

Beat Your Competition on Google Without Hiring an SEO Firm

By: Ali Husayni

These days, it seems that many orthodontists familiar with search engine optimization want to know and understand how to beat their competition in the online ranking war. Knowing how to accomplish this requires a bit of knowledge about Google. Google is concerned about content and reputation. Websites that have a lot of fresh content, such as text and videos or receive many inbound links (links from other websites), rank above the rest. Understanding this and building upon both means orthodontists can beat their competition on Google's organic search results without even hiring an SEO guru. The following techniques are exactly what leading SEO firms have done to place many orthodontists' websites at the top of Google search results.

Website content needs to be abundant, original, and frequently updated. At the same time, an orthodontist's reputation must grow so they can establish themselves as a solid source of orthodontic information – at least in their immediate market. SEO is no longer about "optimizing" a website. Companies that still dwell on this and charge for optimization are light years behind. Optimizing a website only helps if the content and reputation are in order. Otherwise, the website is nowhere to be found, even if the SEO firm optimizes it on a daily basis.

Below are ten easy steps that can be taken to provide Google with what it needs content and reputation wise:

1. Google Places

Orthodontists should list their practice's website in Google Places. Their name should include "orthodontist" or "orthodontics." This will ensure that they are placed higher than their competitors who do not include that in their title.

To learn how to add a business to Google Places, visit our blog at www.mastergoogle.com/blog and search for Google Places. There is a video with easy, step-by-step instructions on how to go about this. Listing the practice on Google Places will take approximately 20 minutes.

2. Blog

Have the webmaster build a practice blog on the website under the orthodontist's domain, such as www.yourdomain.com/blog. Everything that is posted on this blog by the orthodontist, staff or patients will be considered fresh content by Google. Many clients of reputable SEO companies rank well for their websites and their blogs as a result of the content they post and the patient comments those posts generate.

Post information to the blog at least once a week. Write anything – articles, press releases, newsletters, announcements

and anything else you can think of. Just make sure grammar and spelling are correct.

The blog must be under the orthodontist's domain. Services such as Blogspot, Blogfa, and WordPress that provide a free blogging platform will not help in SEO rankings.

3. Website Content

Update the practice's website content once every few months. This often is the most difficult thing to do because most orthodontists do not want to step away from what they are used to reading on their website; however, doing so will give the website a boost in Google's eyes.

4. Staff Website Content

Orthodontists who do not have a webpage for each staff member and each service that they provide should ask a copy writer to write one for each. The webmaster should then build the new pages using that content. The more text and webpages a site has, the more powerful it becomes.

5. Write Articles

Write articles about the practice. The articles must be tailored toward the average Joe, not professional peers. The content must teach the public the ins and outs of orthodontic care, what they should expect from an orthodontist, how to find the best treatment provider, etc. The information should be focused on educating potential and existing patients, not sales-like or marketing-oriented.

"Update the practice's website content once every few months."

Locate local news blogs and see if they allow users to register as writers. If so, orthodontists can post articles and press releases to these websites, but they should be sure to include a link from the post back to the practice's website. The link received from this post is worth more than paying an SEO company that optimizes websites.

Be sure to rewrite the article and post it on the practice's blog. Do not post the original version of the article because that will damage the website's reputation since the article has already been seen by Google.

6. Press Releases

Write a press release. Is there a new hire? Did someone in the office just attend the American Association of Orthodontists meeting? Has the practice celebrated an anniversary or other milestone? Whatever the timely news items may be, write about them. Press releases can be tricky, but websites are available that explain how to write a good release. They must be timely, short, and sweet.

Continued on page 9



The Biggest Mistake That Orthodontists Make On Facebook

By: Steve Holt

Have you made a mistake on Facebook? I am not talking about posting those photos of you sporting bell bottoms from the 1970's. I am referring to setting up your orthodontic practice on Facebook and doing it incorrectly. If the statistics are correct and my experience with businesses is typical, there are many practices that are doing it the wrong way.

Before revealing the big mistake, let's discuss what many doctors do when setting up their practice on Facebook. First, many practices pass Facebook management responsibility to a teenager, assuming that teenagers know what they are doing because they spend so much time on Facebook. Teenagers may know how to use Facebook on a personal level, but may not understand how to correctly create a page for an orthodontic practice. It might be a mistake to classify all teenagers in this category; there are some who could figure it out. However, just because your nephew is free for the summer doesn't mean you should hire him to run and manage your Facebook outreach. Consider this analogy; the fact that he has braces doesn't mean he is ready to work in your office putting wires on someone else's teeth.

What is the biggest mistake? It is this: businesses open up a regular Facebook account in the name of the doctor or practice. If you think about it, it does seem to make sense.

"Most doctors already use Facebook on a regular basis to interact with their family and friends..."

Most doctors already use Facebook on a regular basis to interact with their family and friends, leading them to believe that establishing a practice on Facebook should be an easy transition. It is a natural shift to begin thinking that it would be beneficial to keep personal life separate from business life,

leading to the natural creation of a brand new account in the name of the practice. Therein is the fatal mistake.

A regular account on Facebook is sometimes called a **Personal Profile Account**, or a **Personal Account**. This is an account wherein you have friend requests and you approve or disapprove friends. It is the type of account wherein, if you approve a friendship request, then that individual can view all your personal information, your pictures, your status updates, etc. It is a mutually-agreed upon relationship wherein you agree to share personal information with each other. There might be some good reasons that you could provide for wanting to have this type of account. Perhaps your practice is all about making a truly personal connection with your patients and you do not want to seem like a business in Facebook. That is understandable, but typically most practices do not fit that mold. What is needed for your

practice is a **Facebook Page**. This is also often referred to as a **Like Page**.

