



Digital marketing at the ready



1
2

3 Access your Patient Profile..
Want to check your history, click on the link below!
[Patient Profiles](#)
[Email Us: info@dentalassociatesltd.com](mailto:info@dentalassociatesltd.com)

Use digital tools to easily and effectively market patient treatment and your practice. **Part 2** on this topic looks at Web sites, e-mails, and mobile messages for marketing to patients “at a distance,” 24/7. **Part 1**, in August, looked at customized digital case presentations for in-office marketing.

1 Request an Appointment

First name _____
Last name _____
E-mail _____
Street _____
City _____
State/Province _____
Zip/Postal Code _____
Phone _____
Preferred dates _____
Preferred times _____
Please describe your symptoms here _____

Digital marketing

Dr. Emmott’s practice Web site, Dental Associates Ltd., (www.dentalassociatesltd.com) allows patients to: 1. Request an appointment, 2. Contact the dentist, and 3. Access their profiles. These three convenient services draw patients to the practice’s site and, in turn, help to market the practice.

2 Contact Us

Lawrence F. Emmott, DDS
Dental Associates, Ltd.
(602) 279-1641
info@dentalassociatesltd.com
dremmod@dentalassociatesltd.com

Your name: _____
Your e-mail address: _____
Subject: _____ Contactus _____

One of the advantages of building a high-tech office is using the digital tools you have at the ready for a range of marketing tasks.

For example, you can use the basic information you have created on your office computers—photos, x-rays, occlusal scans—to create a customized case presentation for your patients while they are sitting in your operatory looking at a computer on a mount by their chair. Customizing a presentation is the subject of Part 1 of this two-part series on digital marketing (see our August issue, pages 46-50).

While digital slide shows are suitable for in-office marketing, the Internet allows us to continue our marketing efforts at a “distance” 24/7. Part 2, in this issue, covers tips on using Web sites, e-mails, and mobile messaging for long-distance marketing and patient communications.

Practice Web sites

When it comes to marketing your practice, a practice Web site offers many advantages—with its availability 24/7, unlimited space, and ease with which you can update material.

In fact, a practice Web site can become the cornerstone for communicating with your pa-

tients at a distance—the hub that everything else revolves around. But, there is a caveat. If an office Web site is left standing on its own, somewhere in the wilds of cyberspace, it is useless. A practice has to drive people to their Web site, as part of an overall marketing and communication process. Then, the practice site can become very effective.

Part 2

For example, our office, Dental Associates Ltd., has a Web site (www.dentalassociatesltd.com), which offers our patients many convenient services, as follows (see also the sidebar “Marketing tools,” left):

- Patients can access and update their patient profile on our site.
- Patients can contact us and send us an e-mail on another page of our site.
- Patients can request an appointment on our site. (The appointment page asks patients to enter their preferred dates and times and to describe their symptoms.)
- Patient can get detailed information about various dental procedures.

“We are seeing more and more now that the ‘success’ of a Web site is directly related to the degree that a practice integrates the site into their overall approach to communicating and educating their patients,” said Tim Kelly, co-founder of Web-site devel-

Building a high-tech office:

A 10-article series

How do you build a high-tech office? To find out, we asked Dr. Larry Emmott, DPR's technology editor, to present a 10-article series to guide you through the process of choosing and using high-tech systems, from imaging software to diagnostic devices (see topics below). This issue and the next take a look at the marketing and educational benefits of computerized case presentations, practice Web sites, and customized e-mails.

- **Management software:** charting (February), scheduling (March), and finances (April)
 - **Hardware in the operatory** (May)
 - **Digital photography** (June)
 - **Q&A on building a digital practice** (July)
 - **Digital marketing: Part 1** (August)
 - **Digital marketing: Part 2 (September)**
 - **High-tech diagnostic devices** (October)
 - **Online consultations** (November)
-

opment company TNT Dental. "The more a site is integrated into this process, the more referrals the practice receives through the site," Kelly said.

"The same is true for a practice's marketing efforts," Kelly said. "When the site is used as the centerpiece or 'hub' of these efforts, it seems that all of the external marketing has a better chance of success."

Another benefit of Web-site marketing, Kelly said, is that a Web site has unlimited space and no color restrictions, which makes it easier for you to tell the "whole story" of your practice.

