

dentists in a raffle for a trip based on the most referrals received or assigning a dollar value for each patient referral would cross the line. Clinicians need to honestly determine if a gift would influence them to change their referral patterns. In addition, they need to consider if the gift giver is trying to influence the dentist with a gift.

Soileau KM: How gifting may influence professional behavior. *J Am Dent Assoc* 150:79-80, 2019

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INTERNET SAFETY

Setting up and maintaining internet access



BACKGROUND

The internet has become a highly useful tool in business, with dental practices being no exception. The majority of dental practices in the United States have internet access, which makes the usage security a priority. The primary reasons for having internet access in a dental practice, the primary security risks with internet access, and how to maximize usability and minimize risk were detailed.

USES OF THE INTERNET

Patient data are the most important asset of a dental practice and must be secured. Clinically, accurate information on the patient's oral health is essential. When valuation is considered, it would be extremely difficult to sell a dental practice that has no patient data. The internet offers a way to secure practice data from loss by allowing for online backup capability and off-site storage so that local hardware failure, fire, floods, or theft won't destroy the only copy of the data. It also avoids the potential for HIPAA violations related to the use of removable data to back up patient information.

The internet also allows the office to perform duties that otherwise would be extremely time-intensive. These tasks include verifying insurance benefits, sending referrals, processing prescriptions, and other daily recordkeeping. Rather than taking hours of effort, these operations can be accomplished quickly and efficiently with the click of a few keys.

When the dentist is in the midst of making a diagnosis, formulating a treatment plan, or checking out prescriptions or drug interactions, having access to the internet is indispensable. It offers immediate and unlimited access to any needed information and allows consultation with colleagues when needed.

Practice management software is a significant investment for a dental practice, but updates are essential to make sure that the software is up to date. These updates can be accomplished via the internet without any need for human intervention.

More small businesses are deciding to use Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephone systems rather than the traditional analog systems. The features offered by internet-based telecom are richer and broader in scope than with the old systems. Having this telecom technology is a proactive approach to replacing the analog systems, and it requires the internet.

Management software that is cloud based is also becoming more popular. The cloud offers more benefits and advantages than older storage systems, with companies that publish the software spending the majority of their resources on cloud-based systems. This approach also requires the internet to be available in the dental practice.

RISKS OF THE INTERNET

Among the risks associated with using the internet is malware, which includes viruses, spam, and adware. Viruses are designed to destroy productivity, but spam and adware simply make it difficult. In addition, ransomware is a huge moneymaker for internet thieves. Doctors have had to pay thousands of dollars to ransom their patient information.

Although not as lucrative as in the past, hacking into a server and stealing patient information is a risk. However, the data breaches suffered by larger retailers have made a flood of personal information available on the black market, so small practices are less at risk.

If the dental staff has access to the internet, the risk for misuse is real. Some team members may spend more time checking social media streams or watching YouTube than performing their patient and practice duties.

MAXIMIZING USABILITY AND MINIMIZING RISK

Five actions can help to make usage of the internet safe and beneficial in a dental office setting. These actions consist of establishing an internet use policy, installing a properly configured firewall, investing in robust anti-malware software, continuously monitoring the usage of the internet and the safeguards that are in place, and providing ongoing training for staff members.

The internet use policy should be a written document that specifies consequences for misuse. The dentist must be willing to enforce these consequences. The policy should include details about what safe internet use is, clear descriptions of if and when staff members can access social media, policies and restrictions regarding the use of personal e-mail accounts through practice computers, instructions regarding how to create and protect passwords and avoid viruses, and the rules regarding the use of computers for gaming or other entertainment. All activity and communication on the practice computers should be subject to audit, which should be clearly specified as a warning to staff members. The written document outlining the internet use policy should be signed by all team members and reviewed frequently.

An information technology (IT) professional should be engaged to install and configure a firewall that will protect the dental practice. In addition, anti-malware software needs to be in place and updated frequently, preferably without requiring the dentist's intervention. In addition, the IT professional should provide a comprehensive monitoring system that will alert the office and the IT support team about any potential threats to the practice technology. A managed services package may be purchased in many cases to provide ongoing security and IT help for the practice.

Dentists should provide regular staff training regarding the internet use policy and how to identify malware or potential

breaches. The IT professional may be able to provide educational materials, videos, or personal seminars to use in staff training sessions.

Clinical Significance

Initially it may seem like installing the necessary safeguards to protect the dental practice from technology intrusions or misuse involves more work and less benefit than the dentist would prefer. However, once the practice is adequately protected and staff members are well-trained in their responsibilities with regard to internet use, they will be able to see the advantages the internet provides for performing their duties. Eventually, having a safe and well-functioning internet will become indispensable. The business and clinical aspects of the practice will be accomplished more efficiently and productivity will be enhanced.

Lavine L: Safe internet usage in a dental practice. *Dentaltown* Jan 2019, pp 82-85

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MOTIVATION

Reigniting your enthusiasm for dentistry



BACKGROUND

In the past, most people considered their work as a *job* that provided an income for the family, allowed for the necessities of life and perhaps a few niceties, and was viewed as a necessity. Some people have viewed their work as a *career*, which includes progression in pay, leadership responsibilities, and expertise. These people are considered professionals. Finally, there are those who feel they have a *calling*. They describe themselves by their vocations and are committed to doing an excellent job. Money isn't the primary motivation in many cases, with people who have callings often found in helping and altruistic vocations. They see their work as personally fulfilling and can be engaged in it their entire lives. Today, dentists tend to be in the career or calling category at the beginning of their careers, but it can be difficult to stay motivated after many years of performing the same dental work. Regaining that enthusiasm and motivation can require the dentist to make some changes.

MINDSET

To become more enthusiastic about dentistry again, it's important to have a good mindset. Dentists need to recognize that dentistry is the best profession among all the health care professions, as reported by *US News & World Report*. Many characteristics have gone into this ranking, but one of the most important is that dentistry gives individuals the opportunity to help others while also helping themselves and their families. It gives dentists a sense of satisfaction when they can help patients out of their pain or make them able to eat or smile as they would like to. It's important to recognize that dentists are fortunate to be in this profession because this mindset is essential to the level of satisfaction they obtain from their employment.

CHANGES THAT IMPROVE MOTIVATION

To regain motivation to enjoy dentistry and derive satisfaction from it, dentists should make some adjustments in their lives