The types of businesses you find in Facebook are endless...music artists, authors, sports figures, politicians, corporations, non-profits, hair salons – name it, you'll find it. And, yes, orthodontists are included in that list. You will know a Facebook page when you see it because there will be a button at the top of the page that says "Like." Click that button and you are officially a supporter. It shows up on the Info page of your personal profile that you "like" them, and whenever the business sends out updates on Facebook, that update appears on your wall feed.

"Facebook offers tools that allow you to integrate your Facebook page with your website."

The question may arise, *Are there any benefits to having a "like" page?* Yes, there are some benefits. Personal accounts are limited to 5,000 friends. That may seem like an enormous number of friends, but consider your practice. How many patients do you have? Five thousand may suddenly not seem like as large of a number as first thought. There is good news; your practice's "like" page is not limited to 5,000 supporters. Facebook pages also have a great feature called **Insights** which provide information about who your practice's supporters are, what they are responding to on your Facebook Page, which content they are viewing the most, and more. Facebook offers tools that allow you to integrate your Facebook page with your website.

What's the first step in creating a page for your practice? Log into Facebook with your personal account and then go to www.facebook.com/pages. Click the "create page" button and walk through the easy steps, as directed on the page. It is recommended that you choose the **Local Business or Place** category when creating your page. If a page has already been created and that option was not chosen, don't panic. I have good news below.

After the practice information is submitted a blank page will appear so you can begin compiling content for the practice's page. Fill out as much information as possible, including a picture of your office's exterior, a group shot of your staff, and your photo. The practice's textual content is critical to include because search engines collect that information using it to index search listings. Providing high-quality, accurate information on the practice's page is critical in order for it to be found in search engine queries.

You may be thinking, *Can the practice's Facebook page be fixed if it is been setup incorrectly?* If the mistake has

Continued on page 9



Beat Your Competition on Google Without Hiring an SEO Firm

Continued from page 7

Articles and press releases can be sent to reputable news publication sites on the Internet. The cost is between \$50-\$250. It's definitely worth it. When submitting articles and press releases, be sure to ask the publisher how to place a website link in the article. Most of them have automated ways of linking back to a practice's website and, if they don't, they will manually add it. Articles and press releases posted to these websites will be in Google News the day after publication.

7. Yahoo! Directory

Orthodontists also should add their practice's websites to the Yahoo! Directory. It currently costs \$299 annually, and it is an easy process to add a business. All that is needed is a Yahoo! account and a credit card.

8. Website Links

Orthodontists who are members of organizations can ask them to place a link to their practice's website from the organization's website. This includes professional and civic organizations such as Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, dental associations, etc. Also, for those who sit on boards of charities or other non-profit organizations, if those organizations list a board of directors on their websites, place a link back to the orthodontist's website under the director's name.


9. Positive Press

Write a press release about "giving back" to the community through membership in civic and non-profit organizations. This time, submit the release to a different news outlet.

10. Share & Rank

When sending newsletters to patients, orthodontists can ask them to place a link to their websites if the patients write a blog or share the newsletter on their Facebook page. In the newsletter, ask patients **"Articles and press releases can be sent to reputable news publication sites..."** to "rate" the orthodontist's practice using websites such as Yelp, Yahoo!, Demand Force, or other rating tools available online.

Please note that for orthodontists whose offices are located in Los Angeles, New York, or other large metropolitan areas, it is necessary to do more than what has been mentioned above to rank at the top. There is a large amount of competition in those areas and it takes a bit of effort and legwork to reach the top of the rankings.

The above is exactly what some of the best SEO companies in the world do to rank orthodontists and non-orthodontic clients at the top of the search results. If all of the above suggestions are done continually for three months and the orthodontist's website still does not rank above the competition, consult with an SEO consultant and ask for some input on why the practice's website is not at the top. 

Ali Husayni has worked in the Search Engine Optimization (SEO) field since 2003. He founded Master Google a year later with the focus of helping clients rank at the top of Google organic search results. Since then, his company has helped hundreds of clients increase their sites' traffic and revenues through better exposure on Google. For more information, visit the company's website at www.mastergoogle.com.

The Biggest Mistake That Orthodontists Make On Facebook


Continued from page 8

already been made, it's not too late. Simply create a new page and set it up with all the information as discussed previously.

"Providing high-quality, accurate information on the practice's page is critical..."

Begin telling your patients that the practice has a new Facebook page and encourage them to "like" it. Keep in mind that if the big mistake has already occurred and you currently have a few thousand friends, people may be confused when you ask them to "like" the new page. Even though they didn't press the "like" button to begin with, in their minds they already "like" your practice in the world of Facebook. Asking them to re"like" the page may confuse some of them. However, hang tough. Do what you can to convince them to press the "like" button because the ultimate goal is to have everyone "like" the new page in order to remove the personal account. It will take time

to make this happen, but be patient. At some point you need to let all the patients know that the personal account is being shut down and they need to "like" the new page if they would like to continue to receiving information from the practice.

The social network of Facebook is a great cost-free tool to spread the word about your practice. With the right type of page and a little time, your practice can keep current and former patients updated with helpful information while allowing them to help spread the news about your practice. 

Steve Holt is the owner of Steve Holt Consulting (www.stevholt.com). Steve has been a speaker, writer, and consultant for over a decade on the topics of technology, social media, small business development, web design, and marketing. He recently released "The Facebook Guide For Small Business DVD Bundle," which includes two hours of step-by-step tutorial videos that correlates with his Facebook Guide. You can contact Steve at steve@stevholt.com and find him on Facebook at www.facebook.com/stevholtconsulting.