

Online visibility for dental practices

Frank Taylor & Associates looks at different ways you could improve your online presence

What is your approach to online marketing?

If you are like a lot of dental practices, you may have spent a lot of effort getting a website up and running and then, with a sigh of relief, sat back and waited for the phone calls and emails requesting appointments to flow in.

But nothing happened.

There may have been a couple of enquiries, but on the whole things chugged away like they've always done and you are starting to wonder what the point of the website is. Do people really use the internet to find dentists?

Well, the quick answer is yes, they really do. For example, there were 3,600 searches last month for 'dentist in Cambridge' alone (and it's likely to be similar in your town/area). But these days there is far more to attracting potential new patients online than just having a website. Whilst a website is the essential starting point, the key is to ensure it is visible.

What is online visibility?

Put simply it's the likelihood of your website being found. For Google this means being shown in the search results

list for terms like 'dentist near me' or 'affordable teeth whitening in [your area]'. And unfortunately it's not a foregone conclusion that because you provide dental services in Cambridge (as an example), anyone searching for them in Cambridge will automatically be shown your site.

Whilst people use search engines to find specific things, they tend to spend more time browsing social media, blogs, and newspaper and magazine sites. Visibility encompasses being seen across all these platforms, not just relying on the search engines to bring your site new visitors.

Making sure you're visible – a checklist

So, what can you do about it? Here are some of the key things that increase your

likelihood of being seen online:

1. Is your website properly set up to be found by the search engines? Is there enough text containing the right keywords for a search engine to recognise what your site is about?
2. Has your site been correctly set up for use on mobiles?
3. Have you registered on 'Google My Business'? This will ensure that your website is shown (on a map) when people make local searches for dental services
4. Do you have Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter business pages/profiles that you post to regularly?
5. Do you have a blog area or resource area where you have helpful articles of at least 300 words each that also contain keywords that you want to

be found for (eg affordable teeth whitening)?

6. Have you considered online advertising either with Google, Facebook, or others to ensure that you are found at the top of search engine listings and also on social media?
7. Is your website linked to from other websites such as your suppliers?
8. Do you encourage your patients to leave reviews? Reviews are one of the most searched for topics when it comes to people researching who to buy from
9. Do you have listings in all the popular online directories such as Yell.com, Thompsons, and Yelp (these are free)?

So, how likely are you to be found right now? Why don't you check your own site's visibility using our free tool – here's the website: ftadentalpracticemarketing.com/visibility-index. **D**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit www.ft-associates.com.

PRACTICE ONE – HOME COUNTIES

Practice location – this practice is located on a busy high street in the home counties, with free on street car parking. There are excellent transport links into London.

Practice type – this is a two-surgery, mainly private practice based in a previously residential property. It has been established for over 30 years and is being sold due to a relocation of the principal. The practice is being sold as leasehold with 12 years remaining on a 15-year lease.

Practice gross – the gross fee income for this practice is in the region of £300,000, of which 90% is derived from private income, and 10% from an NHS-GDS contract where the UDA rate is £21.50. The income has been generated by the principal working five days a week and supported by two part-time nurses and a part-time receptionist.

Price achieved – a price of £410,000 was achieved, which was the asking price. Funding for this practice was secured by FTA Finance.

Agent's comments – the existing principal has only used one of the two surgeries at this practice, and has never wanted to develop beyond his current client base. This bodes well for the incoming principal, who has a desire to grow the practice and has already put together a strategic marketing campaign, which incorporates social media as well as more traditional methods. Being visible online is so important these days.

PRACTICE THREE – HERTFORDSHIRE

Practice location – this practice in Hertfordshire is located in a town centre, with good transport links to London. There is free parking in the surrounding streets.

Practice type – this is a four-surgery predominantly NHS practice, which has been established for over 20 years. The existing principal is selling to enable him to pursue other interests but is prepared to stay on for a six-month period to ensure a smooth transition. The practice is being sold as leasehold with 10 years remaining on a 15-year lease.

Practice gross – the gross fee income for this practice is in the region of £800,000 per annum, of which 95% is derived from an NHS-GDS contract with 5% of the income derived from private fee per item. The income has been generated from the principal working three days a week, four part-time associates working a combined 12 days a week, and two part-time hygienists working a combined three days a week. The team is supported by two full-time nurses, two part-time nurses, a full-time practice manager, and a full-time receptionist.

Price achieved – a price of £1,500,000 was achieved, which was in excess of the asking price.

Agent's comments – this practice has a healthy net adjusted profit of 34% and the principal has worked hard to build a very successful practice. The incoming principal will not be working in the practice and even after factoring in additional associate fees to cover the three days a week, can still see a profitable business with hopes to grow the fee per item side.

PRACTICE TWO – GREATER LONDON

Practice location – this practice in Greater London is located close to a station with easy access into London. There is parking for four cars at the practice and local parking.

Practice type – this is a one-surgery, predominantly NHS practice, with room for expansion. It has been established for over 50 years and owned by the current principal for 25 years and is being sold to facilitate the retirement of the existing principal. The practice is being sold as leasehold with a new 15-year in place.

Practice gross – the gross fee income for this practice is in the region of £200,000 per annum, of which 89% is derived from an NHS-GDS contract with a UDA rate of £27.50. Eleven per cent of the income is derived from private fee per item. The income has been generated from the principal working three days a week, an associate working two days a week and supported by a full-time nurse and a full-time receptionist.

Price achieved – a price of £500,000 was achieved, which was in excess of the asking price.

Agent's comments – this practice is ripe for new management as the existing principal has wanted to retire for some time. As a gesture of goodwill he managed to secure planning permission for a second surgery whilst the sale was in the legal process, which has delighted the incoming principal – it was a smart move as the practice is in need of TLC, which could have put some buyers off.

PRACTICE FOUR – HERTFORDSHIRE

Practice location – this practice in Hertfordshire is located in a terraced property on a busy high street with excellent access to a range of different shops and amenities.

Practice type – this is a one-surgery fully private practice, which has been established for over 20 years. The existing principal is selling to enable him to concentrate on other practice sites. The practice is being sold with a virtual freehold.

Practice gross – the gross fee income for this practice is in the region of £120,000 per annum. The income has been generated from the principal working two days a week and a part-time nurse/receptionist.

Price achieved – a price of £450,000 was achieved, which was in excess of the asking price.

Agent's comments – this practice has been under-utilised as the existing principal had additional sites that demand more of his attention. The incoming principal can see a real opportunity to increase the number of days the surgery is utilised and has the ambition to increase activity by 100% within the next 12 months.

