

Excerpt from:

KABOOM!

*The Method Used By Top Dentists
for Explosive Marketing Results*

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PART FOUR

ONLINE PROMOTION

Online promotion is all the rage these days. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google, Bing, Yahoo! – they're fun to say, they're hot, and a lot of doctors are clamoring to be all over them.

Why?

We are a gadget-obsessed culture, and there's no greater gadget than the World Wide Web. The web is the only form of media that give us so much individual *control*. People can become a blogger or a published author overnight. Order that new book online right now and start reading it on your tablet immediately. Amazon.com is talking about a drone that will deliver wares in 30 minutes or less, like a pizza. Hired a new employee? No problem. Just log in to your website and upload her photo and bio. Instant gratification never felt so right.

"Marketing" companies have sprouted up everywhere, offering to "get you found at the top of Google" or "manage your online reputation," or "remove negative reviews."

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Plus, there is a lingering belief that online promotion is far less expensive than traditional media. In the early days, online promotion was commonly thought of as free. Just jump online, post your information and get instant exposure in front of potential patients.

If only it were that easy.

A Balanced Marketing Formula includes online promotion *among other strategies*. It can be easy to get carried away with the online craze by overinvesting. So much online promotion is designed to be do-it-yourself that it's easy to bite off too much. The Balanced Marketing Formula keeps you on track and on budget.

Be sure that the marketing budget allots an appropriate percentage to online promotions. Not too high, not too low – refer back to your Balanced Marketing Formula at the end of Part One to be sure of the right investment for your practice. While many online promotions can be done on your own, you will need a vendor's help with certain tactics to really see results. For example, it is possible to launch a Google AdWords campaign on one's own, but that would be like your patient performing her own root canal. Some procedures are better left to the experts.

Go back to the survey results to understand which online promotions to focus on. What do people like about your website, and what can you improve? Are your patients and their peers searching online for their healthcare needs? Are your potential patients frequent Facebook posters, or do they prefer LinkedIn?

In Part Four, you will see how to get the most out of your online promotions, including website, social media, search exposure, and reputation management.

DISCIPLINED WEBSITE DESIGN

Let's say the surveys indicated that your website needs a makeover.

Keep it simple. A 15-page website is really all you need for a one- to two-dentist private practice. One of those pages can be the blog, which will fill in with entries over time and enhance the content of the website. Like your marketing on the whole, your website is a living organism. Rich, relevant content and frequent updates are what make a website visible on search engines – not content overdose. Quality trumps quantity.

If you bristled at the word “blog” in the previous paragraph, fear not. A blog is nothing more than an online journal. Excerpts of published medical articles, conversations with other physicians, and muses on your work all make interesting and easy-to-formulate fodder. Don't carry the weight alone. Some of entries can come from your own writings, and then pick up other sources to round it out. Search online for expert material that can be re-posted, but be sure it's properly credited. Have staff write guest blog entries about what it's like to work at the practice. Invite a patient to write up what it's like to be under your care. This takes the pressure off and makes your blog credible rather than egotistical. Post once a week and your blog will grow over time.

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Be sure that the website provides an “action opportunity” on every page. *Call for an appointment. Fill out this form to learn more. Follow the practice on Facebook. Enter an email address and get a free care guide.* Each person who arrives to the website will have different preferences, so provide a number of options. The more options, the more likely web visitors are to act and thereby stay engaged with the practice.

The website should be designed to whet the appetite and encourage action. Be sure that the web text and look matches the Message and Design Equation and is promotional rather than informational.

My friend Dr. Cote shared with me the three A's of websites that drive results: affability, ability and availability. It's tough to say where he picked these up, as the concept is all over the web and could very well be applied to developing a successful medical practice on the whole.

A powerful website makes the practice look *affable*, or likeable. Visitors should see warm and inviting photos of the office, doctors and staff. They should get the feeling, “I might like them. They could earn my trust.”

A great website makes it clear that the physicians are highly *able*. It should be clear in the first few seconds of looking at the home page any of the dentists' awards and accolades and any compelling before-and-after cases they have completed. Visitors should get the feeling, “They seem capable. They would take good care of me.”

