Secrets of the online patient journey - Part 2

Nazeer Haque, Google consultant for Dental Focus continues explaining the online patient behaviour, journey and how to ensure they contact you

Though patient Y does exist, often it’s quicker to take a patient who has the Need and Want (N+W) and with the right conversation, coach them to make changing their smile a Priority (P) so that they begin seeing themselves as a patient that pays, thus converting them into patient Y.

So in summary, N+W+P = buying patient (patient Y).

**SO WHERE ARE THESE PATIENTS?**

In my previous article, I mentioned how consumers (patients) respond to a stimulus. Once this stimulus has been triggered, the patient then embarks on a journey to experience the ‘first moment of truth’. This is a critical moment because it’s their first step towards tackling the factor which hinders their self-esteem.

Historically for a consumer, the ‘first moment of truth’ would be experienced when viewing a product in a shop or in a magazine. A picture is worth a thousand words because sight is the most powerful sense when winning a person’s trust and overcoming their self-preservation filters. Consumers don’t want to say that they made the wrong decision or a costly decision.

Seeing the results first hand can help a patient make something pivotal faster than targeting any of their other sensory skills.

In the world of sales and marketing, we’re competing for views. That is why billboards, TV and print advertising can work. If you hear a radio advert, you’ll call the company and they’ll send you literature, which again reverts to sight. Sight helps to sell – is this a possible factor why digital smile design software is helping to increase private treatment sales?

At present, most of these viewers start their journey on Google. It’s reported there are four billion searches a day on Google and 95% of consumers’ decisions lead them to start their journey on Google. The keyword here being ‘decision’. On Google, these patients will be presented with a page full of results to help address their intent and provide the first moment of truth. Hopefully, when patients do a Google search, they find your digital presence. So what counts as ‘digital presence’?

Your digital presence consists of the following:

- Website (practice or clinician)
- Practice videos (on your website and YouTube channel)
- Patient testimonials (videos and written on your website and independent platforms)
- Case studies (photos and descriptions on your website)
- Patient reviews (on your website and independent platforms)
- Social media pages (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, YouTube)
- Recognised directories (NHS Choices)

If optimised correctly, the website has the best chance of appearing on that patient, thus converting them into patient Y.

3) DECISION

The patient may then start carrying out specific searches such as ‘Invisalign in London’, which leads to consideration of who can provide the treatment. This results in a phone call or a website form enquiry, usually to book a consultation. They may already have started preparing this provider shortlist during the Information Search period.

The patient will experience the unveiling of their new smile. This is one of the most critical stages. This is the ‘final moment of truth’. If successful, you’ll create a raving fan and they’ll remember you for life as the person who helped to improve their self-esteem. At this moment, you can ask for a referral, which will help to create a ‘stimulus’ for a new prospective patient and start them on their journey through the research, Information and decisions stages to hopefully choose you.

As cliched as it may sound hopefully, you have realised that dentistry is what you do, but what you offer is a solution for people who are unhappy with their smiles to improve their self-esteem and love themselves more.

Over the next nine months, through four more articles, I will continue explaining the dental patient’s online journey and what gives you the best chance of attracting them and getting them to say yes!

If you can’t wait until the end of 2017 to get the entire plan, get in touch!