rankings. These techniques are unsustainable and will likely be flagged by search engines. If Google or another search engine suspects these black hat techniques, your website will very quickly be pushed to the bottom of search results, and getting back on Google’s “good side” can be a very long, almost impossible process.
- *Social media doesn’t impact SEO.* Consistent and engaging social media activity (posting regularly, gaining positive reviews, etc.) can greatly impact your SEO, though it is indirect. Social media activity increases your web presence, increasing the opportunity for potential patients to land on your online profiles over a competitor’s.

SEO myths are plentiful and should always be addressed by a trusted SEO expert. If you have specific questions regarding your online listings, rankings, content, or website in general, our search engine marketing expert would be happy to help.

Chapter 4: SEO Checklist

There are 37 factors that play into SEO success, as expertly illustrated on The Periodic Table Of SEO Success Factors. Of those, there is a handful that are appropriate for the dental team to do themselves.

Below, find a checklist of the top six SEO basics that are do-it-yourself friendly:

1. The pages are well written with high-quality content. Take the time to read every page of the practice website, ensuring that they are all error-free and that they genuinely answer the burning questions that patients typically ask. Survey patients to know for sure what those questions might be.
2. The pages use words that describe exactly what the dentist does. If the dentist wants to attract more crown and bridge cases, as one example, be sure to have website pages dedicated to terms like “cosmetic dentistry,” “restorative dentistry,” and “tooth repair.”
3. The pages are not “stuffed” with keywords. There is a fine line between using words that describe the service and stuffing keywords. Resist the temptation to repeat “crowns and bridges” or other words or phrases time and again in your website text, since search engines frown on this practice.
4. The website address has been around a long time. If it’s time for a website redevelopment, be sure to retain the practice’s original website address. Some practices have multiple website addresses that redirect to one another, and it’s advised that those be consolidated down to the one that has the longest history.

5. All of the web text is original content or sourced materials, not “pirated” text from other websites. Some dental website providers offer the same stock website text for every client, and the search engines see this as pirated material. Take the time or invest the money to develop website text that is custom to your practice and your patients’ needs.

6. The website includes links from other credible websites. Google, Bing, Yahoo! and other search engines boost your website’s rankings when it includes links from other websites that are relevant to your practice. For example, if you offer same-day dental restorations, include a link to [CEREC](#). If you are a member of the ADA, include a link to the [American Dental Association](#) website. And if you are a dentist who adheres to the Pankey philosophy, link your website to [The Pankey Institute](#).

These simple steps can help in getting your practice to the top of page one. For a more comprehensive SEO strategy or to really compete in your market, be sure to reach out to an SEO specialist for help in the other 31 areas.



Chapter 5: Top Five SEO Best Practices for Dental Websites

Not every practice has the budget for a long-term SEO strategy, because it's just that – long-term. It may not drive new patients immediately to the practice. If you or a member of your team is handling the practice website's SEO, here are five best practices that can help you create a solid baseline.

1. *Get ahold of your local listings.*

Start by using the Moz Listing Checker to see how the top directories and data aggregators are representing your practice. You want your listings to be consistent, complete, and unduplicated. Then, look for secondary listings related to healthcare such as your Healthgrades, ZocDoc, and Dr. Oogle accounts. Finally, look for directories within your community. To start, search for your practice name and city on Google and scroll through the first five pages.

2. *Get social.*

SEO studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between how your social media following engages with your social media content and how a website ranks on maps and search. Additionally, we have found that blog content gets ranked a lot faster when shared on Google+.

3. *Content, content, content.*

Get your patients to engage with your website through a content strategy that your team is passionate about. Among other metrics, Google looks at how long website visitors read your content to assess if your website is trustworthy. While straightforward topics such as “What You Need to Know About Dental Implants” are important, think creatively about how to engage your patients. How-tos, product reviews, and videos are a few examples of content that will really help you stand out.

4. *Each service deserves its own webpage.*

Instead of having all your services listed on one main page, segment them into their own pages with information specific to that service. This will help you develop rankings for searches related to specific offerings.

5. *Focus on mobile.*

Google has an algorithm specific to mobile searches and many of those types of searches show a higher intent for becoming your next patient. Everything you do for your website needs to be vetted on a mobile device.

If you have questions about SEO best practices for your dental website, contact an SEO expert for answers.



Chapter 6: White Hat SEO vs. Black Hat SEO

What is the difference between white hat SEO and black hat SEO?

