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# Effective Practice Marketing in the 24-7 Digital Age of Dentistry

**Your patients are online right now — Are you?**

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By Lou Shuman, DMD, CAGS &  
Diana P. Friedman, MA, MBA

# 81%

OF AMERICANS BETWEEN THE  
AGES OF 30–49 ARE ONLINE

**DAILY.<sup>1</sup>**



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**Your patients are online right now**

— Are you?

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The new paradigm introduced by the Internet has drastically and fundamentally changed how consumers seek, evaluate and communicate with service providers. Google, Bing and Yelp have replaced the Yellow Pages as the lead sources of information. Word-of-mouth and referrals have transformed from neighborly conversations to web communications through social media channels such as blogs, Facebook and YouTube. These changes have impacted all industries and dentistry is not immune to these transitions.

Today, patients make better educated choices regarding the dental provider they select and treatment options they accept. Patients are increasingly leveraging the internet to become better educated consumers, researching treatment options, reading patient feedback and comments, and tuning in to online practice communications.

Traditionally dentistry, a more conservative and highly ethical profession, has shied away from advertising and market outreach. In the digital age though, promotion and market communications are no longer an option, they are a necessity. A dental, orthodontic, or specialty practice without a web presence is invisible to potential patients who are online seeking oral care providers.

**MORE THAN 100 MILLION  
CONSUMERS USE THE INTERNET  
TO SEEK HEALTHCARE  
INFORMATION EACH YEAR<sup>2</sup>...**

**THIS INCLUDES YOUR  
EXISTING PATIENTS AND  
POTENTIAL NEW PATIENTS.**

# 92.83%

OF SESAME MEMBER  
PATIENTS WOULD  
RATHER CLICK THAN  
CALL THEIR PRACTICES  
TO FIND INFORMATION  
AND COMMUNICATE.<sup>3</sup>

In the current highly competitive and tight economic environment, the success of your dental, orthodontic or specialty practice depends on your ability to get found and chosen by new patients, as well as your ability to stay connected with existing patients in ways you may not have previously considered. Your practice must have an effective online communication strategy to encompass the complete patient life cycle, from acquiring new patients through treatment completion to referrals. And your patients need you to meet them where they are—online 24-7.

An effective online patient connection system needs to integrate several core elements in order to optimize your practice brand visibility, efficiencies and effectiveness. These core elements include a well optimized website, social media, online marketing, online 24-7 patient login functionality, automated digital reminders and a HIPAA secure online clinical collaboration platform. Combined, they afford your practice a 360° connection to your market.

The time to address the world of online patient preferences and to take action to become part of the digital age of dentistry is now.

Web Design

Search

Patient Login

Reminders

Online  
Marketing

Online Case  
Collaboration

# Get Chosen

## **The Practice Website //**

### *The Cornerstone of Online Visibility and the Engine Driving New Patient Acquisition*

Driving down a U.S. highway, a billboard one mile away has 60 seconds to resonate its message with you as a consumer. Your practice website must deliver its message quickly to online consumers using the Internet—the information superhighway—if you want to successfully recruit new patients.

In a national study conducted by Sesame Communications, in partnership with Resolution Research, study participants spent less time on practice websites that were difficult to navigate, failed to provide meaningful content, incorporated splash pages or music, or took too long to load.

**Additionally, it only took 90 seconds for the website visitor to decide if they were going to contact the practice or not. Having only 90 seconds to capture the attention of your audience, your practice website presentation and content must make every second count to prompt a site visitor to make an appointment.**

## **EFFECTIVE WEBSITES FOR NEW PATIENT ACQUISITION //**

It can be daunting to wade through the slew of website design companies that have popped up to support the digital world of dentistry and orthodontics. There are claims of instant websites in minutes, those that will coat your homepage with flash, and those that will add music to entertain your website visitors. Is this what will be effective to make patients choose your practice in the 90 seconds they have to decide to act? How do you know what will turn a visitor into new patient?

Through the results of this revolutionary research study, Sesame Communications developed a system to measure the Top Patient Appeal Rating™ of a practice website that evaluates 25 visual, kinesthetic, and aural modality factors determined to make the difference between bringing new patients into your practice or missing the chance to make a strong first impression.

The study involved one-on-one sessions where participants from across the country who were actively seeking a dental provider were asked to give their feedback on various websites in their local area. Participants were encouraged to vocalize their thoughts on the websites and then answered questions regarding their likelihood of becoming a patient at each practice.

