



THE S(MILES) THAT MATTER:

THE LOCAL MARKETING GUIDE FOR DENTISTS

SOCIUS[®]

INTRODUCTION

So here we are. You've hung your shingle, you've formed your dream team of dentists, hygienists, receptionists, and office managers, and you're ready to build your client base! Do you wait for the phone to start ringing, or prospective clients to walk through the door?

Nope.

Those prospects are going to research dentists before they schedule an appointment and the traditional marketing tactics, like mailers and local newspaper listings, no longer work on their own. So where are they going to conduct that research? These days, that's online.

There are layers to this. The first is that you provide in-person services, so you only want to be attracting qualified client leads that are in your area and can visit you in person.

The second being the fact that there are likely numerous other dentists in your area, vying for the same prospects. You must get your name out there and convey why YOU deserve their business over your competition.

So, how do you reach local prospects and stand out so that when the need for care arises, you're the name that comes to mind?

Whether you're a seasoned practitioner with an established client portfolio or just starting out, you'll need a targeted marketing plan that leverages the latest digital marketing trends and techniques to stand out from the rest, increase online visibility, enhance your reputation, and, ultimately, drive a consistent stream of traffic to your practice.

In this guide, we will explore the various components, like website design, search engine optimization (SEO), paid advertising, social media marketing, referral marketing, community engagement, and budget management, that work hand-in-hand with one another to form a comprehensive local marketing strategy.



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01



TURN VIEWS INTO VISITS: CRAFTING A PRACTICE WEBSITE THAT CONVERTS

01 TURN VIEWS INTO VISITS

Having a website is essential for dental practices. It builds your brand, establishes credibility and trust with existing clients, and reaches prospective ones where they're searching for your services.

Here are some tips to build a website that converts viewers into clients:

- Speak to your ideal client.
- Design with the user in mind.
- Highlight client reviews and testimonials
- Let's get into it.

SPEAK TO YOUR IDEAL CLIENT

When it comes to your client's journey, only those that are a good fit for your practice will progress from the lead generation phase to a conversion. And being a "good fit" depends on your practice niche.

Your website should accurately reflect your niche and use language that speaks to your ideal client on every page. Make it clear to browsers who you serve and what you can do for them because, like any business, you don't want to spend time in a back-and-forth with someone you're not suited to fit and, vice-versa, you don't want to waste their time.

***Hint:** While it might sound appealing (and advantageous to attract more clients) not to define a niche, focusing on a particular area of dentistry, like family dentistry, pediatric dentistry, orthodontics, endodontic, cosmetic dentistry, or anywhere in between, allows you to become an expert in that field, stand out in a crowded market and tailor your marketing efforts to a specific audience.*

TIPS FOR HOW TO SPEAK TO A SPECIFIC NICHE:

Craft a compelling message specific to your niche that directly addresses their needs and highlights the unique solutions your practice offers. It's tone and language should resonate with your target audience. This should be highlighted on your homepage and integrated throughout the rest of your website.

Create relevant content that educates, engages, and appeals to your intended audience. You can do this via blog posts, videos, social media, infographics, case studies, and success stories.

Focus your marketing efforts and dollars on channels where your target audience are most active to maximize your reach and engagement. This could include social media platforms, online forums, industry publications, and community groups.

Research and include the keywords related to your specialty throughout your website. In doing so, though, be sure you still are writing

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website content for people, rather than rankings because search engines will note if you aren't doing so and dock you points for SEO (we'll revisit this later).

Doing the above effectively requires ongoing evaluation and refinement, so stay connected with your target audience, actively listen to their feedback, and adapt your marketing efforts based on that feedback.

Specializing will also increase your chances of being referred to. As you become known for your expertise, other dentists in different specialties will likely begin referring clients they can't serve to others more suited in the area. And you can do the same until you've built a strong referral network that can serve as a simple, consistent stream of new business.

Related tip: Referral marketing is a key factor in growing any business. In addition to other practitioners, those referrals can come from other existing clients. Some referral marketing strategies to consider are referral program that reward current clients for referring new clients to your practice; incentives, such as discounts or gift cards, to clients who refer to you; and offering business cards to your clients, so they can easily share your practice information with their family and friends.

