

7 Questions

to Ask Your Website Provider

smileMARKETING
New Patient Dental Websites



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Getting a new dental website, or replacing an existing one, isn't something you do every day. And it's certainly not a decision to be taken lightly. In today's ever-evolving digital age, a practice website is a critical business tool.

Sure, you can hire a great designer. But good design and the latest “bling” isn't enough, particularly when it comes to achieving what should be your website's number-one goal: **generating new patients.**

“Digital artists” who double as online marketers can be a nightmare for dentists looking to grow their online presence. Logistical glitches, poor customer service, or the burden of educating them about the nuances of dental can all work to derail your goals for new patient success.

Are you just getting started? Have you been burned in the past? Whether you're starting from scratch, or looking to replace your existing website provider, use the following questions to weed out the companies that are unlikely to fulfill your new patient goals. In this eBook, we'll count down the top seven questions to ask your prospective website provider. We'll explain what their answers mean and how to avoid a costly mistake.

1

“Who Are You Endorsed By?”

Their Answer: “We are endorsed by a major dental organisation.”

While a major endorsement can be persuasive, it doesn't represent the real qualifications of a company. Take, for example, a celebrity endorsement. Does a credit card company endorsed by a Hollywood celebrity mean it has the best benefits and lowest interest rates? While endorsements can certainly be an effective marketing tool, that's generally all they are – *a marketing tool*.

Moreover, endorsements can become outdated over time. This is especially true when it comes to website providers. An endorsement made back in 2005, when the technical requirements and online competition were considerably different, can be misleading. Many associations grant endorsements in exchange for hidden financial incentives!



What to Look For: “We are endorsed by our clients.”

Large endorsements can be effective for creating memorable marketing campaigns. However, an endorsement from your peer, Dr. John Doe, is far better than one from a celebrity or giant organisation when it comes to choosing the right website provider.

Consider your own practice. Patient referrals are one of the most powerful forms of endorsement, along with testimonials and online reviews. That’s because your patients are getting an endorsement *from someone who is just like them*.

An endorsement in the online marketing world is often nothing more than a third-party favour.

At Smile Marketing, our goal isn’t to persuade large organisations to endorse us. Our endorsements come directly from our clients. When it comes to choosing a website provider, the only credibility needed is knowing that their clients’ patient schedules are full.



2

“Who Will Write the Content for My Website?”

Their Answer: “You know your practice best, so we’ll look to you to supply the content.”

Do you know how to write a compelling headline? Do you know how to engage prospective patients by producing quality content? Most discount providers will expect you to do the heavy lifting when it comes to providing content. But unless you have extensive experience in writing website copy, it’s best to reserve the task for someone who has been doing it for years.

That being said, it’s important to hire a company that employs writers who know how to craft unique copy that appeals to prospective patients. There is an art to writing patient-converting content. The “jack of all trades” writers who have yet to master this art aren’t going to persuade website visitors to schedule an appointment with you.

Their Answer: “We’ll simply migrate your content across from your current website.”

If you already have a website, there’s a good chance it is underperforming – hence, the reason you’re looking for a new provider. Copying and pasting old content on a new design is simply bringing your old shortcomings to a new platform. Your content should be engaging and professional in a way that tells the story of your practice.

Whether it’s your “About” page or ongoing blog posts, your website content is the cornerstone upon which all your online efforts depend. It is an essential component of your online strategy. This is why *migrating*, rather than *re-creating*, the copy from your existing site almost always fails.





What to Look For:

“Following a brief telephone interview, our professional writers craft content that gets website visitors to choose you.”

The concept of conversion lies with how well your content turns digital visitors into living, breathing patients. If your content is dull or it doesn't portray your practice in a compelling way, it won't encourage visitors to schedule an appointment.

It's important that your website captures the spirit of your practice. During the content interview, our mission is to find that special something that already causes patients to choose you. And then we make that special something sparkle and come alive.

Not all new patients are created equal! Our mission is to dig deep and uncover those types of patients or cases you especially enjoy serving. Our interview process is not only unique, it creates an emotional connection that reduces misunderstandings and enhances our ability to create a website that is truly “you.”