IN A SESAME MEMBER SURVEY,  
**95%**  
OF DENTISTS AND  
**99%**  
OF ORTHODONTISTS  
STATED THAT THEIR  
WEBSITE WAS  
IMPORTANT FOR THEIR  
PRACTICE SUCCESS.<sup>4</sup>

VISUAL MODALITIES

WHAT A PROSPECTIVE PATIENT

**sees:**  
consistent structure, font, images and photography

KINESTHETIC MODALITIES

WHAT A PROSPECTIVE PATIENT

**feels:**  
'warm', 'friendly', 'family-oriented'

# The global average time for a website to capture a visitor is approximately eight seconds.<sup>5</sup>

So is flashier better? As it turns out, the answer is no. Patients want real information about your practice, not entertainment. The study found elements such as flash and sound to not only be ineffective in getting additional attention, but they actually deter potential new patients from staying on your site long enough to choose your practice as their new provider.

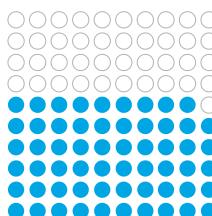
Your website needs to be designed around what appeals to the patients you're trying to attract, not what appeals to your particular taste. New patients want to feel that you truly care about their oral health, and that their experience will be personalized and of the highest quality. Even if a potential patient has your practice in mind because of a word-of-mouth referral, they are still very likely to check out your practice website to confirm that you will fulfill their needs. Use your practice website as the starting point to a long-term relationship with your patients through effectively communicating your commitment to them.

Other elements that will draw in new patients, and ultimately revenue for your practice, are simple. Show that your practice is warm and friendly through colorful pictures of doctors and staff and make navigation easy so patients can find the information they seek quickly. Choose a website design that is clean, fresh, and modern. Use words that evoke feelings of comfort such as 'friendly', 'family-oriented' and 'caring'.

Once you have a solid website that attracts new patients, the next step is to optimize it for mobile platforms such as smartphones and tablets. As consumers with children now spend an average of 6.1 hours a day seeking information online using their mobile smartphones<sup>6</sup>, there is a great opportunity to connect with busy, on-the-go patients who prefer this medium.

Your mobile website should quickly and easily provide prospective patients with important information such as contact details for your practice, general doctor and practice information, and links to your social media sites.

*Is your website optimized for viewing on a mobile device?*



**59%**

*of Americans regularly go online using their phone or other portable device.<sup>7</sup>*

A FEBRUARY 2010 STUDY BY SESAME COMMUNICATIONS TRACKED DENTAL WEBSITE VISITOR PATTERNS OVER A SIX MONTH PERIOD.<sup>8</sup> THE STUDY ANALYZED 24,523 GOOGLE ANALYTICS DATA-POINTS AND REACHED TWO KEY CONCLUSIONS:

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1

### Website Size //

A regression analysis indicated a weak relationship ( $R^2=0.0334$ ) between the average time spent on a site and the total number of site pages. Actually, there was a negative correlation between page number and visit longevity (coefficient -0.7723)

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2

### Website Content //

Top 10 viewed pages accounted for 78.88% of total page views recorded. These included information on the dentist, staff, first visit experience and practice policies. None of the clinical content pages made the top nine pages read.