When you target a specific niche, your marketing efforts become more cost-effective as well. Instead of employing broad-based marketing strategies

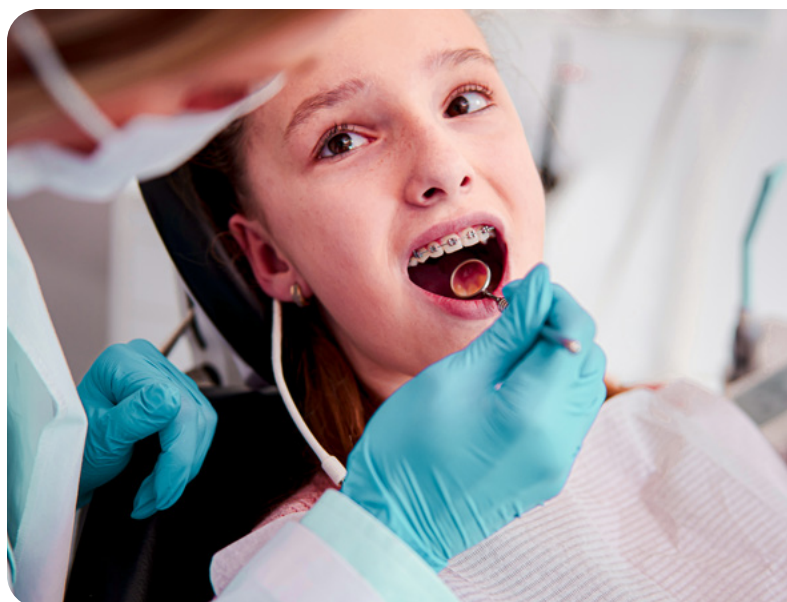
that reach a wide but less relevant audience, you can focus your resources on reaching those who are more likely to convert into clients.

And most importantly, selecting a niche leads to more personalized care better client outcomes, and in turn, higher client satisfaction and better reviews (which we'll get to more of later).

MAKE THE DESIGN PROFESSIONAL, APPEALING, AND USER-FRIENDLY

Your website is often people's first impression of your dental practice and who you are as a provider. In fact, studies suggest that 76% of consumers look at a company's online presence before visiting in person. And just like a large portion of people search online for what medical condition they might have, it's no different with searching online for a provider.

So, what do you want people to see when they find your practice online?



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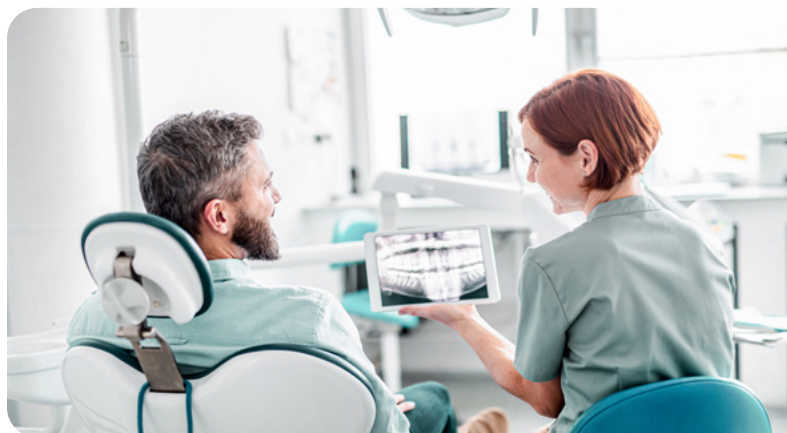
At first glance, you want the design of your website to instantly show up as professional, clean, and appealing, one that provides a positive user experience, establishes credibility, and reinforces your brand. You can achieve this by:

- Creating a clean and straight-forward layout.
- Positioning the name of your practice at the top of the page so users know they're in the right place. This will start building brand recognition right off the bat.
- Choosing a color scheme that is simple and reflects your branding (nothing too loud).
- Using high-quality images and graphics that are visually appealing and relevant to your practice/website content to break up large text blocks. Actual photos and videos of your practice will resonate more than stock photos.
- Highlighting a clear and concise message that communicates your practice's values and services.

Next, you want to be sure your website is user-friendly and easy-to-navigate.

