

Social Media & Technology

Why Dentists Need to Pay Attention to Google and Social Media

by Dr. Leonard F. Tau

I will always remember growing up in the late 70's and 80's and watching E.F. Hutton commercials on television. Typically, two people, in a crowded and noisy location, are having a conversation about investments. Suddenly, one individual turns to the other and says, "Well, my broker is E.F. Hutton, and E.F. Hutton says..."

Instantly, everyone around them becomes completely silent, and turns toward the speaker to listen in on the conversation. Then, the TV announcer proclaims, "When E.F. Hutton talks, people listen."



AACO - Director of Media Relations

Dr. Leonard F. Tau maintains a full-time private practice in Northeast Philadelphia focusing on general, cosmetic, reconstructive, and implant dentistry. He received his dental degree from Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in

Boston, MA and a Certificate in Advanced Education in General Dentistry at UMDNJ in Somerdale, NJ.

He is an active member of many dental organizations including the AACO, AACD, AGD, and DentalTown. Dr. Tau lectures locally and regionally to fellow dentists on Internet marketing and social media. His primary focus in his practice is patient comfort and painless dentistry.

<http://www.isocialdentalconsulting.com/>

Now, 30 years later, you can picture the same commercial in your mind's eye, but replace "E.F. Hutton" with Google. Google is the king of the internet: when they talk, people need to listen. Just how important has Google become?

Despite the fact that there are numerous available Internet search engines, when doing an Internet search today, a person will automatically say that he or she "Googled" it.

68% of all searches are conducted on Google. My 5-year-old son asks me to "Google" things all the time. 100 billion searches are conducted on Google each month, which equates to 3 billion searches every day. YouTube is the 2nd largest search engine, and guess who owns it! Clearly, Google is king of the world when it comes to local Internet searches.

A paradigm shift

Social media are not merely a fad, but constitute a fundamental shift in the way we communicate and share information. "Friending" and "following" have become commonly used verbs in the English language. We now post photos on our Facebook wall, rather than on the walls of our own homes. The social media kingdom has materialized and become part of our lives very quickly, and has been changing our world ever since.

Remember how MySpace started out as an unusual phenomenon? Then, in 2004, Facebook was launched, and it has become the most dominant social media site ever since. As of August 2012, there were almost 880 million worldwide users. Recently, the very popular Twitter has come close to trumping Facebook, and "tweeting" has become almost as popular as "updating" one's status. In contrast to Facebook, Twitter is short, fast, and to the point. At 140 characters per tweet, statements are necessarily simple and informative. Twitter is more of a "post and leave" type of site, whereas Facebook is a "type, and wait for a return comment" site.

Why is all this important to a dentist?

My practice in Northeast Philadelphia, The Pennsylvania Center for Dental Excellence, has grown significantly since I purchased it in March 2007, and this phenomenal growth is almost entirely attributable to my:

- Overall Internet presence
- Online reputation
- Local search optimization
- Use of social media.

The majority of patients that come into my office for the very first time do so because they have found out about me on "Google Places." It is important for dentists to understand what being listed in Google Places means.

When you perform an online search, for example "Invisalign Dentist Philadelphia," or "Dentist in Zip Code 10116," the first 7-10 listings that appear are called

"Google Places." Along with your name and business name, other important information appears, such as your address, telephone, office hours, and website.

The first step

It is wisely said that the longest journey begins with the first step.

Your Google Places listing is a free listing provided by Google. As a first step to establishing an Internet presence, I urge every

fellow American Academy of Cosmetic Orthodontics member to create an Internet listing by doing the following:

1. Log on to: www.google.com/places
2. Click on the "sign-up," prompt in the upper right corner, and follow the instructions.
3. The computer program will guide you with entering your office information.
4. It would be very wise to optimize your Google Place listing with photos, video, or coupons.

Next steps

In the next issue of the Journal of the American Academy of Cosmetic Orthodontics, we will discuss

the importance of positive online reviews for your practice, and establishing yourself on Google Plus and Google + Local.

Embracing the use of social media to publicize your practice and to enhance your practice's reputation is crucial in today's world. Dentists who ignore the social media are putting the future financial health of their practices at great risk. ■

To be continued in the Spring 2013 issue of the Journal of the AACO.

"My practice... has grown significantly...and this phenomenal growth is almost entirely attributable to my overall internet presence..."

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