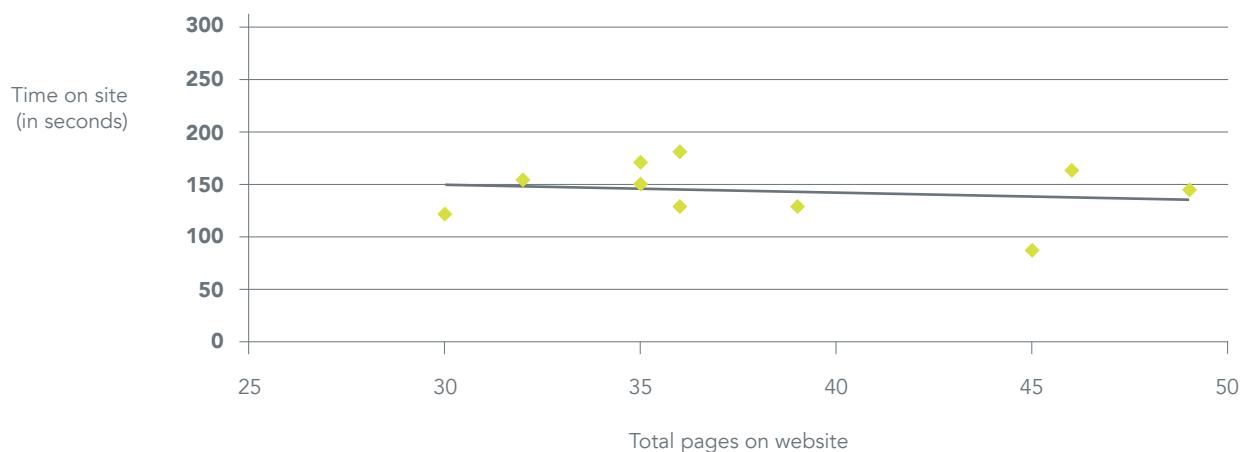
7

### Average Time on Site

(new visitors) in seconds

$$y = -0.7723x + 172.28$$

$$R^2 = 0.03338$$



AN EFFECTIVE WEBSITE NEEDS TO SPEAK TO THE UNIQUE BRAND AND EXPERIENCE THE PRACTICE OFFERS PATIENTS.

**You have only 90 seconds to capture a new patient, so make sure your website designer has dental industry expertise and takes the time to understand your practice and brand. You need a strong design and effective content that attracts new patients within an appealing, easy to navigate, and well branded website.**

THE CRITICAL ELEMENT TO SUCCESS IS THE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS GOING TO DRIVE THE TYPE OF CONVERSION YOU NEED:

**Website visitor turned into a filled chair at your practice.**

# Get Found

## Search Optimization/Marketing and Social Media //

## *The Engine Driving New Patient Referrals*

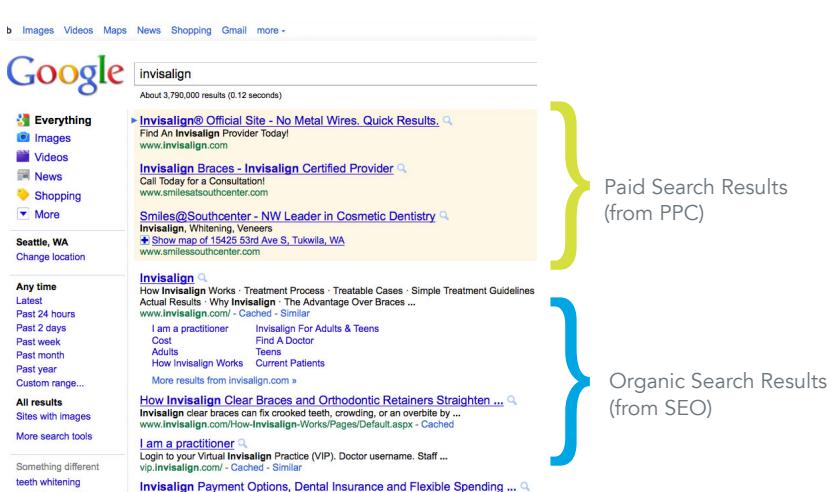
So your practice website is live; mission complete, right? Not quite.

Your online 24-7 mission has just begun. A critical part of marketing your practice online is making sure your current and prospective patients can find you. And with so many dental practices beginning to compete in the online marketplace, search engine visibility is a must. Achieving this objective means leveraging search engine optimization tools, social media and paid online advertising.

**93%**  
OF CONSUMERS WORLDWIDE  
USE SEARCH ENGINES TO FIND  
AND ACCESS WEBSITES.<sup>9</sup>

Search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo! are where millions of online consumers search first for information. These search engines crawl stored records of millions of web pages, and then employ myriad algorithms to determine which pages are most relevant to the specific inquiry. Based on those algorithms they rank the results. This is critically important as a 2010 study by the Georgia Institute of Technology found that 75% of search engine users never go beyond the first page of findings.<sup>10</sup>

Having a solid search engine strategy is vital to the success of your practice. Your strategy should include ongoing evaluation of your website performance in search engines, monitoring the search terms used to find your site, and measuring your performance and placement against competitors in your area.



An “organic” search (SEO, ‘Search Engine Optimization’) result occurs when prospective patients search using various terms, such as “Seattle WA dentist,” and are presented with results deemed most relevant to those terms by the search engine. In addition to organic ranking, businesses can also pay search engines (PPC, ‘Pay Per Click’) so they appear at the top of the results when certain terms are entered. These paid searches will appear before organic search results, thus increasing online visibility.

# Searching for health information is now the 3rd most popular activity for all internet users 18 and over.<sup>11</sup>

THE BIGGEST ONLINE TREND IS THAT, WHILE THE VERY YOUNGEST AND OLDEST COHORTS MAY DIFFER, CERTAIN KEY INTERNET USES ARE BECOMING MORE UNIFORMLY POPULAR ACROSS ALL AGE GROUPS.<sup>12</sup> THIS INCLUDES SEEKING HEALTH INFORMATION ONLINE.

