

BLOGGING FOR BEGINNERS

*Your Smile Marketing practice blog
and what to do with it*

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The New Patient Website Service That
Guarantees New Patients. And Proves It!

“Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one.”
Abbott Joseph Liebling



One of the native features of your new Smile Marketing website is a state-of-the-art blog.

Blog is a relatively new word created by combining the word “web,” as in the World Wide Web, and the word “log,” as in the frequently used narrative device on Star Trek as in, “Captain’s log, stardate 41153.7.” Weblog was simply shortened to blog.

Your website blog is an amazing tool that can serve one or all of the following purposes:

- A platform for personal expression about topics that interest you
- A way of enhancing the new patient performance of your website
- A forum for engaging an audience and cultivating conversations
- A method of adding new content that you can repeatedly reference
- A technique to increase the search engine authority of your website

On the pages that follow, we’ll explore these and other aspects of blogging. Together, we’ll walk through the process of writing and publishing your first blog post. By the end of this eBook the mystery will be gone and the opportunities will inspire you.

Your blog will cover some aspect of oral health. You may only make one post a week. Or just one a month. Either way, our objective here is to open the door to a new way of sharing your philosophy, cultivating an audience, attracting more new patients and having a lot of fun and personal satisfaction in the process.

So let’s get started!

Key Terms

Blogging, like dentistry and other disciplines, has its own vocabulary. When trying to master something new, understanding the lingo is half the battle!

Here are some of the essential terms and what they mean:

Archive

Listing of previous blog posts from most recent to oldest.

Blogroll

A list of other blogs you like or recommend and links to them that usually appear in the sidebar column.

Category

A way of organizing posts by topic, such as Dental Myths, Technical, Pediatrics, etc.

Comment

A way for readers to share their opinions about your post. Comments can be moderated or turned off due to Comment Spam.

Comment spam

Comments of little or no value, which include a link or reference to another site designed to use the search engine authority of your site to enhance the search engine authority of a spammer's site.

Draft

A blog post that is being composed prior to its actual publication.



Internal link

A word, phrase or photo that links to another page on the same website. (Highly recommended to enhance the SEO of your site.)

Like

A button or small icon that visitors can click on to show other Facebook users their appreciation for a particular item or piece of content.

Moderation

The process of reviewing comments posted to a blog and approving them before the comment is published and visible to website visitors.

Page

An article in which the ability for visitors to comment has been turned off.

Permalink

The unique and lasting URL of a post that allows anyone to link specifically to it.

Podcasting

Blogging with audio recordings rather than the printed word.

Key Terms (continued)

Post

Also known as an entry. A blog is merely a series of posts which generally allow website visitors to leave a comment.

Publish

To make a post visible to visitors to your website.

Scheduled

A post that is waiting to be published, such as a Smile Marketing post made on your behalf that gives you time to review and edit it.

Share

A button or icon, which when clicked, allows the user to add the content to their Facebook timeline or share via email.

Tag

Assigning a searchable term to identify the type or types of content within a particular post, such as "Prevention," "New Patients" or "Implants."

Trackback

A blogging convention in which you provide a link in your post to the post of another blogger you're blogging about.

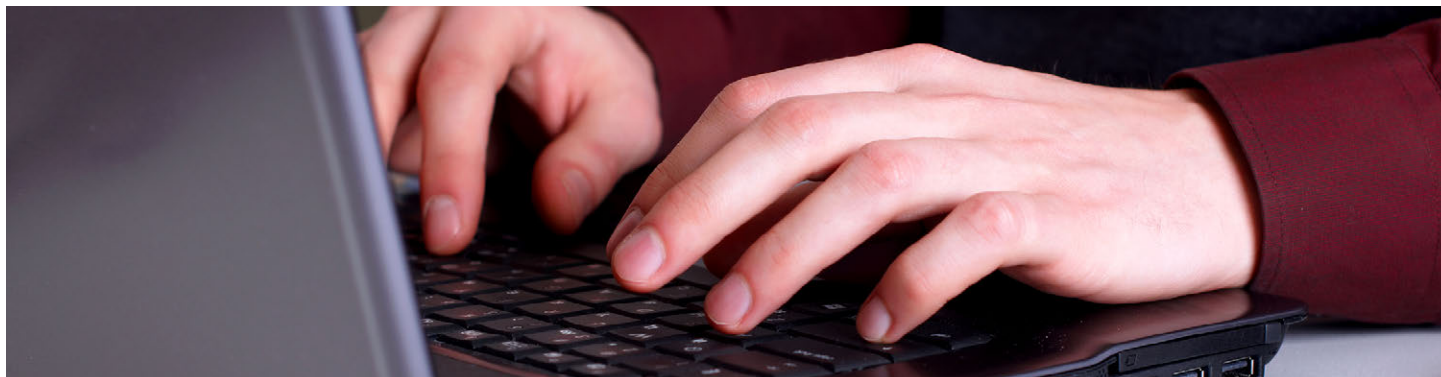
Trust link

An outbound link to another website with greater authority than your own, citing them as an authority.

