

## BACKGROUND

Millennials have quickly overtaken baby boomers as the most numerous generation in the United States. These individuals are in need of dental services and constitute the future of most dental practices, so it's important to be able to market dental services to them and let them see that your practice can meet or exceed their needs.

## CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERESTS

Millennials are strongly focused on the future, which often means marriage, new careers, and growth in their fields of engagement. They also want smiles that will match their goals and aspirations, but often lack dental insurance and don't really know what dental care costs. They are highly connected via smartphones, which are their means of communication, where they consume media, and where they do research. They can be demanding, but can also become enthusiastic fans and sing your praises to all who will listen—or they will let others know if they are disappointed in their care. They expect excellent service with quick turnaround times.

Young workers also often want short-term orthodontia or cosmetic treatments because they value the appearance as well as the function of their teeth. Because they are used to monthly payment plans for phones and cars, they have little difficulty accepting a payment plan for dental care. They often pay out of pocket for care because they lack insurance. They are usually eager to start treatment plans right away.

They prefer podcasts to television and their own digital music to radio. They live online, so that's the best way to reach them.

## MARKETING STRATEGIES

### Media Presence

To reach young professionals, it's important to become a social media “superstar.” Creating content that will keep them enthused can be time-consuming because it can't be limited to passively consumed content. Millennials expect to be able to comment and ask questions and receive prompt responses. This will require a staff member or contractor to monitor all of the social media accounts your practice has, create engaging content daily, and be a point of contact for customer service when potential patients interact with any of the sites.

The median pay for a social media manager is \$56,000 a year. New patients are worth about \$2000 in the first year, so a social media manager would have to bring in 3 patients a month to be a worthwhile investment. This should be doable for good social media managers.

### Website Enhancement

A solid website is needed so potential patients can obtain additional information. Millennials are looking for one that has a mobile-friendly format, lots of visuals, evidence of community engagement, and an easy way to make appointments by chat or text.

### Marketing in Person

Millennials also respond to creative personal interactions. Because they spend most of their time working, going to their places of employment and doing educational seminars on how you can improve their smiles can be highly successful. It can be wise to bring snacks and be prepared to meet young workers and answer their questions. Finding out who are the biggest employers of millennials in the area and asking them to allow you to come in can be a great way to meet young workers.

### Proper Messaging

Millennials prefer ads that feature humor, social good, motivational texts, and real-life situations. Dental offices can be a great source of inspiring stories, real people and their testimonials, community service projects, and quirky humor. To avoid getting in a rut, marketing should use all of the various types of stories; that keeps your social media accounts fresh and interesting to your audience. There can also be quizzes, contests, and uplifting photos to engage young people. This mixture should attract people who want to improve their smiles.

Another concern of millennials is how they look on sites such as Instagram. To help them see themselves in the story, patient testimonials can be filmed or photographed in interesting local spots such as wineries or natural local landmarks. Existing pa-

### Clinical Significance

Crafting a social media presence that is targeted to millennials can be a lot of work and require a change in focus for your marketing approach. However, it's important that they receive a couple of messages. First, they should know that you offer amazing services that can help them obtain the smile that they want. Second, you can show them that you are kind, sympathetic person who is skilled in your dental care. The combination can make these patients yours for life—and often they'll bring their family and friends along.

tients who had cosmetic work done before an important event such as a wedding can be asked to provide pictures of them smiling at the event, which sends the message that you can help others achieve the smile they want so they can have similar photographs and memories. Existing millennial patients may also be asked for testimonials, reviews, and referrals or to like you on Facebook. Contests that encourage them to share your content with friends can also be engaging at a low cost to the dental practice.

Because this population tends to just be starting out and lacks savings, you might consider offering a membership plan or in-office

payment option so they can obtain the dental care they want. Patients should also be reminded regularly that payment plans are available to fit most budgets. This generation tends to think less of the total cost and more of the monthly payment. Knowing that you will work with them to help them reach their dental goals is a powerful message.

Peterson VM: Reaching the right patients: The young. *Dent Econ* 108:32-34, 2018

Reprints not available

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## Reaching retirees



### BACKGROUND

Retirees are good for dental practices because they have considerable wealth and definite dental needs related to their age and physical health status. They are often taking medications that lead to problems such as dry mouth, root caries, and periodontal disease, which can be linked to coronary heart disease. As a result, the dental office has much to offer retirees. The challenge is reaching retirees with the message of hope that their dental health care needs can be met.

### CHARACTERISTICS AND INTERESTS

Often retirees care about their health but, because they are no longer employed, they no longer have dental insurance and fear that they won't be able to afford dental care. They also don't realize that the advances in dentistry mean that the dental problems their parents faced as they aged can now be managed in many cases. Many have old restorations that could benefit from replacement with newer and better materials. They need to learn about implants, new crown materials, adult orthodontics, and treatments that address unhealthy biofilms. Often they are also taking medications that cause oral problems such as dry mouth and don't realize that this can also be managed. Retirees fear their lack of insurance will limit them to a lack of dental care and don't know what is possible.

Retirees offer the dental practice opportunities to engage in more cosmetic dentistry, especially if they plan to begin dating again or want to start a new business. They are also available to fill time slots during the day when students and working people aren't available. The hygiene team will be able to perform more periodontal care, which helps to address receding gums and dry mouth. Both of these conditions can be extensive because of these individuals' weakened immune system. Retirees are considered "payment worthy" patients because they are willing to budget and work with a payment plan to obtain the treatment they

need. In addition, they are often surrounded by family and friends, who may become referrals when the retiree receives excellent care. Baby boomers are one of the fastest growing demographic groups, making them a desirable population for dental offices.

### MARKETING STRATEGIES

#### The Right Places to Find Retirees

An excellent way to introduce a dental practice to retiree populations is by offering educational programs at senior centers, retirement communities, and gyms, especially those that offer the Silver Sneakers programs. In addition, local specialists in cardiology, pulmonology, oncology, or endocrinology, for example, could be contacted. The dentist can offer to show how his or her services could help their patients manage and live with other conditions. They can even be given toothbrushes, for example, to hand out to patients.

Social media posts are also a valuable means for reaching retirees. Joining groups and pages for local neighborhood coalitions, arts programs, and other organizations with a large retiree presence helps to build connections. This is also a means

#### Clinical Significance

The number of older persons who have retired and no longer have dental insurance is huge and will continue to grow for several years from now. Dentists can't afford to ignore them as patients, but will have to reach out to them where they are and ensure that the message they receive is one of hope that improved dental health is possible and available to them. Targeting their concerns is the key to engaging them to view themselves as your new patients.