**SEO //** Effective SEO increases the visibility of your website in search engine results based on users' search terms. In order to maintain a prominent presence in search listings, you'll want to ensure you have relevant and fresh content on each page of your website.

If, for example, your goal is to incrementally grow your revenue by targeting new patients who would be good candidates for implants, you would want to include rich content (copy, images, and videos) within your website that is specific to implants and the keywords associated with implants.

Optimizing SEO is not a point in time activity, but rather an intensive ongoing process as search engines change their algorithms and crawling rules on a frequent basis. This is why it is imperative to have a specialist reviewing your online search (such as Google Analytics) results on a monthly basis, taking corrective action to proactively optimize your website results.

**PPC //** To guarantee your practice shows up at the top of a search engine results page, you need to bid on select keywords that are relevant to your practice. Using a paid search product such as Google Adwords, you select a keyword and the amount you are willing to pay when you show up at the top of the page and someone clicks on your link. The amount you ultimately spend on this type of search marketing is dependent on two things:

- 1** **The maximum budget amount for a given keyword**
- 2** **The amount of clicks your link receives within your maximum budget**

You will need to create ads that contain a clickable link to the corresponding keywords on your website. For these, use capitalization for each word (Write Ad Copy Like This), put the keyword in the ad itself, and make sure the ad copy is tightly relevant to the keyword you are bidding on.

Over  
**155** MILLION consumers use Google to search online each month.<sup>13</sup>

A NOVEMBER 2010 STUDY BY SESAME COMMUNICATIONS, FOCUSED ON PPC CAMPAIGN PERFORMANCE OF 63 PRACTICES OVER A 60 DAY PERIOD, FOUND THAT:

1

79% of consumers calling the practice, based on Google AdWords, self-identified themselves as new patients.<sup>14</sup>

2

9.5% of all consumers who clicked on Google AdWords ads called the practice—a very high conversion rate.

*Consumers are now more sophisticated and when they click on PPC advertisements they are further advanced in their purchase cycle and ready to purchase the service researched.*

11

3

On average, PPC campaigns generated nine new patient calls per practice.

If you are serious about bringing new business into your practice, this is a great way to stand apart from your competition.

DATA FROM SESAME ELITE SEARCH PREMIUM ANALYSIS<sup>15</sup>

n=63

MONTH	CLICKS	LEADS
AUG	3297	332
SEPT	2837	251
TOTAL	6134	583

MONTH	CLICKS TO LEADS	AVERAGE COST PER LEAD
AUG	10.07%	\$46.94
SEPT	8.87%	\$52.58
AVERAGE	9.50%	\$49.37

The Sesame Elite Search Premium management strategy of keywords, ad content, and landing pages improved call rate and delivered a lower average cost per lead.

**KEYWORDS //** So what is a keyword? A keyword typically refers to one of three things in search.

In PPC campaigns, a keyword is the actual word or phrase you bid on to target in search campaigns. This is the most consistent use of the word, since it is used uniformly across the industry. In this case, a keyword is an actual list of specific phrases or terms the member creates with their search specialist.

In SEO, it gets a bit more confusing. Often keyword can refer to an actual line of code that was commonly used in websites, known as the Meta Keyword element. In the early days of the Internet, this was a list that the webmaster would write in the page's header, invisible to people browsing. This list was used by Yahoo! and other earlier search engines as their method of determining the relevancy of a website. This method was quickly exploited, with websites listing hundreds of "keywords" to show up for various searches and, because of this, was eventually abandoned when Google developed a way to use the content of a website to determine relevancy. In 2009, Google and Bing both announced that their algorithms completely ignore this element.

Generally in SEO, however, a keyword should refer to a general idea of what you're targeting in your website. It should be a broad list of terms and phrases that you have in mind, describing services and terms that you want to target with your website. These keywords should be targeted by using them in your content and website. Ultimately, the way to target a keyword is mentioning your services and location in ways that makes sense and are relevant to your practice.



# 75%

OF DENTAL PROFESSIONALS  
REPORTED THAT THEIR  
PRACTICE WEBSITE AND ONLINE  
SEARCH CAMPAIGNS ARE THE  
MOST EFFECTIVE ADVERTISING  
FOR THEIR PRACTICE...  
THEY AGREED THESE  
ONLINE TOOLS ARE MORE  
VALUABLE THAN DIRECT MAIL  
MARKETING, MAGAZINES,  
YELLOW PAGES, TELEVISION  
OR RADIO ADVERTISING.<sup>16</sup>

#### **Is it important then, to be number one on Google through organic search?**

Number one is nice, but certainly not necessary. You need to focus on the overall goal of your SEO efforts, and that is to get new patients to take notice of your website and ultimately become a new patient—not just the notoriety of being number one.

