

# Transforming Your Practice through Digital Dentistry and Digital Marketing



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The task of running and marketing a dental practice has changed dramatically in recent years, and many practices have moved toward digital dentistry. Technology has both increased patient expectations and become more accessible to dentists. This has changed the way dentists market their practices, as well as the actual practice of dentistry.



Digital dentistry and the move digital transformation doesn't have to be daunting — at its roots, it's simply building relationships with patients in the best way possible.

In terms of marketing, the strategy of paying for ads and waiting for patients to gravitate to the practice just doesn't work anymore. The biggest change is that traditional marketing budgets are smaller — often much smaller. Endeavoring to get the most bang for their buck, practices find it more effective to reach people through digital channels. The key to a successful dental practice today is engaging with potential patients and developing relationships, establishing a level of trust with them even before their first appointment.

Another major advancement is the move toward digital dentistry — which means the use of digital tools for diagnostic and treatment purposes rather than physical tools. This shift affects every area of the practice, including equipment, scheduling, and employee training, requiring digital tools and a tech-savvy workforce.

Whether around patient treatment or marketing, both of these digital shifts require practices to have the IT infrastructure in place to handle the new technology. Because both rely on data, networks must be capable of processing the increased levels of data at a rapid speed. Before dentists jump into these new directions, the first step is to build the infrastructure to power their digital transformation.

## Three Initiatives to Move Your Practice into the Digital World

This type of change doesn't show success overnight, and it isn't something practices can decide to do on a whim. It takes a robust technical infrastructure to make it happen. There may be some hesitancy as this requires an investment in technology, but think of it as a replacement for the expensive print ads and Yellow Pages listings used in the past.

Below are three digital transformation initiatives dental practices should put on their list for 2018:

### 1. Enable Digital Dentistry through Cloud Migration

No one can undergo digital transformation without the technology to support it. The first step is to stage a cloud technology migration for all aspects of your practice. Once this is done, it's possible to move IT processes, data storage and communications systems to the cloud. This gives practices the infrastructure to then add digital dentistry diagnostic and treatment equipment.

Other dental practices are already making the move, and the longer a practice puts this off, the farther behind they become, playing catch-up instead of leading the way. Employees also expect the latest in technology and may consider leaving a practice if you don't have the most up to date digital technology and tools.

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### 2. Install a Business Communication System

Still using wired phones in the office? Do you have to be at your desk or give someone your mobile number to take a call? By moving to a business communication system, your practice can stay connected regardless of where you are. This also makes it easier to incorporate data from digital dentistry, such as images and videos. Features such as a virtual receptionist help patients reach the right person or have calls forwarded to wherever the recipient is at that time. Practices can also send SMS text notifications to patients for appointment reminders, and using APIs, can incorporate connecting with patients through apps.

Another exciting use of communications systems is telehealth. Offering these virtual appointments, instead of making the patient come in after a procedure, is convenient, both for the patient and for staff. Make visiting the dentist as easy as possible by using the latest technology available.

### 3. Integrate Artificial Intelligence

Dentists can only treat your patients based on the data they have available and the information they are aware of. By using artificial intelligence tools, it's possible to predict which patients are at higher risk for certain conditions, such as gum disease, and then provide preventative treatment. AI can also analyze patient data and determine which treatment is most likely to be effective based on what worked for similar patients.

Aside from contributing to successful patient treatment, AI also has marketing applications. For example, it can be used to select the most compelling messages for specific patients, such as images of a dentist working with a young child for patients who are parents, or senior citizens being shown a photo of an older patient. Artificial intelligence allows real-time data access to provide the best possible message to your patients and potential patients.

### Digital Transformation Doesn't Have to be Daunting

The term digital transformation can sound overwhelming, but the reality is not as daunting as it sounds. It means doing the same thing practices have been doing for years — building relationships with patients and providing the best possible care at all times. Yes, the tools are different and interaction is sometimes online or through a telehealth appointment instead of person-to-person, but the concept is the same. It's just a matter of learning how to apply digital tools to what you already know how to do.

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