Different pages, such as a "Services," "Our Team," and "Contact Us" page, should be linked in the header of your website's homepage so users can easily find information about your practice. This

is especially important for contact information and online appointment scheduling (if you offer it). Your contact information should include a phone number, email address, and office location —Include a photo of your storefront so people know what to look for when coming in for their first visit.



Another huge component of a user-friendly website is one that is mobile-friendly. A responsive website is one that will look great on, and adjust well, to different screen sizes, depending on which device is being used. It should:

- Have a simple and easy-to-use navigation menu
- Use clear and legible fonts, short paragraphs, and photos/videos optimized for mobile
- Have fast loading times
- Be designed with touch-friendly elements, such as large buttons and links

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Finally, each page on your website should have at least one “Call To Action” (CTA). By using clear, compelling CTAs, like “Schedule a Consultation” or “Speak With Us Today,” you can create a sense of urgency and encourage visitors to take action right away and improve conversion rates by making it easy for visitors to take a desired action.

HIGHLIGHT CLIENT REVIEWS AND TESTIMONIALS

Featuring real reviews from satisfied clients on your website will help attract new clients and grow your practice. A study by the [National Institute of Health](#) said that online client reviews have become an “increasingly important role in clients’ choice of health care providers.” In fact, [84% of the public trust online reviews](#) to help them make decisions and [88% of surveyed dentists have reported receiving online client reviews](#). So, if people aren’t finding reviews on your practice, they’ll surely find them on your competition’s.

Why are reviews so important?

First, they build trust. When visitors see positive reviews from real clients, they are more likely to trust your practice and choose you as their dentist.

Reviews from real clients also demonstrate that your practice is reputable and provides high-quality services.

And finally, search engines like Google prioritize websites with fresh, unique, and relevant content

(we’ll get into this more later in the guide). Client reviews can help provide this and can also signal to search engines that your website is active and engaging.

While you can encourage clients to leave reviews of your dental practice by providing excellent service, making it easy to leave reviews online, and speaking with them in person, it is important to be careful about how you do so. Many review platforms have guidelines that prohibit businesses from soliciting reviews or offering incentives in exchange for reviews.

So when it comes to design, if you focus on the above factors to build a website that’s professional, appealing, engaging, user-friendly, and builds credibility, the bounce rate, or percentage of users who leave your site after viewing only one page, will decrease. Why does this matter?

Good question.

Bounce rates measure the effectiveness of your website – the whole purpose of creating a strong digital marketing strategy. A high bounce rate may indicate that visitors aren’t finding what they’re looking for on your website. Maybe your design isn’t up to par, you have slow loading time, irrelevant content, or confusing navigation.

When users leave your page, they’re likely missing opportunities to get in touch or schedule a consultation – or converting. So, a high bounce rate likely equals missed opportunities.

02



SHOW UP WHERE IT MATTERS: LOCAL SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

Local search engine optimization (SEO) is the practice of optimizing your website to rank higher in search engine results pages (SERPs). It's especially important for dental practices because, as we stated earlier, most people search for dental services online before making an appointment. Let's discuss some tactics to increase your SEO.

CLAIM YOUR GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE

Google Business Profile (GBP), also known as Google My Business, is a free tool that allows you to manage your business's online presence across Google, including search results and Google Maps. Claiming and optimizing your listing can help your practice appear in the "Local Pack" of search results, the list of businesses that appear beneath the map in Google search results. This significantly increases your visibility and attracts more local clients. Make sure to include your practice name, office address, website URL, phone number, hours of operation, photos, and services in your listing.

Make sure to keep your profile up-to-date and engage with customers through Google's features to build a strong online reputation. Overall, GBP is an essential tool for any dental practice looking to improve its online presence and attract more local clients.

To create your GBP, you need to have a Google account and claim your business.

1. Sign into Google. If you don't have one, you can create one for free.
2. Visit <https://www.google.com/business/>.
3. Click "Manage now" to begin the process of claiming your business.
4. Enter your business information. If your business is already listed on Google, you may be able to claim it by clicking the "Claim this business" button.
5. After you've entered your business information, Google will ask you to verify your business. You'll need to provide a physical address where Google can send a verification code, which you'll need to enter to verify your business. Depending on your business category and location, you may also have the option to verify your business by phone or email.
6. Once your business is verified, you can complete your GBP by adding more business information. You can also add photos, respond to customer reviews, and use Google's features to connect with customers.