Dentists are constantly flooded with marketing offers, especially for SEO. Most of these offers, however, fall under the black hat category. For example, let's say you get a call suggesting that you can be on page one of Google for a surprisingly low price. Your first thought may be, "Great! Minimal cost with maximum reward, right?" Wrong. Here are some issues with black hat SEO:

- The focus is put on getting your website in front of the largest audience possible, even if this audience is not necessarily human. The quality of your impressions and website views will be significantly diminished and your target audience may not ever see your content.
- Keywords are "stuffed" into your website content, making the text read like spam and with unnatural wording.
- Hidden links can be placed on your website to drive a lot of low-quality traffic.

This type of SEO is extremely frowned upon and may result in your website being banned from search engines altogether. With black hat SEO, you might see a quick uptick in website views and big numbers in your analytics, but you will not see long-term results or ultimate SEO success.

Conversely, white hat SEO requires a long-term investment and will yield long-term positive results. Here are some benefits of white hat SEO:

- You can utilize content marketing to drive quality traffic to your website. Adding fresh content to your website regularly means that search engines will see that your website is being updated and hasn't gone dormant. Relevant content also drives more potential patients to your site. This alone will significantly improve your SEO.

- As opposed to black hat SEO, white hat SEO will put your website in front of a relevant audience – people who are searching for your unique content, finding it relevant, and calling to inquire about your services.
- White hat SEO also requires research on what is relevant to your audience right now. From that research, you will be able to create content featuring key words that drive your appropriate traffic to your site.

It is important to remember that you must follow search engine guidelines in order to see a long-term return on your SEO marketing efforts. For this reason, it is highly recommended to stay away from black hat SEO, even if you are just looking for quick, easy results. Our recommendation? Put on your favorite white hat and start researching and writing.

You can also contact a reputable SEO agency that adheres to white hat SEO tactics to help you to boost your website in the rankings, increase website visitors and drive more patients to your practice.



Chapter 7: Basic DIY SEO

You don't have to be an SEO expert to get started boosting your search engine credit. Here are a few things you can do to get your website to stand out in search engine results.

Keyword Research:

Two great tools for keyword research include Google's Keyword Planner and a website called keywordtool.io.

- To begin, categorize a few general terms and services critical to your business, such as "Dentist", "Dental Implants", "Teeth Cleaning", etc.
- Enter each individually into keywordtool.io. Keep in mind this is a free tool so it will not reveal everything. Once the search is complete, click the "copy all" button.
- Open up Google Keyword Planner and select "Get search volume data and trends."
- Enter your copied list from keywordtool.io, set your desired location and hit "get search volume".
- This will give you a list of keywords and phrases with their associated monthly search volume. The highest searched terms are the ones you will want integrate into your website.

On-Page Optimizations:

Once you identify your keywords, implement them into several areas on your website beyond your page copy.

- Title Tag – The title tag is one of the most important attributes to on-page SEO. It is the headline that will show in your search results. A good title should be around 60 characters.
- Meta description – This is the description portion of your search result. A good description should be under 160 characters in length.
- H1 Tag – The H1 tag is the header of the page. Each page should have one, clear header that describes the information on the page.
- Alt Tag – The alt tag is short description that tells Google about the images on your website.

Links:

The days of “black hat” link schemes are long gone and can even get you put on Google’s penalty list. The best way to build up a great link profile (domains that link to your website) is to generate quality content and update that content on a consistent basis.

Some great ways to do this are to:

1. Set up a blog page and post articles and updates about the dental industry.
2. Submit newsworthy information to local influencers and/or news websites.
3. Utilize social media to push engagement and updates about your practice.
4. Make sure to watch for broken links as well. [Google Webmaster](#) and [Siteliner](#) are great free tools to evaluate new or broken links.

Local Listings:

It is very important to have an easy to find and consistent representation of your practice NAP (name, address, and phone number). These are important elements in making into Google’s local three pack – the three local listings at the top of search engines. Local search terms usually trigger these to appear.

Set up a [Google Business](#) page using your keywords in the description and category. This is Google’s number one go-to for local listing information.

Avoid duplicate listings by using the same NAP across all citations. If you notice a lot of duplicate listings, you may have to contact a professional SEO organization to have these removed.

Final Note:

Be sure that Google Analytics and a Google Webmaster Account with tracking codes have been inserted into your website. These can be done with any Gmail account and are crucial to the ongoing evaluation of your website’s SEO health.

