

# HOW TO CONVERT

## WEB VISITORS INTO NEW PATIENTS



*A 3-Part Guide to  
Dental Website Conversions*

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### Introduction

If you have a practice website or are considering getting one, it is crucial that you know what your ultimate goal is for your site. For most dentists and dental specialists, the primary purpose of a practice website is to attract new patients. If this is your primary goal as well, it's time to consider the conversion process, that is, how someone goes from being just a website visitor to an actual new patient.



This 3-part guide details each step of the conversion process so that you can determine whether or not your current website is effectively optimized for generating new patients, or if the website company you are considering is going to offer you everything you need to actually convert visitors into patients.

## PART 1

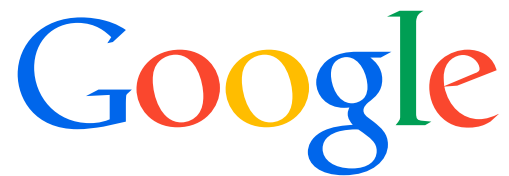
# The Science of SEO

SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is the science of optimizing your website for peak performance in the search engines. The bottom line is, people have to be able to find your website online or it is of no use to you and your practice, making SEO part 1 of the 3 part process that is new patient conversion.

The search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, have algorithms they use to determine which websites to show in search results. Thus, your practice website needs to be *optimized* to fair well under the scrutiny of these algorithms.

SEO is not some ultra-complex, secret language that requires high costs and insider information. It is, however, something that should be handled by SEO specialists who use [white hat methods](#). Unfortunately, when questionable, aggressive methods are used (aka "[black hat SEO](#)"), websites may experience short-term benefits, but the long-term penalties can be detrimental.

If your practice website used to produce new patients, but seems to have recently fallen out of favor with the search engines, your site may be suffering from questionable tactics that were used in the past. In fact, when Smile Marketing takes on new clients who already have a website, we often must perform time-consuming "link pruning" to remove the detrimental side effects of overzealous SEO consultants.

The Yahoo! logo, featuring the word "YAHOO!" in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on a solid purple rectangular background.

## What is the Mark of Effective SEO?

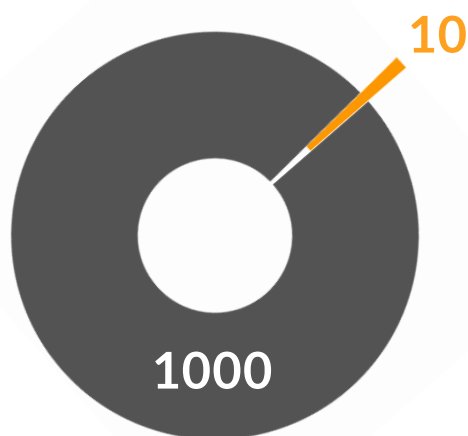
That is the million-dollar question! While many website companies and freelance SEO consultants will insist that keyword rankings and website traffic are the clear indicators of SEO success, the truth is that those mean nothing if your website is not generating new patients for your practice.

Rather than simply looking at the number of website visitors your website is receiving, or the number of keywords for which your website ranks, you must look at *how* those website visitors are interacting (or not interacting) with your site, and you must know *which* keywords patients in your jurisdiction actually use when looking for a dentist online.

The right type of traffic, **new patient traffic**, is people who live or work within 20 minutes of your practice who are actively seeking a new dentist. Those are the website visitors you need.

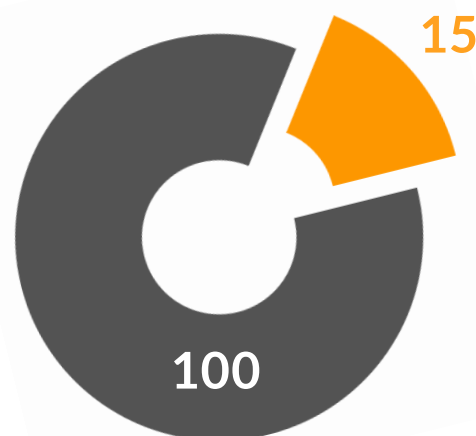
Let's look at two scenarios and see which you would prefer:

### Scenario 1



Your website had 1000 visitors in the last month and your practice saw 10 new patients.

### Scenario 2



Your website had 100 visitors in the last month and your practice saw 15 new patients.

Pretty obvious, right?

Your SEO is effectively targeting new patient traffic when your website visitors are actively engaged on your site and when new patients are calling to book their first appointment. When it comes down to it, the most accurate marker of successful SEO is the number of new patients coming through your door.



Now, SEO may get new patient traffic to your website, but it cannot make them call... That is where parts 2 and 3 come in.