To know what you're doing is having a positive impact on your practice, you should regularly check ROI (Return On Investment) data points such as website traffic and the referring URLs, as well as using unique phone numbers to identify where your new patient calls are coming from. Look for a service provider with the ability to track the calls from search ads, even after they land on your website so you can measure the ad impact.

The value of being online 24-7 where patients are looking to find you cannot be overstated. Think about where you would turn to find a new product or service. If you needed to find a physical therapist for example, are you going to start manually flipping through a phonebook where there is limited information, and you would need to call each one to find out more? No, most likely you would go online and find the physical therapist that is right for you. And so would your patients.

FOR SESAME MEMBERS,  
THE AVERAGE COST PER ONLINE  
LEAD IS LESS THAN \$50,  
COMPARED TO THE NATIONAL  
AVERAGE OF \$275<sup>17</sup> FOR  
NEW PATIENT ACQUISITION.

# Get Connected

## Social Media //

### *The Engine Driving Patient Retention and New Patient Referrals*

Social networks are no longer just the playground for pre-teens and college students. As a dental, orthodontic or specialty practice, it is becoming more important than ever to be online to communicate with your patients. Not only is the demographic you are targeting actively using social networks, but they are also specifically searching for health information online.

If your potential patients are online, then your practice needs to be online engaging with them and turning them into lifetime patients in your practice. If your practice is not using Facebook, Twitter or YouTube to connect with your patient community, then you are missing valuable opportunities to build brand loyalty and trust, brand awareness, and a relationship with your patients for retention purposes.

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13

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**FACEBOOK //** Patients are now using social networks to refer your practice to friends and family. These are still word-of-mouth referrals; patients are just using Facebook as the medium. In this digital age, Facebook not only serves as an extension of traditional word-of-mouth marketing, but has an easy to track ROI when you use a dedicated phone number tracked by services such as Sesame First Call™.

Your practice Facebook profile creates a touch point for your patients and opportunities for them to connect with you 24-7. It allows you to have conversations in a one-to-many way about things important to both your practice and your patients such as new products and services, special promotions, or contests. This is a great portal to build a family-like community around your practice, and to build trust in your practice's brand.

When your practice shares videos, posts, and photos on your wall, and starts conversations with your patients, your patient perceives you as an active connection in their online community. They can then respond by checking in to your practice using Facebook on their smartphones (iPhone, Android, Blackberry) and tagging your practice in their status updates (new braces, treatment completion, positive dental cleanings).

Spending as little as an hour a day with your patients on Facebook builds trust in your brand. Additionally, as your patients increase their activity with your practice, they create organic brand awareness of your practice among their friends and family.

ACCORDING TO FACEBOOK, THE SITE HAS MORE THAN

**500 MILLION  
ACTIVE USERS  
AND 50% OF THEM  
LOG ON TO THE SITE  
ON ANY GIVEN DAY.**

PEOPLE SPEND OVER

**700 BILLION  
MINUTES PER MONTH**

ON FACEBOOK.<sup>18</sup>

MORE THAN

**50% OF FACEBOOK'S  
MEMBERS IN THE US  
ARE 35 OR OLDER,  
AND ONLY 26.8% ARE  
24 OR UNDER.<sup>19</sup>**

# Social network or blog sites are visited by ¾ of global consumers who go online.<sup>20</sup>



**TWITTER //** You can use Twitter to connect with your patients who prefer rapid communication in 140-character exchanges. Share insightful tidbits from your onsite practice blog, announce monthly specials on dental services, or let your patients know how much you care about their healthy smiles. Your profile bio will display your practice website, so use Twitter to drive traffic to your other social media profiles or your onsite blog.

15



**YOUTUBE //** Your patients may not be uploading their own videos, but according to YouTube, hundreds of millions of YouTube videos are watched every day. Share a glimpse of your practice with your patient community using a video recorder and your desktop computer. Share patient testimonials to reach current and prospective patients, or record those moments with you and your staff that show what your practice is all about. When viewers feel good about your content, they share it with their friends and family on Facebook, Twitter, or their own personal blogs.

Dr. Mark Powell, a Sesame Member in Jenison, MI, really stands out as someone who understands the value of social media. He uses video as a way to communicate with his current and prospective patients. In only 3 months, his practice created 16 videos for their YouTube channel that have received nearly 45,000 views.