STATISTIC ►

Over **85 percent** of consumers say that using a search engine allowed them to learn important information to increase their knowledge about a product or service.

-Pew Research Center



3

“How Will You Handle My SEO?”

Their Answer: “We don’t do SEO, but we work with a great outside consultant.”

Search engine optimisation (SEO) is an unwelcomed burden for many website designers. Some will encourage you to hire an outside consultant, adding to your overall website expense. Or more typically, they may overpromise what the layman can do without a budget or an understanding of Google’s changing algorithm.

This creates a disconnect in your strategy. SEO should be implemented from the onset so it integrates with your overall marketing blueprint. An outsider, without any real skin in the game, can never measure up to the synergy that comes from an integrated solution: a single-minded vision of producing new patients.

Their Answer: “Our keyword strategy will boost traffic to your website.”

Depending on your location, competition for new patients can be fierce. And it is bound to increase. For your website to be optimised for search engines – yet still written from a patient’s point of view – you need a provider that knows which keywords to target and how to best incorporate those keywords into your site.

It’s important to know how your provider approaches SEO, and whether their methods appeal to patients in your local location. Many companies use a clever tack of guaranteeing a certain number of keywords that they themselves choose. In this fashion, they can select non-competitive terms and have a fairly high rate of success in producing generic traffic. Whether those keyword rankings provide *qualified* traffic is another matter altogether.



What to Look For: “After conducting a competitor audit, we use on- and off-page techniques to increase your website’s authority.”

SEO is dramatically different than it was even two years ago. This is why it’s critical that your provider is current on the latest Google algorithm trends. Discount providers focus almost entirely on on-page SEO (title tags, meta descriptions, headlines, and alt text). But these days, that’s not enough. Your provider should optimise your directory listings (verifying that they’re 100% accurate across all platforms) and employ additional techniques for practices in highly competitive locations.

The truth is, it’s well known what you must do to rank well with Google. What separates Smile Marketing from the pack is our insistence on scrupulously following Google’s terms of service and taking a long-term perspective. Our mission is to make you “findable.” Last time we checked, the turtle beats the hare every time.

STATISTIC ►

Each year, Google changes its search algorithm around 500 to 600 times.

-Moz.com

4

“How Will You Assure Me Page One Google Rankings?”

Their Answer: “We’ll get you on the first page of Google within the first three months.”

Sound familiar? The “page one rankings” sales pitch has become a moniker that has tainted the reputation of the SEO industry. And for good reason. For years, website providers have used “guaranteed rankings” as a slimy catchphrase to lure uninformed and easily manipulated businesses with too-good-to-be-true promises. Google even warns against these kinds of sales overtures.

If a prospective website provider makes any sort of guarantee on rankings, run for the door. Many companies tout such assurances simply to close the sale, contending that high rankings will automatically grow your practice. But will those rankings produce any new patients? If you feel like you’re being sold with overly-ambitious promises, then most likely they won’t.

Their Answer: “Our ranking strategies will ensure a steady flow of new visitors to your site.”

High rankings that produce a steady flow of traffic, may sound like the perfect new patient formula. But if misinterpreted, rankings can be a meaningless marker. The reality is, your position in search *alone* doesn't translate into **new patients**. Content, website design, which keywords you rank for – there are countless factors that determine new patient success.

Rankings are just one piece of the online marketing puzzle. Every bit as important is *user engagement*. This includes metrics that are determined after a visitor lands on your site from a Google search result (how many pages they visit, how long they stay on the site, etc.)





What to Look For: “We are more interested in new patients than Google ranking.”

Would you rather have 100 website visitors that turned into 2 new patients, or have 50 website visitors that turned into 10 new patients? The myth that high rankings automatically mean more new patients is just that – a myth. The fact is, high Google ranking gives you a false sense of security. It’s easy to check, but it’s a false proxy.

In the new patient equation, ranking is merely the traffic portion. Don’t confuse high traffic with high new patient statistics. Your focus isn’t “hits” or “visitors.” Your focus is *new patients*.