Vlog

A blog that is largely video posts rather than the written word.





The Benefits of Blogging

Blogging is used to increase website traffic and visitor engagement, crucial metrics in determining your search engine ranking. Traffic to your website is only half of the equation. The other half is conversion, turning visitors into new patients. Thankfully, your blog can help with both.

However, until you see the benefits of making regular blog posts, blogging will simply be one more guilt-producing task added to a schedule already burdened by too many things to do. Here are some of the significant benefits you'll enjoy by regularly blogging:

Personal Expression

Think of your blog as your own printing press, editorial page and soapbox all rolled into one. It's a platform for self-expression and addressing the subjects that are meaningful to you and your audience of current and prospective new patients.

Often the temptation is to take on the safe, politically-correct topics. But that's boring. Blogging is about taking a stand, stirring the pot, being thought provoking and interesting. Do this from time to time and you'll create the "buzz" and the repeat visitors that tell search engines to pay attention.



New Patients

Ultimately, getting new patients is about your ability to create authority, communicate trust and inspire hope. Blogging can help you do all three.

When a prospective patient can learn about you and your philosophy, it generates a sense of authority and expertise. As you engage new patients on your blog, you send a powerful signal to search engines that your website is relevant and worthy of high rankings. High rankings, quality traffic and meaningful content is the trifecta of great website performance.

And don't forget the comments, testimonials, reviews and recommendations generated by delighted patients. Authentic contributions from current patients can go a long way in winning over a prospective new patient to pick up the telephone.



Creating Community

Blogging is a conversation. You'll make a post. Someone will comment. You'll respond back. Someone else chimes in and magic happens. This level of engagement and sense of community just isn't possible with private email. Many dentists discover that they have far greater engagement from their patients on their blog than during the course of a typical patient visit.

Reference Material

If you're like most dentists, there's a process you frequently recommend. Or a helpful home care procedure you frequently recommend. Or a question you get asked that can't be adequately answered during the course of a patient's visit. Post it on your blog. Then, all you have to do is write the permalink URL on the back of your business card or send the patient an email with the link.

Or maybe you have a riff on fluoride, flossing, mercury; you name it. Write it up, post it, refine it and refer to it as needed.

Search Engines

Search engines love fresh, new, original content. That's why search engines love blogs. The original posts that you (or your team) make, have tremendous value:



More is more

All things being equal, search engines give greater authority (ranking) to sites with more content. Especially if that content is unique.



Increased time on site

Another metric used by search engines to evaluate your site is how long visitors spend on a page. Longer is better. Original, relevant content means visitors linger longer.



Increased pages visited

Search engines conclude that the more pages a visitor consumes, the more trusted the content. Trust means authority and authority means better search engine ranking.

What Should I Blog About?



As a Smile Marketing client, we'll be supplying weekly posts on your behalf. That's a start, but you'll want to unleash the full power of your blog by making your own blog posts.

That's because, while the posts we make on your behalf can engage visitors and educate current patients, since we share the same post across our entire network, our posts don't specifically give your site the search engine authority that your own original blog posts will have.

Now, if the idea of writing a blog post conjures up the specter of high school English composition class, relax! Here are some ideas to get you going. One or more of these approaches could give you the inspiration to become a frequent blogger:



Google Alerts

Sign up for Google alerts. Let's say you're seeing great results with some new piece of technology. Tell Google that you want to be notified whenever the topic of this new technology is added to the web. Whenever it is, you'll get links to sites that contain that keyword. Post a short critique on your blog or a suggestion for your patients to go read it. This is how you become seen as an authority.



Case studies

Have you had a patient with some stunning before and after photos? Or a patient for whom you completed a particularly difficult procedure? Write a paragraph or two about the case. You don't even have to use the patient's name. Speak in general terms about the patient's age, background, experience, your program of care and what happened. Write up a paragraph or two about a recent patient that you helped. Even a typical, routine case can have tremendous value.

Why I love [my city]

When someone searches for a dentist, search engines know it's a local search. So, show up as the local dental authority and the local authority in your community by writing about your favorite haunts, popular sights, preferred restaurants, community events and the like. Express yourself and be seen as an expert.

Write a short profile

Describe a procedure or service you provide. With the appropriate permissions, write a short profile on your oldest patient, youngest patient, the patient who travels the furthest, the patient you've seen the longest, etc. Write about what interests you, inspires you and makes dentistry so fulfilling.

Rant or Rave

Something got your hackles up? Your website is a convenient outlet that you can use to vent your opinion about some issue that has you fired up. Especially if that topic is about something going on in your community. Better if it relates somehow to oral health, but not essential.

Frequently Asked Questions

Brainstorm a list of frequently asked questions about dentistry, your practice, your background and the like.