A terrific website articulates that the dentist is *available*. Office hours, address and directions should appear on every page. This conveys the feeling, “It would be easy for me to at least check them out. I could make it happen.”

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Some sources add a fourth: affordability. In marketing, selling on price is rarely a good idea, which is why it's not included here. *50% off today, lower teeth whitening only!* Eek!

Website development can be a lot like building a home: It's a big undertaking and a huge investment; it opens up high probability of scope, time and budget creep; and the finished product is a public reflection of you, which means it has to be *just so*.

Use these eight milestones to help guide your provider to completion:

1. **Budget.** Share with your web developer the budget you have allotted to this tactic, and execute a written agreement stipulating those terms.
2. **Sitemap.** This is the blueprint for the website. The web developer should outline in text the navigation of the site, demonstrate the page flow, and show the titles of all pages that will be developed. Be sure that you both fully agree on the sitemap before proceeding. After you approve a blueprint, the construction begins. Adding a room on a house (or adding a webpage) can drive up costs.
3. **Web Text.** Next, request that your provider write, edit and proof all copy or text to appear on the website. Share your Message and Design Equation to eliminate the guesswork and streamline the process. Be sure to lock in the web text before going to the next step. Just as a bathroom with one sink has a different configuration than a bathroom with two, so too do your webpages shift with more or less text.
4. **Wireframe.** Ask for a basic layout in black-and-white of the functionality of the website. Will there be a large

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“slider” of compelling images on the home page? Where will images appear and where will text appear? Where will action opportunities appear? Be sure to see a “wire-frame” for the home page and at least one other page. This part of the process is like the newly framed home. You begin to see what it will be like when it’s finished. Refine and sign off on the wireframe to go to the most exciting part: the actual build-out.

5. **Homepage Design.** Focus on the homepage first. This way, you can see the heart of the home nearly finished before all of the other rooms are designed. As with everything else, be sure that the homepage design correlates with your Message and Design Equation. Approving this will set the rest of the build out in motion.
6. **Website Development.** The rest of the webpages should be developed from the foundation set in steps 2 through 5. This may be a good step to outsource to an expert. The foundation locks in the direction for the rest of the design, making the development process much faster and more exciting. Rather than build a separate mobile site, which was a popular solution in the early 2010s, have your provider build the website to be *responsive*. This means the website will automatically resize to various screen sizes (phone, tablet, laptop, desktop). The content will be digestible regardless of where it appears.
7. **Testing.** Prior to launch, be sure that functionality is tested across all browsers and devices to ensure quality display regardless of who’s viewing it.
8. **Launch!**



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It's key to remember that your website is nothing more than a billboard in the middle of the ocean until you make the effort to attract visitors with tactics like social media, search engine optimization (SEO), Google AdWords and more. These are the tactics that transform your practice website into an efficient machine that attracts visitors to your site and patients into your door while you focus on what you do best. That's the *KABOOM!* method for you!

DEMYSTIFYING SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2009 the Social Media Revolution video hit YouTube and went viral, scaring the socks off the millions of people who saw it. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIFYPQjYhv8>)

“Is social media a fad?” the video challenges. “Or is it the biggest shift since the Industrial Revolution?” The video explodes with startling statistics set to heart-thumping music:

- If Facebook were a country, it would be the world's 3rd largest.
- 80% of companies are using LinkedIn as their primary tool to find employees.
- Generation X and Y consider email passé, and some universities have stopped distributing email addresses. Instead, they are distributing eReaders, iPads, and tablets.
- 78% of consumers trust peer recommendations, while only 14% trust advertisements.

“We don't have a choice on whether we *do* social media,” it warns. “The question is how well we do it.”

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It turns out the video is a promotion for the creator Erik Qualman's book of the same title. While it makes a good point that social media can't be ignored, it's not that scary. In fact, social media is nothing more than a practice open house. It's just happening online.