In our earlier days of online dental marketing, we actually fell for this theory. Then we discovered that several clients who we had propelled to the top listing on page one discontinued their service with us. Why? They weren’t getting new patients. That was when the penny dropped, and why we became advocates of the art and science of **new patient conversion**.

STATISTIC ►

60 percent
of all organic
search engine
clicks go to the
top three results.

-Business2Community.com

5

“What Will You Expect Me to Do Before the Website Launches?”

Their Answer: “You won’t have to lift a finger. We do everything for you.”

Your website provider shouldn’t be working *for* you. They should be working *with* you. Discount providers assure you that you won’t have to do anything – *except*, of course, pay them a seductively low monthly fee. Low enough so it ends up matching your low expectations about what a website can do. A low fee means the website company sees themselves as a design and hosting company, not a marketing partner and extension of your practice.

The question is: Do you want a vendor that’ll simply do what you say, or do you want a **strategic partner** that’ll work with you to achieve your new patient goals?

Their Answer: “We can get your website up and running in a week to 10 days.”

If a website provider boasts that they can furnish you with a brand new website in a matter of days, this is a glaring red flag. You want your website to be unique to your practice in a way that it stands out from the crowd. Having a clean-looking website is only one part of the Internet marketing package.

If you want your website to appeal to your ideal patient, your provider must know who your target audience is and how to best reach them. In doing so, your provider must learn about you, your services, and your practice philosophy. Achieving this all in a week's time would be impossible, unless they're relying on you to supply content and slap it onto a cookie-cutter template shared by a dozen other dentists.





What to Look For: “It takes about 30-45 days to launch a high performance website.”

This is what it takes to get a practice website live that has a solid conversion process in place. At Smile Marketing, we have a development process that combines all the ingredients needed to create a patient-generating website. When looking for a website provider, look for a process that includes these key elements:

- ✓ Competitive analysis of your local location
(because your website doesn't exist in a vacuum.)
- ✓ Content interview that involves learning more about your practice
(so it uniquely reflects your vision and philosophy.)
- ✓ Design brief that connects your website to your ideal patient
(so they choose you rather than the dentist down the street.)
- ✓ An approval process that ensures client satisfaction
(so you're comfortable with how your practice is conveyed online.)
- ✓ Database import of existing patients
(so you can stimulate referrals, improve retention and educate your patients.)

Consider these key factors before committing to a new website provider. Be particularly wary when a company suggests that they can deliver your project in substantially less time than their competitors.

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“What Will You Do After My Site Goes Live?”

Their Answer: “We’ll make sure your website is working properly and guarantee 99.9% uptime.”

Careful of those quoting “99.9% uptime” or some other astonishing figure. In an ideal world, your website will be running 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. But virtually all website server uptime is identical.

More important is how your provider deals with client issues and requests. If you’ve hired a graphic designer whose emphasis lies on creating “digital art,” making website revisions often gets put on the backburner. If you have a change in services, hours, or a new staff member, you shouldn’t have to wait three weeks to get your website updated.

Their Answer: “Just wait for the new patients to come rolling in.”

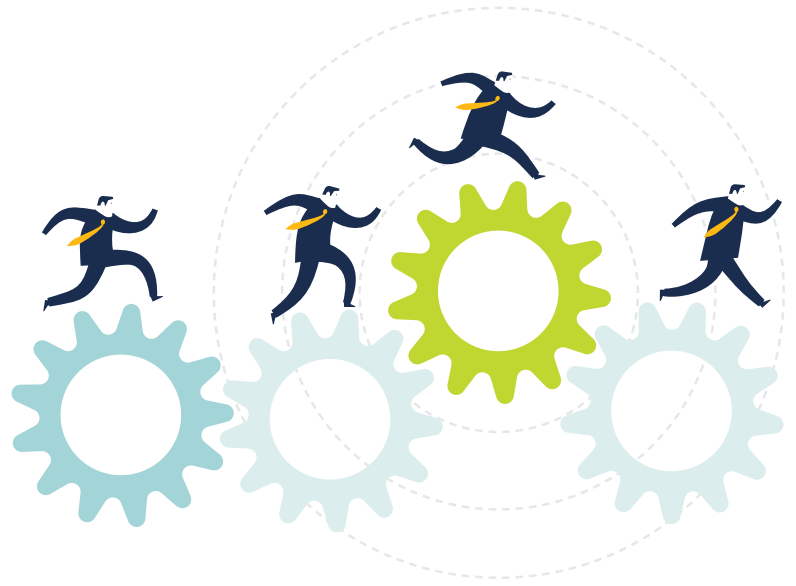
A diligent post-launch process reveals the critical distinction between a website sold as a “product” and a website sold as a “service.” The former tends to have a higher initial fee and a lower monthly cost. Website *service* providers, however, generally have a lower setup fee and a higher monthly cost. This higher monthly fee stems from the ongoing work required to keep your practice site running. And not just in a technical manner, but in a manner that delivers new patients.

