



How SMART technologies are impacting dentistry

SMART technologies are changing the way dental practices are managed—for the better.

[curated by Dr. Lou Shuman with Paul Intlekofer, JD, MBA, CEO of MMG Fusion]

Each month, Dr. Lou Shuman consults with a dental digital marketing specialist to discuss the latest developments in social media trends, SEO strategies, website optimization, online reputation management and more.

This month, Dr. Shuman sat down with the CEO of MMG Fusion, Paul Intlekofer, JD, MBA, to talk about the impact of SMART technology in dentistry.

What is SMART technology and how can it be generally defined?

SMART technology is Self-Monitoring Analytics and Reporting Technology. As it relates to the dental industry we are referring to autonomous patient acquisition and practice growth tools. This is technology that integrates into practice management software and simplifies, centralizes and creates efficiencies within a practice. These various tools communicate with each other and serve as an “automated practice

manager” for the dentist.

Why should dentists care about SMART technology?

SMART technology provides a dental practice with a 24/7 employee for a fraction of the cost. It is always operating, it is always accurate, and it is always working to drive practice growth, save you time and money, and keep you ahead of your competition.

What is new in the smart technology sphere?

Many SMART tools have been on the market for some time: Reminder tools, review and ranking tools, SEO, social media, call tracking and various analytics dashboards that display practice metrics. What’s new is the ability to integrate all of these tools not only into the practice management software, but into each other. Recent advances in technology have allowed for this new level of communication and integration. This is what enables these disjointed marketing and analytics tools to become a SMART practice growth engine.

How difficult is SMART technology to use or implement?

The short answer is that SMART technology is not difficult to use or implement. It was designed to simplify your life and create efficiencies. Intuitive dashboards insure that you don’t have to be a professional marketer, or data analytics guru to use these tools. If they are too complicated to use within a dentist’s busy schedule, then they are useless.

In many cases the tools and integrations do the work for the dentist so the dentist is monitoring and reviewing the intuitive dashboards instead of being forced to input data or complete tasks in order to see results. These tools truly can serve as an automated office manager who works 24/7 and allows even the busiest practitioner to always have their finger on the pulse of their practice.

How can SMART technology drive practice growth?

A SMART appointment reminder or patient communication tool is a great example of SMART technology driving practice growth. When integrated seamlessly into your practice management software it can help you to monetize your existing patient base through re-care, re-activation and automated email campaigns. The software will segment patients that are overdue for regular treatment or may have left

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parts of a treatment plan uncompleted and targeting them with communications reminding them to come back into your practice.

Another example uses integrated marketing tracking and analytics to replicate success. A practice using SMART marketing tracking can effectively track their marketing back to not only leads generated, but also patient's generated, and individual patient production and revenue. The practice then knows exactly what works and what doesn't—and to even to what extent. They can use that knowledge to invest in successful marketing while moving away from marketing that they know is less effective. Stagnant and repetitive marketing in a competitive environment is a recipe for wasted money and limited or no practice growth.

What about new patient growth? How can SMART technology work to help a practice bring in new patients?

Some key drivers of new patient growth that are often overlooked are ranking and review tools, and negative review removal tools. In this digital age where the “internet of things” surrounds us we are more and more dependent on third party validation. We no longer blindly trust internet marketing and ad promises that we read. We rely on other people's reviews and their experiences to help us decide where to seek treatment. A product that collects and projects positive reviews to the public can be invaluable for generating new patients for a practice.

While positive reviews are invaluable, we also can't overlook the impact of negative reviews on a practice. Many practices are unaware of the negative reviews that exist about their practice. Some negative reviews can be associated with prior owners, or there may be many negative reviews from a single displeased patient. In any case, these negative reviews can do serious damage to a practices ability to generate new patients. Many more practices are also unaware that these reviews can, in many cases, be

removed. Negative review removal can provide a true reputation reset. A smart tool can automatically monitor the web for these negative reviews, flag them and begin taking the necessary steps to remove them. This in turn improves the practice reputation, setting the stage for new patients to feel comfortable joining the practice.

What final thoughts should dentists remember about SMART technologies and tools?

Dentists should remember that these tools are here to help them, or even force them to keep in touch with their marketing and patient acquisition efforts. Like anything else you need to stay on top of your marketing programs, A and B testing, monitoring results, making changes based on those results. SMART tools allow any dentist with any ranging level of marketing skill, to effectively manage and grow their practice in today's competitive and ever-changing marketplace. ●

ABOUT PAUL INTLEKOFER, JD, MBA

Paul Intlekofer is President of SFP Capital, a VC firm, and CEO of MMG Fusion, LLC, a software company helping dentists manage, market and grow their practice. He holds a BA in economics from Johns Hopkins and a JD/MBA from Maryland. Paul has helped start-ups, emerging companies, and public companies create innovative products and achieve significant growth. Paul was also a founding member of an internet/technology start-up, rdental, LLC, which was ultimately acquired by WebMD, and became WebDDS. Paul started out as an attorney with Venable, LLP.

ABOUT DR. LOU SHUMAN

Dr. Lou Shuman is a long-time contributor to Dental Products Report and a member of the DPR editorial board. He is president and CEO of Cellerant Consultant Group. He is also the Chairman of the Technology Advisory Board at WEO Media, a Venturer-in-Residence at Harvard's Innovation Lab, and founded a dental-education internet company.