Here are several guidelines from the book *Social Media is a Cocktail Party* by Jim Tobin and Lisa Braziel of Ignite Social Media:

- “The event goes on with or without you.” Whether or not you are participating, people are talking about your practice online. Why not join the conversation?
- “Listen and mingle before you talk.”
- “Different settings have different rules of etiquette.” Just as you would behave differently at a children's birthday party than you would at a business networking lunch, Facebook requires a different decorum than LinkedIn. If Facebook is like an open house for the practice, then LinkedIn is the gathering of collaborating dentists.
- “You can ask for a little help from your friends.” Once you build a base of followers who love you, they will write you stellar reviews and refer you more often. After all, anything for a friend.
- “Share information that doesn't benefit you.” Apply the 80/20 rule here. Share 80% of the time about general social things that loosely reflect your practice's values, and 20% of the time hard facts about the practice.
- “Make it about them, not about you.” People love to talk about themselves. Let them. When it's your turn, they will be all ears.

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Let's dive deeper into best practices for Facebook. Post at least two to three times a week to stay visible. Anytime you get a comment on a post, comment back as soon as time permits to keep the conversation going. Make it possible for others to post on your page. (You can easily adjust this on your privacy settings.) Inviting others to post opens the door to your open house and invites others to be part of it. Have a personal *profile* on Facebook in addition to your business *page* to widen the circle of people whom you engage.

Finally, invite people to like your page. Message your friends on your personal profile first. Then include a "Like Us on Facebook" link in your email signature, on an iPad or tablet at your front desk, on your website – everywhere you can think of. Run a Facebook ad to get even more likes. We will explore Facebook ads in more depth in the next section, A System for Attracting Web Visitors.

Now for LinkedIn best practices. First and foremost, be sure to maintain a current profile. Potential patients and referrers will likely check you out online before calling, so you want them to see a complete and relevant profile. Don't make your profile a cut-and-paste of your curriculum vitae. Instead, draw readers in with elements from your Message and Design Equation.

Make your profile public by adjusting your settings. The more people who see you, the more new patients and referrals you will be exposed to.

Recommend others on LinkedIn. Don't just make endorsements by clicking on the buttons at the top of people's profiles. Take the time to write a short but detailed review about what they did for you and how it helped. Over time, many will do the same for you, and these reviews act as online referrals working for you. You can't beat word-of-mouth.

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For even more exposure on LinkedIn, get involved in groups and discussion boards. Repurpose your blog postings to stay relevant and visible in multiple conversations. Anytime someone comments on something you post, be sure to comment back to keep the conversation going.

Let's talk about virality. That's virality, not to be confused with virility. Virality is the tendency to spread by word of mouth. It's all about cracking the code on getting noticed on social media.

Posts that get high virality, or are liked, commented on, and shared most often, are photos of the doctor and staff, babies or dogs (or better yet, babies with dogs), happy birthday posts (or better yet, happy wedding or happy new baby), and funny images or cartoons. Think: things that will make people smile and laugh.

Posts that get low virality include polls and questions that require too much thinking, and long posts that require too much reading. That's not as bad as it sounds. This is a social setting. No one likes the overt intellectual or long-winded talker to overtake the conversation. Keep it light.

It goes without saying to never post anything that may violate HIPAA regulations. But social media can be a slippery slope in this open-communications era. Train all the staff who are posting on social media to follow these guidelines:

1. If you wouldn't say it in an elevator, don't say it online.
2. Don't talk about patients, even in general terms.
3. Do talk about conditions, treatment, research.
4. Don't badmouth the competition, even subtly.
5. Do use humor carefully.
6. Keep personal posts on personal profiles and professional posts on professional pages.
7. When in doubt, leave it out.

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(Source: <http://www.kevinmd.com/blog/2011/06/7-tips-avoid-hipaa-violations-social-media.html>)

Abe was right: It's impossible to please all of the people all of the time. Inevitably, you will get a negative social media post or comment. When it happens, behave just like you would in with a disgruntled patient acting out in your waiting room. Respond publicly to the original post. A simple, "Thank you for your feedback, we will do everything we can to rectify the situation" will do. Contact the patient personally. Be calm and understanding, listening intently until the patient has exhausted all emotion about the issue. If a resolution is reached, consider asking the patient to remove the post.

We all get the rare client who just can't be helped and doesn't want to behave rationally. As a last resort, use the setting that will ban the patient from posting.

Above all else, take the high road in social media. Behave with the ultimate decorum, and it will reflect favorably on you.