From the Desk of Dr. [YourName]

Use your blog to address some of the questions you get at your case reports or that your front desk team receives on the telephone. Don't get asked questions? Make some up. When you are asked a question by a patient, "That's a great question. Let me write up my answer and I'll post it on our blog."





How Long Should My Posts Be?

The research is unclear about what constitutes the perfect blog post length. But one thing is certain. It must be engaging—something that will compel others to stay and read. The longer they're on the page, the better.

Studies show that most people read text on a monitor in the 180 to 200 words per minute range. That's about a minute to minute and a half. Avoid filler material to artificially lengthen your posts. Presented with a long block of text, many will quickly leave if they suspect that digging through your post will be more work than it's worth, or doesn't hold the promise of delivering what they're looking for.

For those who aren't professional writers, creating spellbinding material longer than 200 to 300 words is challenging. Use short paragraphs, bullet points and subheads to make your content easy to browse.

Adding photographs (with captions) and video to your blog posts can be especially effective in engaging the visitor to linger and consume your content. Just be sure you have the rights to use it and you're not infringing on copyright law.



How Frequently Should I Post?

①

②

③

Frequency doesn't seem to be quite as important as consistency. The Internet is littered with blogs that have only one or two posts. Or a spurt of posts that came to an abrupt end 18 months ago.

That said, even one original post is better than no post at all.

Some professional bloggers make several posts a day! Political pundits will often make daily posts. But probably a more realistic goal would be to aim for making one post a week. If a week passes and you don't have anything to share, relax! But between the weekly posts we make on your behalf, and your weekly posts, patients (and search engines) will get the idea that something important is happening and they should pay attention. Very helpful.

One way to make sure you have some regularity to your posting is to brainstorm subjects and write them in advance. That way, if something doesn't inspire you that week, you know that you have usable posts in reserve.

The point is, you don't need the stress of trying to write something with a deadline staring you in the face. Having a couple of articles in cold storage is great comfort in case nothing worth writing about shows up in your Google Alerts or the oral health sites that you monitor and comment about.

Once you miss a week or two, it's easy to lose your mojo and the momentum and hard earned authority you've won, is lost.





Making Your First Post

Watch this video to see the step-by-step process to publish your first post using the Smile Marketing blogging function.

[[CLICK HERE TO PLAY VIDEO](#)]

www.smilemarketing.com/blog-how-to-video/

Alerting the World About Your Post

You've invested your blood, sweat and tears and created something special that your community and your patients should know about.

Now what?

This is when you'll want to put on your marketing hat and get the word out about your fantastic new post.





The second thing you should do is visit your website and go to your new post and be the first to “Like” it. And just how many Likes and Shares and Retweets should you expect? Hard to know. Depends upon how compelling your content is and how many followers you have.

But let's say you've made a post that is so significant you want to shout it from the rooftops. Then, you might want to send a single topic email to your website subscribers inviting them to give it a read. You'll want a compelling subject line for your email, and of course, include the permalink so readers can click it and go directly to your post.

Use Your Front Desk

Create a template so you can print four or six little handouts for the front desk advertising your blog post. It can be the same content as your PS message or single-topic email. Hand one out to every patient.

As you become known for great content, you'll create a larger and larger following. And before you know it, your following will enlarge, your authority will increase and the referral process becomes even more effective!



But I'm Not a Writer

No problem. You don't have to be. A blog post can be something as short as this paragraph. Being confronted by "writer's block" is just another way of saying, "I don't have anything to say right now." So, if you're not a writer, here are some ideas that can help you get this critically important original content created and posted on your website:

One of your team members

You may have a budding writer on your team who would relish the opportunity to write. Presto! Problem solved.

One or more of your patients

You probably have a blogger or two amongst your patient base. Some may write for free in exchange for the authorship link on your site. Others may want some nominal fee. The going rate for a custom 200-word post is about USD \$15. A bargain.

Outsource the writing

As blogging has become an increasingly important strategic SEO tool, it has spawned an entire industry of freelance writers ready to create custom blogs. Prices (and quality) vary.

Smile Marketing blogging service

If even the thought of writing a postcard-length blog post seems daunting, our custom blogging service might be helpful. (Additional fee applies.) Periodically we'll conduct some brief interviews on the telephone and our writers will fashion the recordings into original blog posts for you. Problem solved.

Get Blogging!

Hope this brief explanation has removed the mystery surrounding your Smile Marketing blog. Here are the major takeaways:

- Blog about topics that interest you and you think will interest others.
- Blogging is simple and the tools you use are intuitive and easy to learn.
- Blogging is a way to enhance the new patient performance of your site.
- A blog improves patient engagement and stimulates conversation.
- Your blog can be the receptacle for content you refer to again and again.
- Blogging fresh, original content increases the authority of your website.
- Blog on a regular basis to keep your audience fed with your latest insights.
- Your site includes built-in ways to alert your tribe about your blog posts.
- There are many ways to secure original content for your blog.

*Blogging is fun!
So get started today.*