**ONSITE BLOG //** Sesame research confirmed that onsite blogging integrated into the practice website resulted in 32% greater website traffic, with users spending 38% more time on the site and looking at 30% more pages per visit. An onsite blog is a fantastic marketing tool that you can update at your leisure with news, videos, and other information you want to share with your current and prospective patients.

60% OF RESPONDENTS CLAIMED THEIR FACEBOOK FANDOM INCREASED THE CHANCE THEY WOULD RECOMMEND A BRAND TO A FRIEND. AMONG TWITTER FOLLOWERS, THAT PROPORTION ROSE TO NEARLY EIGHT IN 10.

MORE THAN ½ OF FACEBOOK FANS SAID THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO MAKE A PURCHASE FOR AT LEAST A FEW BRANDS, AND 67% OF TWITTER FOLLOWERS REPORTED THE SAME.<sup>21</sup>

## SYNERGY OF COMBINING STRATEGIES //

Social media, SEO optimization, and online PPC advertising are an effective combined strategy for retaining and growing your dental practice. A comprehensive, integrated online marketing strategy will help your practice optimize results.

In a five month study conducted by Sesame Communications<sup>22</sup>, results for 167 dental and orthodontic practices were tracked. Researchers found that online marketing effectiveness grows non-linearly as online marketing campaigns expand. With two campaigns (for example, organic website SEO and social media presence), new patient calls grew by 46%. Adding PPC with Google AdWords enhanced results by 123%!

This translated to an average of 22 monthly practice calls from a single online campaign, increasing to 43 (11 identified as new patients) with two campaigns and a significant 56 (17 identified as new patients)<sup>23</sup> with three campaigns. With an industry new patient annual production average set at \$900, this represents potential increased production from a low of \$7,200 to a high of \$15,300 per month.

To have the most impactful online marketing strategy, you need to take advantage of the multiple online SEO and social media tools. Combining SEO, PPC, social media, and an onsite blog will not only drive new patient acquisition, but really push your practice's image as a technology-savvy service provider. Perhaps more significantly, these activities will help you establish a solid brand and community around your practice.

16

## % increase in calls generated through online search strategies and social media when second and third service is added<sup>24</sup>

n=167

	New Patient Calls	Total Calls
<b>2 Sesame Search Services</b> SEO and social media	<b>46%</b>	<b>91%</b>
<b>3 Sesame Search Services</b> + PPC with Google AdWords	<b>123%</b>	<b>152%</b>

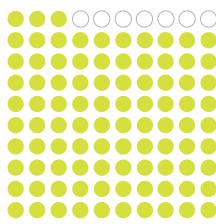
# Stay Connected

## Patient Login Portal Functionality //

### *The Engine Driving Practice Efficiency and Patient Satisfaction*

With the right online patient portal, your practice can elevate the quality of patient care and stay in touch with your patients at all the crucial moments, from ensuring they remember to show up to an appointment, to reminding them to pay their bill. More significantly, automating certain administrative functions will afford your team the opportunity to leverage their time to focus on more important tasks such as establishing great relationships with your patients, tracking treatment acceptance and completion, activating patients, holding open house events to bond with your patients, and community building around your practice.

In an economy where limited budgets and resources have become the norm, it's imperative to make the most of what you have, and to discover ways to consistently achieve your practice's production and collection goals through more efficient methods.



**93%**

*of patients find it more convenient to find answers online compared to calling the office.<sup>25</sup>*

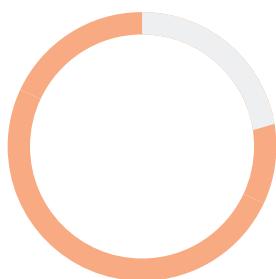
There is also a huge convenience factor for your patients when they can perform tasks such as filling out forms, accessing dental records and insurance balances, paying their bill, and sending you communications online, any time of day. Your patients are just as busy as you are, so when you can make their experience with your practice hassle-free, and accommodate their preferences and convenience, they are going to respond by making it a can't-miss priority.