As always, remember that social media is only one tactic in your Balanced Marketing Formula. Avoid the temptation to get too carried away overinvesting time or thought to it. Use the *KABOOM!* method, and you will be able to stay the course for steady results.

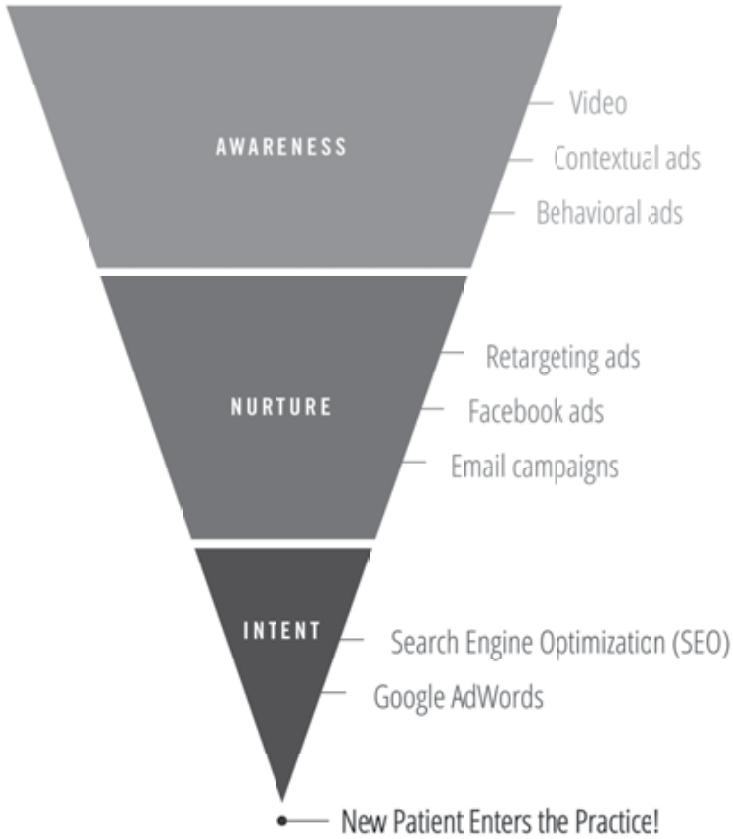
A SYSTEM FOR ATTRACTING WEB VISITORS

The right tactics for attracting web visitors surface in nearly every dental practice's Balanced Marketing Formula. It's just a matter of figuring out which tactics are best to deploy at any given time. There are so many online tactics for attracting website visitors that even those who are marketing savvy can get overwhelmed.

As always, first consider the survey results. Would your existing patients search online for a practice like yours? Would they click on the ads, or only the organic search results? Would they follow you on Facebook? Cross off tactics from the list the data show that don't make as much sense for the practice.

Consider this funnel, the brainchild of Ryan Wilson of FiveFifty Digital Marketing, to further simplify the possibilities.

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Awareness

The top and largest section of Wilson's funnel is awareness. For new practices, the immediate goal is to increase awareness of the practice's offerings. No one knows about the practice yet, but they will soon with tactics of video, contextual ads, and behavioral ads.

Some dentists are under the false impression that they have to have video on their website in order to be highly visible by the search engines. While video might help, there are plenty of other more efficient tools to help with that exposure. Video production can be quite costly – \$10,000 or more for a quality 3-minute spot – so tread lightly. A video makes most sense when it can be repurposed across several media. For example, a television spot can be added to the website homepage and shared across social media for maximum exposure.

Like retargeting ads, contextual and behavioral ads are colorfully designed, sometimes animated or flashy ads. Contextual ads appear on websites that have a context closely linked to your practice's offering. Behavioral ads appear on websites that match the online profile, or behavior, of those most likely to become patients.

All awareness tactics are typically best put into the hands of the experts. It's a big investment, but it can pay off big time.

In 2007 GoDaddy.com invested millions of dollars in Super Bowl ads that subsequently went viral online. While they didn't capture an immediate monetary return on investment, they reportedly drew 1.5 million visits to the GoDaddy.com website. Suddenly everyone knew GoDaddy.com.

This is top-of-mind awareness at its finest. After that game, whenever someone was ready to buy a website address, GoDaddy.com was the place to go.