## PART 2

# The Nature of Design

Did you know that it takes just one-twentieth of a second for the average website visitor to decide if they like a website or not? Will your website pass this rapid test? Design, part 2 of the conversion process, is a crucial step in getting website visitors to part 3 where the real magic happens.



Your website design needs to ensure that visitors stay on your site long enough to read your content. While a cutting-edge, elaborate, and expensive design is not going to get you more patients, an outdated, unprofessional design will definitely cost you new patients.

Website visitors need to see, from their very first impression of your site, that your practice is current and an outdated website immediately signals an outdated practice.

## Responsive Web Design



Another element that is crucial to getting more new patients is whether or not your website design is responsive. A responsive website is one that adjusts automatically for optimal viewing on any Internet-capable device (desktop computer, mobile phone, tablet). This ensures that your website visitors have an ideal user experience regardless of the device they are using to view your site. [See [this infographic](#) from HubSpot that explains how responsive web design works]

The lack of a responsive design may actually be another reason that a site that used to perform well is now underperforming. Websites that are more than 3-4 years old may not have responsive capabilities. The search engines know this, often putting these sites at the bottom of the search results because of the less than optimal user experience visitors will encounter if browsing on a mobile device.

Once prospective new patients have found your website online (Part 1), an attractive, professional, responsive design (Part 2) is just what you need to hook your visitors long enough to read your content (Part 3).

## PART 3

# The Art of Content

While SEO and design are extremely important parts of the conversion process, content is what ultimately *engages* website visitors and has the ability to push them through the conversion funnel, taking them from visitor to lead to new patient.

Writing persuasive copy is a skill, an art that should be handled by professional copywriters. Oftentimes, web designers or website companies will require the client to provide their own content to be placed on the website.

There are two things to ask yourself before going this route: first, do you have the time to devote to writing web content, and, second, do you have experience writing persuasive copy? If the answer to either one of these questions is “no” then you need to consider building your website through a service that has professional writers on staff to write the content for you.

For example, at Smile Marketing we have pioneered the [content interview](#). We conduct a 45-minute phone interview with you, and then our team of professional copywriters listens to that interview as they draft the content for your site. This allows your voice and passion to shine through in persuasive copy written by professional writers.





## Why is Content So Important?

The content of your website is what actually tells potential new patients **what you have to offer** and **why they should book their next appointment with you**.

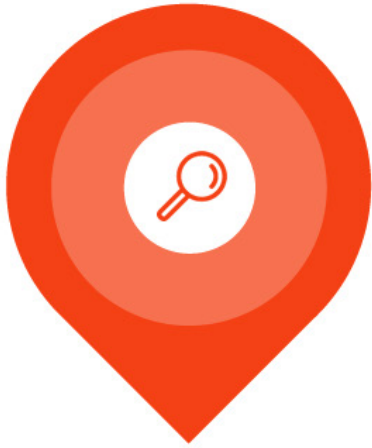
If someone is searching for a new dentist online, they have questions and want information. Your website should answer those questions, provide clear information about your services, and encourage visitors to call your practice.

Here are a few questions to ask yourself about your website content:

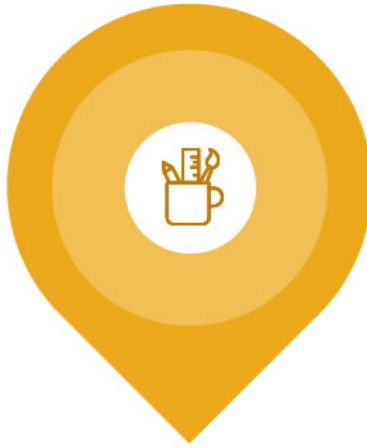
- Does your website answer the most common new patient questions?
- Is your website informative and easy to navigate for answers?
- Does the content compel action with professionally crafted calls-to-action?
- Is your content easy to browse with subheadings, bullet points, and other features that increase “browsability”?
- Is it written with patients in mind in a language everyone can understand or is it too technical as if written from the doctor’s perspective? The most persuasive content is personal, compassionate, and human, it doesn’t just platform the doctor’s technical prowess.
- Does your site include professional photographs of you, your staff, and your office to help build trust with your site visitors?

When it comes down to it, the quality of your website content is what will make or break the conversion process. The content is what will finally persuade the website visitor to *pick up the phone*.

## In Conclusion



SEO



Design



Content

Not one single element of the conversion process can work independently to get you new patients; they must all be optimized to support each other in order for you to get the most new patients from the Internet. A dental practice website that is created without these considerations is doomed from the very beginning, so be sure to choose a website service that sees, and fully understands, the big picture.