A Web site also can be updated instantly at little cost. If something changes at the office, those changes can be made to the Web page in seconds. Compare that to having thousands of full-color printed brochures with an old phone number, outdated services, or a photo of an assistant who has moved to Wyoming never to be seen again.

E-mail messages

Another digital marketing tool is E-mail. E-mail messages are quickly becoming the communication of choice for most people. E-mails are fast, inexpensive, and can include digital attachments. For example, an e-mail could include your practice's logo, a personalized message for a patient, a photo of a patient's teeth, a short video describing treatment and, of course, your Web-site address.

Laci Phillips, my practice administrator, uses e-mail every day at our office.

"One of the first things I do each morning when I arrive at our dental office is check my e-mails," Phillips said. "Patients often use e-mails to contact me when they are away unexpectedly and cannot make a scheduled appointment, or if they have

questions about treatment or payments."

Phillips also is a high-tech consultant for Emmott on Technology Ltd., my consulting company, which helps dentists make informed technology choices through various vehicles, including this column, a Web site (www.drlarryemcott.com), speaking engagements, and

individual in-office consultations.

Phillips also uses the Web enabled-features of our Dentrix practice management software to communicate with patients via the Internet. For example, she can send customized e-mails to patients via our software. The e-mail could be a recall notice telling a patient it's time for their next

appointment. Such a reminder could include a scenic picture a doctor selects (just as a recall postcard often includes a scenic photo.)

"I also use e-mail to order 75% of our office supplies and to interact with vendors without using valuable phone time,"

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Phillips said. "Now most of my time is spent with my patients," she added.

Mobile messaging

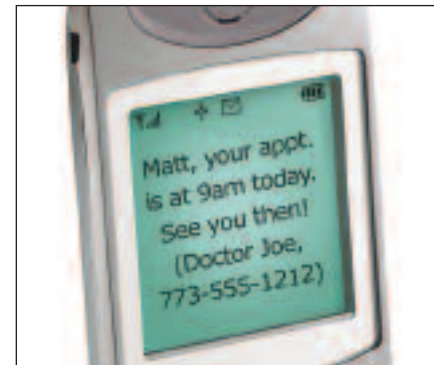
Another way to communicate with patients outside of the office is to use a mobile messaging service that sends mes-

sages to patients over a mobile device, as a cell phone, PDA, PC e-mail, or a pager.

For example, Smile Reminder offers a Web-based mobile text-messaging service that allows a dental practice to send personalized real-time text messages to patients' mobile devices and e-mails (see example at right). The message could be

an appointment reminder or any other type of communication, including suggestions for treatment.

"These messages are effective because they are tailored to fit the image of each practice and center on patient convenience," said Jim Higgins, CEO of Smile Reminder. "Patients can view messages at



Communicate with patients via their cell phones, PDAs, or e-mails, by using a service that delivers personalized text messages, as an appointment reminder. For more information, contact Smile Reminder (www.smilereminder.com).

their convenience and from the sanctuary of their home or office. In addition, Smile Reminder automatically embeds a link to the doctor's practice Web site in every communication that goes out via e-mail."

A key element practice of practice Web sites, e-mail, and other types of digital communications tools is that they keep driving patients back to the office Web site. Once a patient accesses your Web site, you have a much better chance to tell your whole story.

"We have learned that a Web site can be far more effective than we had ever imagined when implemented properly into a complete approach to our communication, education, and marketing efforts," Kelly said.

What's next? Back in the last century, we saw how technology was changing the way GPs use computers at the front desk. We couldn't have imagined the future we have with instant, personalized worldwide digital communications allowing us to communicate with patients at a distance 24/7. And who knows what's next, as cell phones and other digital technologies with text and imaging capabilities continue to evolve, for the future is coming and it will be amazing! **DPR**

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Dr. Larry Emmott, a recognized authority on dental technology in America, is a practicing general dentist in Phoenix. He also is an award-winning speaker who has addressed hundred of professional groups. He is a featured instructor at the Las Vegas Institute and a member of the American Academy of Dental Practice Administration. He has written hundreds of articles on dentistry, computer use, and management. He also writes a monthly electronic newsletter, "Emmott on Technology," which shows dentists how to minimize costs and maximize profits through the effective use of technology. Dr. Emmott also offers hands-on technology seminars to dentists in his Phoenix office. The next seminar is Oct. 29-30. For more information, call Dr. Emmott at 602-279-1641 or visit his Web site www.drlarryemmott.com.

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