IN DENTAL PRACTICES, THE AVERAGE MISSED APPOINTMENT RATE IS BETWEEN 18% AND 22%. THIS TRANSLATES INTO AN AVERAGE LOSS IN REVENUE OF \$138,000 PER PRACTICE, PER YEAR, DUE TO MISSED APPOINTMENTS ALONE.<sup>26</sup>

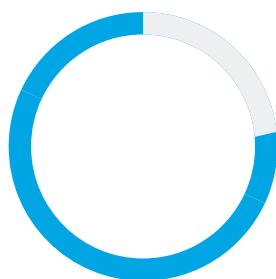
### Automated Reminders



■ 76% of patients prefer email appointment reminders.<sup>27</sup>



■ 77% of dentists stated text reminders reduce cancellations and strengthen commitment to appointments.<sup>28</sup>



■ 76% of dentists stated that automated reminders reduced administrative team work.<sup>29</sup>

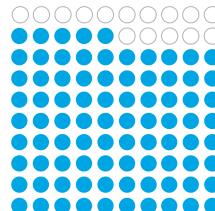
18

### AUTOMATED APPOINTMENT REMINDERS

**Keep Your Schedule Full //** How much time would your staff save if they weren't manually making calls every day to remind patients about upcoming appointments? What could they be accomplishing if they had that time back in their day?

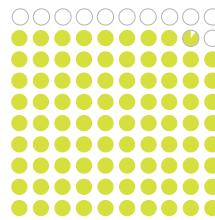
An effective automated appointment reminder system decreases your no-show rate, helps staff be more productive, and strengthens patient commitment. The most significant patient benefit of an automated communication system is the patient's ability to customize communications to their preferences: email, SMS text, or voice mail appointment reminders.

Unlike manual systems that require daily scheduling, good online patient portals require that your staff only set up the reminder once—the system takes care of the rest. Reminders should be automatically sent when you want, including 1-hour pre-appointment SMS text messages to gently remind patients about their appointments.



**85%**

of doctors agree that using reminders reduces outbound calls from their team.



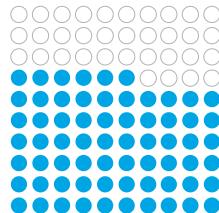
**88.9%**

of doctors agreed that letting patients choose their preferred method of communications supports their commitment to individualized treatment.<sup>30</sup>

The result is fewer patients telling you, "I got so busy I forgot," and more productive days with filled chairs.

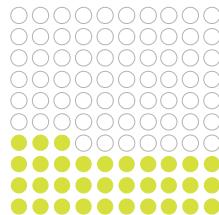
Should patients miss their appointments, you'll want to have the confidence of knowing the practice follow-up was immediate and consistent—pick a portal that contacts no-shows with an email requesting them to reschedule.

FOR SESAME MEMBERS USING PATIENT LOGIN AUTOMATED FINANCIAL REMINDERS, 32% PAY ONLINE USING A CREDIT CARD WITHIN 24 HOURS OF RECEIVING AN EMAIL REMINDER, AND 50% PAY WITHIN 48 HOURS.<sup>31</sup>



**66%**

of Sesame orthodontist Members surveyed said their patients who pay online pay faster than those who mail checks.



**33%**

say they pay a week faster or more.<sup>32</sup>

19

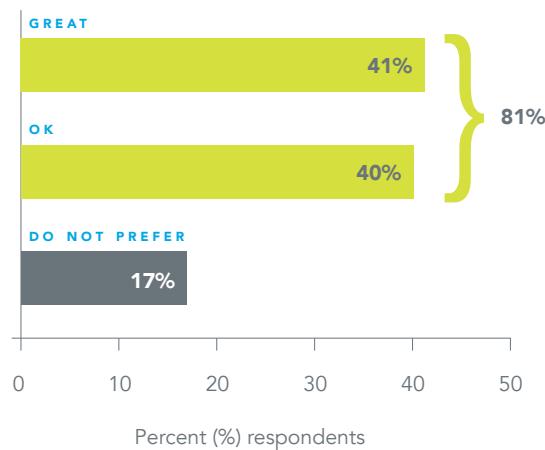
#### **FINANCIAL REMINDERS** **Ensure Timely Online Payments and Reduce Accounts Receivable //**

What would you be more likely to do on time—go to the post office to mail a check to a business, or pay online with a credit card from the comfort of your home or office? Online bill pay is becoming more of an expectation in today's digital world, with the total number of online households growing by 53% in the past 10 years, and check payment volume dropping by 57%.<sup>33</sup>

The convenience of being able to pay online not only means a quicker turnaround for payments, but the ability to collect payment outside of office hours. Sesame Members receive over 46% of payments outside of normal business hours<sup>34</sup>—meaning the money is in their account and waiting for them by morning.

#### **Online payment embraced by dental patients<sup>35</sup>**

Survey Question: How do you feel about making payments online?