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Keep in mind that awareness can develop offline, too, with traditional marketing tactics like broadcast and billboard advertising. The most important thing is to do what's going to work best for your practice.

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Nurture

Consider the next concept in Wilson's funnel: the pool of potential patients that you can nurture into the practice. These are patients who may have a need in the future, or who have lapsed in treatment but will need to return one day. While they are not ready to make an appointment today, they are likely to make an appointment in the next six months.

Nurture tactics help the practice show up in the right place at the right time. They most often include retargeting ads, Facebook ads, Facebook promoted posts, and email campaigns.

Retargeting ads include more than just text like Google AdWords. Often called banner ads, they are colorfully designed, sometimes animated or flashy ads that follow people around the web. Let's say a potential patient visits your website, but wanders off to a number of different sites. A banner ad for your practice can appear atop multiple pages on those other sites to keep your practice top-of-mind for the potential patient.

Facebook ads work in a similar manner, appearing in the newsfeeds of people who are likely to visit your practice one day. This visibility nurtures the potential patient to think of you when the time is right.

Facebook's "promoted" posts make it possible to plug the fact that certain patients like your practice page and may invite others

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to do the same. “This is a big deal,” says Wilson, “because it’s a referral for you working on your behalf with little or no effort from you.”

What’s more, daily posting on a practice Facebook page is the unpaid way to capture this mindshare and can be equally effective. As with SEO and Google AdWords, a one-two punch can pack the biggest bang.

Retargeting ads, Facebook ads and Facebook promoted posts are best handled by the experts.

Email campaigns are a great do-it-yourself option to nurture potential patients to take the next step. Push it beyond the typical practice newsletter. Create a series of emails that reflect your Message and Design Equation *and* have a clever twist. Consider repurposing your direct mail or print/billboard advertising campaigns into this digital medium for maximum effect.



Intent

Refer back to Wilson’s funnel at the beginning of this section. The bottom and smallest area is packed full of people who seek a practice like yours. It’s in every practice’s best interest to make a concerted effort to reach the people who already have intent to see a doctor. “Right this very moment there are potential patients who already need your care,” explains Wilson. “It’s just a matter of scooping them up.”

These are the folks who reside in the *intent* section of the funnel. They understand that they have a dental need, they know they have to seek out a dentist, and they are ready to make an appointment once they find the right dental practice. This is the



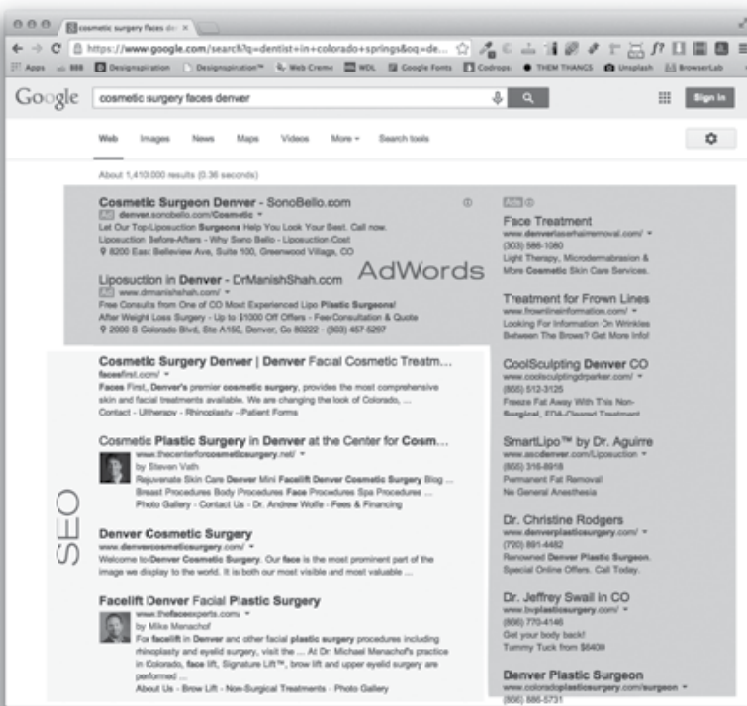
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low-hanging fruit. It's comparatively inexpensive to get intentional people to take that last step of calling for the appointment.

