

will never call and ask for Social Security numbers or information on insurance by phone. If the patient receives such a phone call, the best course of action is to hang up immediately. Patients should also be vigilant about reviewing their insurance statements to see if any suspicious or unauthorized treatments or payments are listed.

TDIC Risk Management Staff: Are your patients who they say they are? Preventing medical identity theft. *Calif Dent Assoc J* 46:663-664, 2018

Reprints not available

MILLENNIALS AND PRIVATE PRACTICE

Meeting millennials where they shop



BACKGROUND

Millennials have the reputation of killing off what once were industry staples, such as shopping malls and the auto industry. The reputation isn't really deserved, but rather reflects the fact that these aspects of the culture didn't keep up with the wants and needs of this generation. Understanding their wants and needs will be essential if the dental office doesn't want to join those closed shopping malls.

WHAT DO THEY WANT?

Millennials would rather buy the latest gadgets and technology than cars. They purchase online and rarely use their phones for talking—but they all have phones on them at all times. They are now the largest generation, so dental practices must take them seriously if they are to appeal to them as health care providers. By 2025, 75% of the US workforce will be millennials. The oldest millennials are currently age 37 years, and many have good jobs and are raising children. This makes them attractive as patients. They've consumed enough Red Bull and Starbucks coffee drinks to need the services of a good dentist.

WHAT CAN THE DENTIST DO?

Have a Digital Presence

The vast majority of millennials are willing to trade in the ability to place phone calls for unlimited data plans. Rather than call to make an appointment, what they would like to do is schedule their visit online. They also want to be able to book immediately and aren't afraid to check out the competition to see if they offer online access.

Millennials like evening and weekend hours and don't want to wait a long time for an appointment. A majority of millennials in one survey said they would change providers just for the opportunity to book an appointment quickly.

In addition to not making calls, millennials prefer not to receive calls. Instead they're good with a text to book a cleaning or to learn about follow-up care or report on their condition after a

procedure. Two-way text messaging and AI are both preferred for communication purposes.

Become Connected

The practice website is the doorway to your practice as far as millennials are concerned. It needs to make a great impression on this generation. In addition to confirming online appointments, millennials want to verify their insurance is accepted, learn about what procedures are offered, complete their paperwork online, and meet the office staff. The website needs to be mobile enabled so they can navigate on a mobile device.

Being highly visual, millennials also love to have access to photos and short videos. Many use free streaming services rather than watch television. Having videos that highlight various aspects of the practice, doing a virtual tour of the office, and offering interviews about procedures or personnel in the office will grab millennials' interest and keep them engaged. Having quick, authentic content is more valued than videos that require extensive production.

Socialize

Social media is an essential part of life for millennials. The 3 digital areas of greatest importance for the dentist to focus on are the website, Facebook page, and Google and Yelp reviews. Ninety percent of millennials trust the information offered by their health care providers on social media.

Millennials seeking Instagram-worthy experiences where they go and do things should have the opportunity to experience great times in the dental office. A practice hashtag is essential and should be used and promoted throughout the office. Millennials also trust what their friends and family post about their visits to health care providers, so the dental staff should make the visit memorable. It's vital to get them to like and share your page—and their millennial friends may become interested in you as well.

Be Specific

Big data, especially that gathered by geographic information systems (GIS), and consumer buying data provide a 360-degree view of consumers' choices, preferences, and habits. No longer is the use of big data limited to corporate giants; small organizations are also using them.

Clinical Significance

Dentists can't just wait and hope that millennials will find their way to them and ask them to be their oral health care provider. Millennials are used to using on-line tools, social media, and a love of video to help them choose what to buy and where to buy it. Dentists need to tap into the areas most valued by millennials so that they can reach these potential patients at their point of need. In this way, dentistry won't go the way of shopping malls but will become relevant and valued by the largest generation currently on earth.

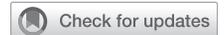
Experts say it's critical to understand who lives and works near your practice, to recognize what kind of lifestyle they have, and to see how they prefer to consume media. Dentists can invest in marketing companies that help them understand the best marketing channels for reaching millennials and how those channels influence their buying decisions. As a result, dentists can see an increased return on investment (ROI). Dentists may want to target their online marketing to digital channels such as satellite radio and mobile display advertising to help reach this potential patient group.

Radz G: Will millennials kill private practice dentistry? *Dent Econ* 108:30-32, 2018

Reprints not available

PATIENT MANAGEMENT

Leading patients to treatment plans



BACKGROUND

Making emotional connections is a vital part of creating lasting relationships with dental patients, but the process isn't easy. The emotional component is also vital in making decisions, especially those related to smile enhancement, so efforts need to be made to connect with patients at the point where they are interested in improving their smile.

BARRIERS TO OVERCOME

Most patients who come to a dental office for a consultation are distracted by the possibility that the treatment may be painful or may cost too much, which has a negative impact on their ability to make an emotional connection with the dentist. They may have felt an emotional connection when they considered the possibility that they could improve their smile and feel better about themselves, but the anxiety over these other concerns can block their ability to return to that emotional place. Dentists need to help them overcome their fears and restore their hope for a better smile.

STRATEGIES

The best strategies for clearing the pathway back to the decision to make changes in the smile are through asking questions and listening to the answers, and then being excited about the possibility of transforming the patient's smile. When the dentist evidences excitement about the possibilities for helping the patient transform his or her smile, the patient again becomes emotional connected to the decision and is more prepared to follow through with the idea.

Asking Questions and Listening to the Answers

When a patient expresses a concern during a consultation, the dentist should inquire about when he or she first noticed the situation, then follow up with questions about what the patient was doing at the time. These questions allow the patient to return his or her thoughts to those connected to the smile negatively affecting his or her quality of life. As the patient shares, the dentist can ask how he or she felt at that time or how the thought of a negative impact on the person's level of confidence affected him or her. This can be a tough question for the dentist to ask and the patient to answer but has great impact and helps to identify the motivation behind desiring a better smile.

Dentists can probe more deeply into the reasons for wanting a better smile. Often they uncover powerful disconnects between how the patient feels about himself or herself and the belief that the smile does not accurately reflect his or her persona.

Responding with Excitement

Showing the patient before and after images of a patient of similar age who required similar solutions can have a significant impact on the patient. Telling the patient's story is even more impactful and can lead to an emotional connection. An important question to ask at this point is "What would be different if we could do something like this for you?" Patients then have the opportunity to engage in that hopeful exercise of projecting the positive improvements that could be made in their lives. The dentist can then respond with enthusiasm and excitement for the opportunity to provide the change the patient desires. The next steps