

The importance of Local Search in 2018



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By Carl Burroughs – Managing Director – Integrated Dental Marketing

This year heralds my 17th year helping the dental professional, through proactive marketing solutions and my 17th year writing for this glorious publication. Over this time we have seen massive disruption to the media sector with the meteoric decline of traditional print media, such as Yellow Pages and newsprint and the almost incompressible rise in the digital space.

I have written about all the various marketing mediums that are relevant to the dental sector and the opportunities that arise on the back of new and growing mediums. However, what we are now seeing and what has been evident for some time, is the new digital age is maturing, and in its own way is becoming as predictable as the big media houses of the past.

By the early 2000's Google was becoming the dominant search engine and the name was even accepted by the Oxford English Dictionary as a verb in 2006. Today, 14 years after its launch, Facebook is one of the world's largest businesses with a value of over \$400 B, which is

greater than many of the major banks and century-old oil companies.

So, with this dominance comes predictability and stability, which in real terms may not last as long as the reign of newspapers, but for the foreseeable future allows you to spend your advertising budget on platforms you know statistically are being used by the vast majority of your patients and potential patients. And if you are not using these mediums in the appropriate ways, then you are without a doubt missing out on both new patients and providing great customer service to existing patients.

The overwhelming duopoly that Google and Facebook have over the public's time on-line also means you can 'keep it simple'. I have met with hundreds of practices around the country that have felt a sense of being overwhelmed, by not knowing what mediums they should engage with. There is no doubt that platforms such as Instagram and Twitter can benefit some practices when used correctly, but if you are not found first on a Google search in your local area

and if you are not advertising to your target demographic on Facebook, you are wasting your time using these additional platforms.

What is important today is the same as it was last year and will be the same next year:

- ◆ SEO – Organic – Getting your practice to the top of the Google page on a relevant and localised organic search.
- ◆ SEO – Maps – Getting your practice including in the top three map results on a relevant and localised organic search.
- ◆ Google Ad Words – Using Google Ads to attract relevant and targeted patient enquires
- ◆ Facebook Ads – Advertising to specific and localised demographics to attract new patient enquires

Get these four activities right and you will get the most 'bang for your marketing buck' in 2018.

To help you dominate your local on-line search traffic my team and I have developed a platform to manage your SEO, SEO Maps, Google Ad Words and Facebook Ads, which we call IDM Fundamentals. We only accept one practice per geographic area and the IDM Fundamentals program will deliver you the localised and relevant on-line marketing you need to grow your practice this year.

In a few weeks time at the ADX, millions of dollars will be committed to for new equipment and fancy practice fit-outs. Yet it is the constant flow of new patients that maximises the use of new equipment and justifies these great fit-outs. So, this year don't underestimate the power of localised on-line marketing and certainly don't get overwhelmed by what platforms you should be using. As the on-line space matures what works for you locally becomes more and more pragmatic and important – it's fact, it's fundamental.

To organise a demo and to find out if your area is still available, contact Sonia Kingman at IDM on 02 9211 1477 or e-mail info@idm.com.au