OPTIMIZE LOCAL KEYWORDS

Using local keywords in your website content, like page or blog copy, can help your dental practice rank higher in local SERPs.

Local keywords are words or phrases that include the name of your city or neighborhood, as well as other geographic identifiers that are relevant to your location. For example, if you're a dentist in Salt Lake City, you might use local keywords such as "Salt Lake City dentist," "dentist in Salt Lake City," or "Salt Lake City dental office," in your website content. This will signal to search engines that your dental practice is relevant to local searches and improve your chances of ranking higher.

Again, when using local keywords in your website content, it's important to do so in a natural and contextually relevant way. Avoid "keyword stuffing," or overusing local keywords in your

content to manipulate search engine rankings. Google will notice if you are writing for search engines, rather than humans, and will dock your search engine ranking because of this.

Instead, focus on creating high-quality, informative content that includes local keywords strategically in a way that makes sense for your users and provides value to them.

It could be in page titles, headings, or meta descriptions. When you do so in the body of your content, make sure it feels natural. If you don't want your content to sound too "buzzword-heavy," try using some synonyms or related terms to create some variety.

The takeaway from this section should be that you don't have to sacrifice authenticity for search engine rankings. You can still use keywords in copy that's written naturally. Write in a conversational tone – the same one you'd use when you're actually speaking with a client in person. That will 1) read better, 2) speak to search engines, and 3) create a feeling of familiarity between you and your clients.

NAP CONSISTENCY

NAP stands for Name, Address, and Phone number and is an important factor of SEO. Having consistent NAP information across all online directories and listings helps search engines understand that your dental practice is a legitimate business with a physical location. Inconsistent NAP information can cause confusion and lead to a lower ranking in local search results.

To ensure NAP consistency, search for your dental practice online and make note of all the directories and listings where your business is listed. If you find any inconsistencies in your NAP information, such as variations in your practice name, address, or phone number, correct them.

Regularly monitor your online listings to ensure that your NAP information is still accurate and up-to-date. If you move your practice or change your phone number, update your listings as soon as possible.

Okay, we know your first thought is probably, “I don’t have time to do that.” We hear you!

That’s why we recommend finding the right marketing partner to take care of it for you. Socius Marketing’s first step when we’re connected with a new practice is running a free online assessment where we analyze their current online presence, NAP information included, and where there might be room for improvement.



BACKLINK BUILDING

Backlinks, also known as inbound links, are links from other websites that point to your website. Search engines like Google view them as a vote of confidence in your website's authority, credibility, and relevance.

Being linked to by other websites with strong Domain Authority (DA), or ranking potential, in turn increases your DA. While DA is not a direct ranking factor used by search engines like Google, it is a useful indicator of a site's overall SEO strength. Comparing the Domain Authorities of your site and your competitors' can help you assess your relative visibility and identify areas for improvement.

Here are some strategies for building backlinks for dental practices:

- **Guest blogging:** Reach out to other dental-related blogs and offer to write a guest post. In return, you can include a link to your website in your author bio.
- **Local directories:** Submit your practice to local directories such as Yelp and the Yellow Pages. And remember, make sure that your NAP (name, address, phone number) is consistent across all directories.
- **Associations and organizations:** Join dental associations or organizations and request that your practice be included in their member directory.



Sponsorship: Consider sponsoring local events or charities, and ask that they include a link to your website on their event page or sponsor list.

Interviews and press releases: Reach out to local media outlets and offer to provide an interview or press release about your practice. This can help to build credibility and earn backlinks from authoritative sources.

Social media: Share your content on social media (we'll get into this more later) and encourage others to share it as well. This can help to increase the visibility of your content and earn backlinks from social media profiles.

AUTHENTIC, ORIGINAL CONTENT

Search engines prioritize unique and high-quality content when ranking websites. By creating original content that provides value to your target audience, you can improve your search engine rankings and attract more organic traffic to your website.

Not sure where to include this content? How about on an “About Page”? Tell website visitors who you are as a practitioner, how your practice got started, and highlight your team. Information about your team and their qualifications that help establish trust with potential clients.