Sure, there was a time when simply having a website was all you needed to have an adequate online presence. But the Internet has evolved. Choose a provider that is able and willing to monitor patient growth and find areas of improvement. To determine the provider’s level of engagement post-launch you may ask how the team works internally, how resources are allocated, and what the process is for measuring success.



What to Look For:

“That’s when our service swings into high gear.”



When discount providers launch your site, they think they’re done. But that’s when we swing into high gear. To generate new patients through your website, it takes ongoing activity. So what does an Internet marketing “service,” rather than a “product,” entail?

To give you insight into how an Internet marketing service should operate, here are a few examples of how the Smile Marketing website service works (depending on the service plan chosen):

- ✓ **Blog posts:** *Weekly posts that position you as **the** oral health authority.*
- ✓ **Newsletters:** *A monthly eNewsletter that keeps your practice top-of-mind.*
- ✓ **Birthday emails:** *Birthday greetings that are automatically sent on your behalf.*
- ✓ **e-Learning:** *Six-part Socratic, online patient education that keeps patients educated.*
- ✓ **New patient surveys:** *Valuable first-visit feedback that increases positive online reviews.*
- ✓ **Unlimited support:** *Proactive support that maximises the performance of your site.*
- ✓ **Social media:** *Optimised social media accounts that maximise your digital reach.*

These are just several of many marketing tools that will keep your website performing.

Long-term success is choosing a provider that provides a **service**, not a product.

7

“How Will I Know My Website is Working?”

Their Answer: “We’ll send you a Google Analytics report that shows exactly how much traffic your website is getting.”

A simple Google Analytics report sent to your inbox only goes so far. In these reports, you can see metrics such as how many visitors land on your site, how long they are engaging with your site, what your most popular pages are, and much more. Sounds great, right?

In terms of traffic, it’s important to know how well your website is performing. But does the number of visitors determine the success of your website? No. It’s the number of new patients that determines success. While Google Analytics reports can be useful, your provider should have the resources to show you the real metrics that determine ROI.