Intent tactics invite those people into the practice, and the tactics typically include Search engine optimization (SEO) and Google AdWords.

There's a big difference between SEO and AdWords:

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SEO drives websites to the top of the “organic” listings through methods of enriching website content. Google, Yahoo! and Bing crawl the web continuously to search out the most robust websites and present them as top choices for the keywords that are being searched. A search strategist will keep your name highly visible on those search engines by keeping your website healthy and active with relevant content, working links and a variety of other goodies that the search engines love.

SEO used to be a simple process of stuffing key words into a website and bolstering website headings with highly searched terms. Today it is a far more complex undertaking. On average, Google changes its search algorithm *every two days*. That means search strategists have to be continuously on the leading edge to keep your website on page one of the search results.

The more relevant the content and the more regular updates your website has, the more robust it appears to the search engines, and the higher it climbs in the search results. SEO for your website is like car maintenance – the tasks for upkeep continue over the lifetime of the vehicle.

Google AdWords is simply an online auction. Competing medical practices essentially outbid each other so their website ad shows most often. Each keyword, such as “Austin ophthalmologist,” is given a dollar value, and the highest bidder’s ad shows up first atop the page. The charge is triggered not when the ad shows but when someone clicks on the ad. Hence, the term pay-per-click advertising. This is where Google makes its money, by making it easy for small business owners to set up and manage their own campaigns.

Easy to set up and manage, sure. But it’s more complicated to create a campaign that will *drive results*. A good search strategist will help select highly searched words and terms of

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a reasonable cost and that are most likely to covert clicks into paying patients. A good ad leads not to the website homepage but to a relevant landing page that echoes the offer in the ad. The landing page increases the likelihood that the potential patient will convert, or take the next step like call or make an appointment. Like any good ad, AdWords can get the customer in the door. The rest is up to you, which compels having a dynamic website.

It doesn't matter whether *you* are more apt to stick to the organic search results or to click on the ads on the Google results. It matters only how your potential patients behave online. Organic can help populate your website to page one of the search engines as a complement to AdWords.

SEO and Google AdWords are not do-it-yourself tactics. Lean on a strong search strategist to get the most out of your investment. A combination of both can drive patient traffic more quickly.

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Each part of the funnel feeds into the next. Wilson advises, "If you have strong website traffic but people are not filling out the online form or calling in, that indicates the need to move people from nurture to intent. If your website traffic is low, that indicates a need for more awareness."

Some practices benefit from regularly running one or two tactics in each area of the funnel. Many simply stick to nurture tactics to maintain the status quo of patient traffic through top-of-mind awareness. All healthy practices keep coming back to the Balanced Marketing Formula to ensure a good spread of strategies, both online and offline.

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“Eventually you will get to the point where you will have reached the number of people that you can affect,” he explains. “Then you do more awareness to open up the funnel. Work from the bottom up.

“There’s only so much you can do online,” he continues. “No one will go online and book a \$50,000 implant case, but there are other activities to optimize like ‘Share your email address,’ or ‘Like us on Facebook.’ Focus on those and move visitors down the funnel.”

The great thing about online efforts is that they are highly measurable. Be sure to set up Google Analytics to track website traffic. Ask your agency for monthly reporting on your online marketing efforts. Consider these reports like you do your financial investment statements: look for overall trends but try not to get too caught up in the details.

With online promotion, so much of the decision happens before the patient even contacts the practice. Work the funnel with the guidelines provided here, and you will have applied the fruitful *KABOOM!* method to your online marketing, too!

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT SIMPLIFIED

Reputation management is public relations happening on the web – it's all about keeping the practice's reputation squeaky clean online.

Specialists scour the web for the practice or doctor's name to uncover reviews and other content that may be damaging. Some reputation management services help cover up bad reviews by stuffing the web with good reviews or other content. This essentially pushes the less-than-stellar stuff off page one of the search engines. Reputation management can be incredibly time consuming and is best left to the experts – and only when absolutely necessary.

Consider first that it might not be necessary.

Ethically, reputation management can be challenging. After all, the First Amendment protects free speech, and reputation management tactics can be construed as censorship.