Or you can include authentic content on a dental blog. Consider positioning your website as an important resource for educating and informing clients about dental procedures, treatments, and best practices.

Differentiate yourself even further by creating content that's specific to your practice, like a section titled, “Get To Know Us” where you feature a profile on a different member of your staff every month. Or say it's March, Women's History Month, create a blog post, “The Women of [Dental Practice Name]” where you ask to do a Q&A with, or write mini-features on, each of the women in your office.

You can also write procedure walk-throughs. Clients want to know what they're signing up for when they schedule a procedure, like benefits, potential risks, what they need to do to prepare, how long it will take, what the procedure entails, and what the recovery process and timeline will look like. You're the expert, why not share your knowledge to build trust, transparency, and esteem?

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Or consider writing about local programming or events you've been involved with. This will show your network that you're active in your community and are passionate about its members' wellbeing outside of your day-to-day practice.

Sharing client success stories, just like positive reviews and referrals, is also specific to your practice and will help build credibility.

By creating original blog posts on complex dental concepts in an easy-to-understand way, you can help clients make informed decisions about their dental care, differentiate your practice in a crowded marketplace, and position yourself as a thought-leader in the industry.

All-in-all, when sharing content for your dental website, it's important to focus on quality over quantity. Rather than churning out generic content that's been covered elsewhere, aim to create content that's original, insightful, and provides real value to your target audience (as discussed above). And speaking of target audience...



03

WATCH YOUR MARKETING DOLLARS WORK:
THE POWER OF PAID ADVERTISING

03 WATCH YOUR MARKETING DOLLARS WORK

Paid advertising, also known as paid media, is the practice of paying to display promotional content to a targeted audience with the goal of attracting potential clients to your practice and encouraging them to take a specific action, such as making a purchase or scheduling an appointment.

Paid advertising can take many different forms, including search engine ads, social media ads, display ads, and video ads. In each case, practices pay to have their ads displayed to a specific audience, based on factors such as demographics, location, interests, and online behavior. This can result in a higher conversion rate and a better return on investment (ROI) compared to other forms of marketing.

Another advantage of paid advertising is its flexibility and scalability. Businesses can adjust their campaigns in real time to optimize their results and can increase or decrease their budget as needed to reach their goals.



Paid advertising can feel expensive, so you want to make sure you're doing it right. This requires careful planning and management. First you need to develop a clear strategy, select the right platforms and targeting options, create compelling ad creative, and continually monitor and adjust their campaigns to maximize their ROI. Here are some paid advertising strategies to consider:

- 1. Google Ads:** With Google Ads, you can create targeted ads to reach people searching for dental services in your local area and pay only when someone clicks on your ad.
- 2. Social Media Ads:** Use social media advertising platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to target potential clients based on demographics and interests.
- 3. Retargeting:** Retargeting ads will hone in on people who have visited your website but did not take action. They can help you stay top-of-mind with potential clients who are familiar with your practice and encourage them to return to your website.

By combining paid advertising with other marketing tactics, such as SEO, practices can create a comprehensive marketing strategy that delivers results and helps them achieve their business goals.

04



STAY UP TO SPEED:
ENGAGE YOUR CLIENTS AND REACH NEW
AUDIENCES WITH SOCIAL MEDIA

04 STAY UP TO SPEED

Social media can be a valuable tool for dental practices looking to attract new clients, educate their current ones, and build their brand.

When you develop a social media strategy and consistently post engaging content, you'll inherently establish a strong online presence that impresses your existing clients and reaches new ones, especially those in the Millennial and Gen Z generations because, let's face it, appealing to these demographics is essential to build your client base for years to come.



Here are some social media marketing strategies to consider:

1. Choose social media platforms that your clients are most active on, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter.
2. Consistently post engaging content to keep your followers engaged.

3. Use social media to showcase your practice and services by sharing high-quality photos and videos.
4. Monitor your social media pages for reviews and comments and respond to them promptly. This shows that you care about your clients and their experiences with your practice.
5. Drive traffic to the practice website. By sharing links to blog posts, services, and promotions on social media, dental practices can encourage clients to visit their website and schedule an appointment.