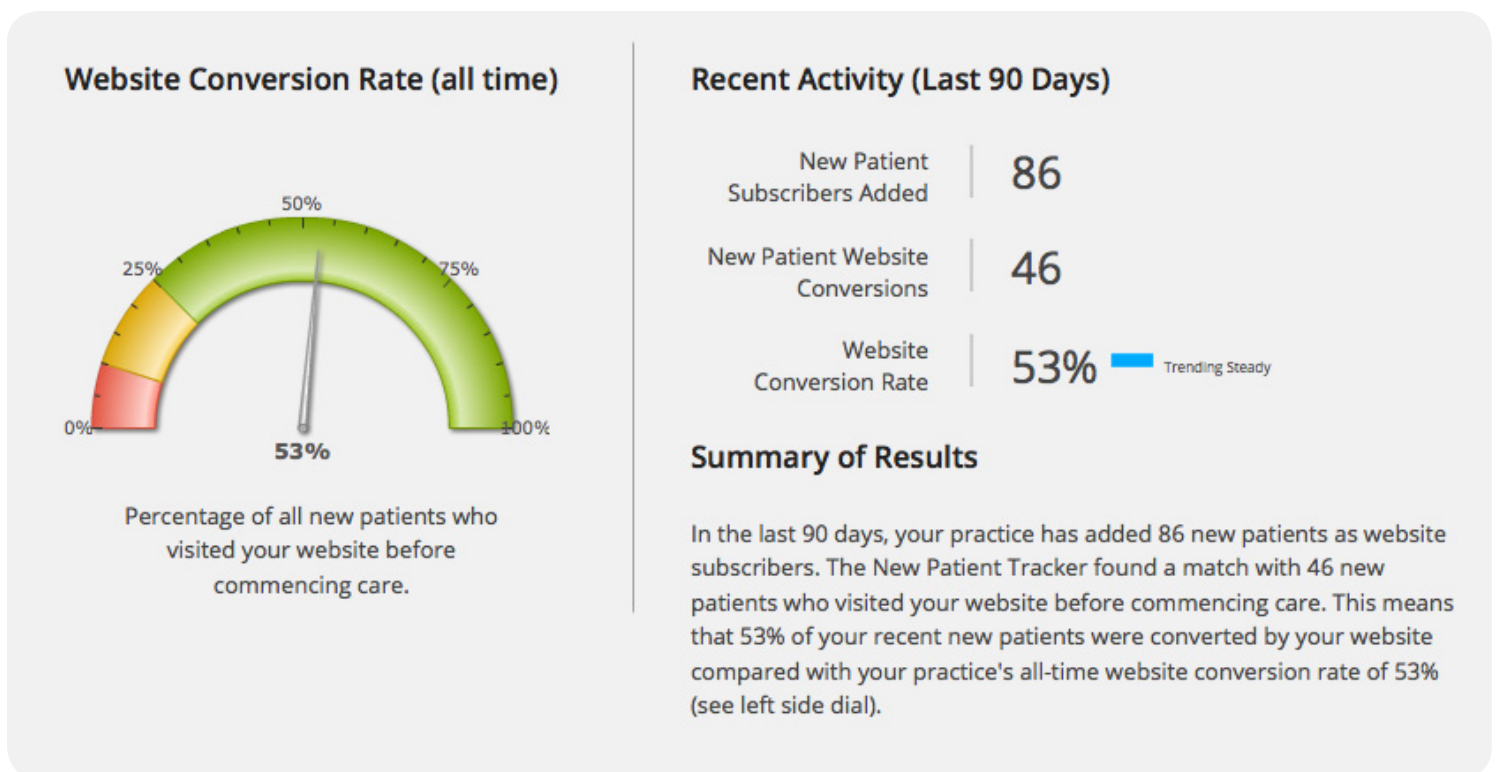
What to Look For: “We show you that your website is working by identifying every new patient by name.”

You want a provider that has systems in place for you to monitor your website's *new patient* performance. This means showing you not only how many visitors land on your site, but how many of those visitors convert into new patients.

For instance, the Smile Marketing New Patient Tracker (NPT) goes far beyond basic website analytics by providing insight into which sources are converting new patients. It was through this technology that we were able to identify the most important online channels which actually produce new patients. (It surprises many to learn that Facebook rarely produces new patients!)

The NPT tells you what those who became new patients did on your site before scheduling an appointment. By using both NPT and Google Analytics we get a more complete picture of how your site is performing. We know the most crucial pages on your site. For example, we can compare the performance of your “Meet the Doctor” page with thousands of other “Meet the Doctor” pages.

This proprietary software dispels the myth about traffic and rankings by proving your website is earning its keep. This technology not only tells you how many new patients your website is generating, you can see exactly who they are.



Click to learn more about the New Patient Tracker ►

Conclusion

Finding that responsive, results-oriented website provider doesn't have to be something you dread. Nor should it be something to put off. It's rewarding to partner with a company that will work with you to reach your new patient goals.

After reviewing this eBook, we hope you are more comfortable working through this discovery process. While it may seem like an intimidating journey, it doesn't have to be. And it's well worth the effort. Once you've sealed that perfect partnership it will become one of the greatest investments you've made in your practice.

Put us to the test. Give us a ring and ask Smile Marketing these questions.