Reputation management can also backfire. One afternoon, a dentist friend called me in tears because a patient had written her a bad review. Why the long face? She had paid a service to correct it, and to bury the evidence they erected hundreds of dummy websites bearing her name, most with content that had nothing to do with her practice. The creation of these dummy websites is

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one way that reputation management services dilute the appearance of undesirable reviews on the search engines. These dummy websites were created not by a person but by an automated program, and inadvertently a few of the websites bore pornographic content. Had she done nothing, positive reviews would have filed in over time to offset the negative one. Instead, her reputation suffered. The correct remedy took years to take hold.

Be proactive rather than reactive. There are three things you can do today to boost your awareness of what's online about you. The more aware you are, the better positioned you are to immediately respond to any less-than-great reviews.

First, set up a Google Alert with the dentist's name and the practice name to receive regular updates about what is appearing on the web bearing your brand name.

Next, get social. The more active you are online, the more apt you are to get positive reviews and to see negative reviews, if any, as they happen.

Finally, add a patient communications service like DemandForce, Lighthouse 360, or SolutionReach. For a reasonable fee, they help dental practices keep current patients engaged and happy with appointment reminders, digital check-in, email newsletters and opportunities to review the practice online. It's always easier to attract a positive review than it is to bury a negative one. What's more, these services are very easily managed by your front office staff.

What should you do if you get a bad review? As with social media, it's bound to happen at one time or another. The rule of thumb: Behave the same way you would if a patient voiced a negative opinion in your office. *Always respond.* To say nothing might exacerbate the issue by showing arrogance or ambivalence, implying agreement with the criticism. Type up a professional



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response and review it with another team member for objectivity and clarity before posting. Afterward, call the patient to hear his side of the story and offer a resolution. If all goes well, ask the patient to post his or her take on the resolution to the original online review. Even if they don't, your reply will show that you responded and did everything you could to take care of the patient.

By the way, an overall rating of four stars is great on a scale of five. Five-star reviews across the board suggest review stuffing, or "astroturfing," which undermines credibility.

Reputation is built every day in every way. When the practice is humming along at its best, it will be reflected online just as it is in offline circles. Be the best you can be, and glowing reviews will ensue. In this way, the *KABOOM!* method simplifies reputation management so you can focus on care.

TOP 10 MISTAKES IN ONLINE PROMOTION

1. **Believing slick salespeople.** There are no guarantees in online promotion. Walk away from anything that sounds too good to be true. “We will get you found on page one of Google tomorrow...”
2. **Same old site.** There are a lot of cookie-cutter templates out there, but you don't want to look like the dentist next door. At the same time, there's no need to hassle with an expensive custom website. A happy medium is a customizable WordPress theme. Pick a theme, and then add your own design to stand out.
3. **Dismemberment.** In your website, too, ditch the teeth-only photos in favor of full-face before-and-after shots. They tell a more compelling story to your potential patients.
4. **Bad shots.** Use crisp, clear images of the practice, dentist and staff in lieu of blurry or stock photos.
5. **Confusing navigation.** To keep the potential patient moving through the website and eventually to your door, narrow down the navigation to no more than seven pages or “rails” across the top and no more than five on each

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dropdown. Group similar information on each page so the layout is digestible and well organized.

6. **Missing the opportunity.** Be sure the phone number, email address and links to the practice social media pages appear prominently on every webpage. Better yet, include a short form on every page with an engaging offer: “Share your email address and get our article, ‘10 Ways to Naturally Keep Teeth White and Bright.’”
7. **Missing the party.** People are talking about your practice online. Join the conversation. Join the social media revolution, with gusto.
8. **DIY on the cheap.** Attracting web visitors is to marketing as the all-on-four is to dentistry. (God forbid a layperson ever try that without his dentist!) Let go of the idea that a do-it-yourself solution will save money, and invest instead with an agency that can guide you through these tactics. It will pay off.
9. **Billboard at sea.** Your website is a billboard in the middle of the ocean until you make the effort to attract visitors. Start with an online marketing agency focused on intent tactics first (SEO and Google AdWords), since they are the easiest and least expensive way to attract people who already have the intention of finding a dentist like you.
10. **Reputation management run amok.** Instead of getting carried away worrying about bad reviews, focus on attracting great reviews by being your best.



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