Need support? [Contact an SEO expert for help.](#)



Chapter 8: Understanding Google's Algorithms

Google puts the majority of its ranking emphasis on three algorithms, four if you're a local business. The algorithms are:

1. The Panda Algorithm – Content

Quality content should be well written with no grammatical or spelling errors. It should encompass appropriate keywords and phrases that answer the questions and/or provide the information the users seek online. It should be aesthetically pleasing and hearty in substance, not thin or shallow. Be sure to avoid duplicating content on multiple sections of your website. Either remove **duplicate** content or insert a canonical tag that will pass ranking to another page with similar information.

2. The Penguin Algorithm – Link Quality

Are the websites that link to your domain reputable and relevant in correlation with your content? Avoid spam/purchased links and submit a disavow request to Google if questionable links begin to get out of hand. This will remove them from your backlink profile.

Content is a great driver of link acquisition. Great content drives engagement, which in turn draws links back to your website. It is always a good idea to set up a content calendar so that you are posting new and engaging content on a regular basis.

3. RankBrain – Google's machine learning AI system

As Google's crawl bots work through websites, RankBrain determines a website's connection to the word or phrase entered into the search engine. In summation, it's searching for the most relevant information to the users search query.

To optimize your website you will need to run through a checklist of some technical items such as:

- Does your website have metadata (backend descriptions that characterize what your website and pages are about)?
- Are title tags between 60 and 80 characters?
- Are meta descriptions around 155 characters?
- Are H1 tags clearly defined?

4. The Pigeon Algorithm - Pigeon is referred most commonly as the "local search algorithm"

To optimize for local searches, you will need to make sure that your practice name, address and phone number (NAP) are listed and consistent across your website and directories.

You should set up a Google Business page. Google will look to Google + for categories, photos, reviews, ratings and more. Google Business is key to appearing in what is commonly referred to as the local three pack, the three listings that appear at the top of search engines in local searches.

To further your local efforts, take a hyper local/mobile approach. Target surrounding cities, towns, and landmarks on your website and in your content. Make sure a phone number is easily found and clickable on a mobile device. Be sure your website is listed on the local chamber or directory. Local searches that occur on mobile phones convert at a much higher rate than desktop searches, so it's important to capitalize on these high-intent searches.

Algorithms can cause a lot of confusion. Get total SEO clarity by contacting an SEO expert.



Chapter 9: When to Call an SEO Expert

SEO is a constantly evolving practice, based on various search engines updating their algorithms, online directories pulling your practice info for their listing, and many other moving parts. With that said, we recommend that an expert help with SEO.

For a startup dental practice, it is imperative that an expert conducts and monitors your SEO. As an entirely new practice, all of the right measures must be deployed to gain traction and start generating traffic to your website, and ultimately to your door. There are many measures that can be taken to help speed up the process to increase traffic and boost rankings.

SEO is a long-term approach that gains effectiveness and traction with time. When left entirely on its own, your website is likely to be swallowed by thousands of other websites and similar webpages. By having an expert deploy and monitor SEO, results can be experienced more quickly and you will have more time to dedicate to being the expert dentist that you are.

What to Ask the SEO Expert:

What is the strategy you will be deploying to improve my SEO?

Be wary of the SEO expert who cannot detail the strategy they will be deploying. If they cannot establish clear expectations in regard to results and length of time to see those results, or commit to keeping you informed each step of the way, move on. SEO requires initial assessments and constant monitoring, and is an evolutionary strategy.

What is your strategy for local SEO, specifically?

Local SEO is imperative for small businesses like dental practices. By boosting your local SEO, you are improving your practice's chances of appearing in search results based on nearby location.

What information will you need from me?

SEO often requires website updates, content build out, directory logins, etc., so you may be required to share data. Specific information regarding the services you promote, benefits accepted, etc. may also be needed.

How will success be measured?

Website traffic should be tracked month over month. Sustainably increasing traffic to the website is a sign of improved SEO. In addition to quantifiable traffic, track the sources from where that traffic is coming. Essentially, the number of websites sending traffic to you, the keywords that are driving traffic, the duration of stay on your website, and overall traffic are all important, easily-tracked SEO measures.

Looking for an SEO expert that specializes in dentistry? Contact Big Buzz today and get a free SEO assessment, outlining exactly where to start to give you a boost!