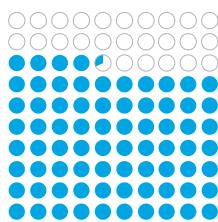


## BUILD LOYALTY THROUGH PROVIDING CONVENIENCE //

Without an online portal to communicate with your patients about their upcoming appointments, remaining insurance benefits, treatment images, and financial data, your office staff must spend time manually responding to each and every request for information.

Give your patients the option to quickly and easily access the information they are seeking. Allow patients to seamlessly confirm their appointments online, download an appointment reminder for their calendar, fill out health forms and make payments, and you are going to have a more satisfied patient who is more likely to stay with your practice.

20



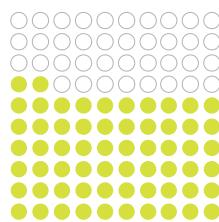
# 74.32%

*of patients said having anytime online access to information makes them more likely to stay with their doctor.<sup>36</sup>*

## BUILD BRAND TRUST //

Regular communications with your patients not only builds a sense of familiarity with your practice, but it builds brand trust. Newsletters and customized personal emails and holiday greetings are an effective way to deliver practice information, industry news relevant to your patients' treatment plans, or to simply wish them a happy birthday to let them know you are thinking of them.

The average dentist has 1,871 active patients,<sup>37</sup> making the ability to have one-to-many conversations crucial to patient retention and the success of their practice. It's difficult to make a personal connection with each one of your patients on a regular basis, but by reaching them electronically, you can close the time gap between conversations and increase patient recognition and awareness of your practice's brand.



# 62%

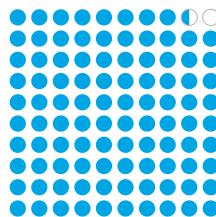
*of Sesame dental Members stated that having an electronic newsletter was important to the success of their practice.<sup>38</sup>*

## MEASURE TO ENSURE SATISFACTION //

Practices are hectic and busy environments, and you may often fail to ask your most valued patients for feedback and guidance on how you may better serve them. It is imperative to regularly keep tabs on your patients' level of satisfaction. A complete online patient portal functionality needs to include post-appointment feedback surveys that can easily be filled out online after every appointment while the patients' visit is still fresh in their minds. In addition, it should include a survey form any visitor may complete to provide feedback to the practice. Use this valuable information to continually improve the experience of patients in your practice and keep them returning. Take it one step further and post positive testimonials and reviews to your practice blog, Facebook and Twitter pages to attract new patients.

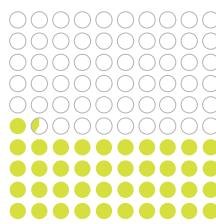
## GAIN NEW BUSINESS Through Referrals and Recommendations //

The continued success of your practice requires happy patients who refer their friends and family. Allowing your patients to conveniently input this information online and send your practice information directly to their referral, means you will have the contact data on hand to reach out directly to potential new patients right away and that referral will have already received a positive assessment of your practice.



# 98.5%

of Sesame Members stated  
referrals from patients were  
important to the success of  
their practice.



# 41.4%

On average, an astounding  
41.4%  
of patient referrals for Sesame  
Members come from friends  
and family members.<sup>39</sup>

## The Time is Now

As consumers look to the Internet for health information and online conveniences, your practice must follow suit and address these needs to stay competitive. Connecting with your patients online via your website, search marketing, social media, and online portal will solidify your patients' understanding of

your commitment to them and open the gates to incremental revenue through new patient acquisition and retention of existing patients. The 24-7 digital age of dentistry is here and ready for your practice to take part. Become visible to your patients and market with an effective, integrated, and online marketing strategy.

### About Dr. Lou Shuman, DMD, CAGS

Dr. Shuman currently serves as President of Pride Institute. He is a sought after dental industry speaker and educator in the areas of strategic relations, emerging technologies, Internet strategy, and practice management and marketing. He brings a wealth of experience to the The Pride Institute who's vision is to significantly impact the lives of

dentists, their teams, and their patients by delivering the finest information and counsel in dental practice management. With a 30-year focus on extensive research and development, their team of experts continually strive to deliver the very best through new models and new methods that creates new success for our dental community.

### About Diana P. Friedman, MA, MBA

Diana is President and Chief Executive Officer of Sesame Communications. She has a 20-year success track record in marketing innovative technologies and fortifying brand positioning for dental companies in the professional and consumer markets.

Throughout her career, Diana served as a recognized practice management consultant, speaker, and author. Diana holds an MBA in Management and Marketing as well as an MA in Sociology from Arizona State University.

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