



SOCIAL MEDIA

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The truth about how social media influences your online search results

MYTH: Having a lot of followers and links back from social media will make your practice’s website appear higher in search rankings.

TRUTH: According to Matt Cutts (who works as head of the webspam team at Google), Facebook likes and Google+ links don’t affect how your website does in search rankings. There are still some who insist that they can see a connection, but as Matt is fond of saying, “Correlation does not necessarily equal causation.”

However, your social media accounts can help your practice in many ways. From new patient acquisition to patient retention, you can use social media to leverage what people see when they look at your practice’s footprint online.

OWNING YOUR SEARCH RESULTS

As I’ve said many, many times in the past, not participating in social media doesn’t mean people aren’t talking about you. It just means you have no idea what they are saying! In the same way, if you don’t actively work to “own” the search results for your practice name, you have no control over what people are seeing.

People who google your practice name have already found out about you – whether from a friend or family member, an advertisement, or a previous Internet search for dentists in their area. If you are handling your social media, brand visibility, and reputation management correctly, a potential patient who googles your practice name should see the following results:

1. Your practice’s website.
2. Your practice’s Facebook Page.
3. The top review site used by your practice (e.g., Demandforce, Solutionreach, Yelp, etc.).
4. Your practice’s YouTube videos.
5. Your practice’s Twitter page (if you are very active).
6. Other online review sites or directories that include your practice (e.g., Angie’s List, yellowpages.com, etc.).
7. The latest press release about your practice’s charitable or community endeavors.

By using social media sites and encouraging satisfied patients to review you online, you can boost these positive results and “own” your practice’s name on Google. If you don’t, you could be facing results like these:

1. The website of another dentist who is located on a street that has the same name as your practice (yes, this actually happens).
2. Your practice’s website.
3. An inner page on your practice’s website.
4. Another inner page on your practice’s website.
5. Another inner page on your practice’s website (yawn...).
6. A link to a 5-year-old press release about your practice opening.
7. An angry rant about your practice written by a disgruntled patient with a blog (that you never knew about because you didn’t go online, although people looking for information about you saw it every day).

Do you see why it is so important to “own your name” on Google?

CREATING SHAREABLE CONTENT

As mentioned, using social media doesn’t ensure that your practice website will magically shoot to the top of Google. However, using social media *does* ensure that you have a wider audience for your content – especially if that content is deemed worthy of sharing.

Social shares (“sharing” on Facebook, “retweeting” on Twitter, and “+1ing” on Google+) can boost your reach exponentially. When you create and share great content on your own social media pages, others can share it to even larger audiences, so the ripple can continue.

Follow these three steps to influence the web when it comes to your practice:

- “Own” your practice name by securing and using your social media accounts, review sites, and more to create strong search results.
- Create terrific, shareable content and feed it to your followers on a dependable, consistent basis.
- Check your social media platforms daily so you can interact with people who reach out, and check the search engine results for your practice every few weeks to ensure that you remain in control.

Social media is a can’t-miss tool in today’s world of digital marketing. It’s your key to owning both the view *and* the conversation! **DE**

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