WHAT TO POST

There are many things that dental practices can post on their social media accounts to engage with their followers and promote their services. Some ideas are:

Educational content: Share informative articles, blog posts, or videos related to dental health and wellness, like tips on how to maintain healthy teeth and gums. This could mean resharing industry updates from reputable sources or posting your own original content.

Promotions and specials: Let your followers know about any special deals or promotions that you are currently offering, like discount, new client specials, or referral programs.

04 STAY UP TO SPEED

Office updates: Share news about your practice, such as any new services or staff members that you have added. You can also share pictures of your office or staff to provide a behind-the-scenes look to build trust in your practice and make your followers feel like they know you better.

Client stories and testimonials: Post stories and testimonials from satisfied clients to demonstrate the quality of your services and the level of care that you provide.

Community involvement: Let your followers know about any community events or initiatives that you are involved in/attending. This can help to build goodwill and show your commitment to the local community.

Fun and engaging content: Share lighthearted or humorous posts, such as dental-related memes or jokes, to help keep your followers engaged and entertained.

The key is to provide a mix of informative, promotional, and engaging content that will help to build your brand and keep your followers interested.

WHEN TO POST

The best time to post on social media can vary depending on the platform and the audience you are trying to reach. Here are some general guidelines for peak posting times on some popular social media platforms:

Facebook: Generally midweek, between 1 pm and 3 pm, with the peak time being Wednesday at 1 pm. Posts on weekends and after 8 pm tend to get less engagement.

Instagram: Generally midweek, between 11 am and 1 pm. Posts on weekdays tend to get more engagement than those on weekends, and posts on Mondays tend to perform worst.

Twitter: Generally midweek, between 12 pm and 3 pm. Posts on weekdays tend to get more engagement than those on weekends.

LinkedIn: Generally midweek, between 10 am and 12 pm. Posts during business hours tend to get the most engagement, while posts on weekends tend to get the least.

Keep in mind that these are general guidelines and may not apply to all practices or audiences. It's a good idea to experiment with different posting times and analyze your engagement metrics to determine what works best for your specific audience.

05



FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WORKING:
MEASURING RESULTS AND MANAGING BUDGETS

05 FIGURE OUT WHAT'S WORKING

Now that you've crafted and implemented a full digital marketing strategy, you can just sit back and watch your search engine ranking increase, right?

Unfortunately, no.

Local marketing is an ongoing, and ever-evolving, effort. It takes time, thoughtful consideration, and on-going upgrades to reap it's rewards. Once you've kicked off the initiatives we outlined in this guide, you should consistently be measuring their effectiveness. Because in the end, what's the point of putting so much effort a strategy if it's not providing return on investment (ROI)?

To do so, you should be tracking website analytics, like traffic, user behavior, bounce rates, and conversion rates. Also be sure to monitor online reviews on GBP, social media, and directories to measure client satisfaction and identify areas for improvement.

Here at Socius, we have the expertise to interpret analytics specific to the dental industry to provide meaningful insights about your online performance, audience behavior, and marketing campaigns.

We can assist in configuring analytics tools, such as Google Analytics, to track and measure key performance metrics on your website; executing A/B testing to compare changes in design, messaging, user experience, etc; and

analyzing that data to identify trends and areas for improvement. We'll provide custom reporting that consolidate and visualize those data points in a clear and understandable format to help you stay informed, because you didn't go to school to sit at your desk and anayze online data, but we did!

With these metrics ironed out, you can adjust your digital marketing strategy and budget accordingly to capitalize on what's proving to work. Here at Socius, we have the expertise to interpret analytics specific to the dental industry to provide meaningful insights about your online performance, audience behavior, and marketing campaigns.



06



THE TAKEAWAY

06 TAKEAWAY

So, there you have it.

We know all of the above can sound daunting. But alas, this is an important aspect of the gig - Attracting and retaining clients is essential for the growth and success of a dental practice. And, frankly, if you aren't garnering the attention of qualified potential clients online, someone else will.

But no need to worry. Partnering with a team like Socius Marketing will ensure all this, and more, is taken care of so you can focus on what matters most to you – providing the best care possible to your clients.

ABOUT SOCIUS

Socius Marketing provides full-service, agency-model digital marketing services that drive leads for healthcare clients. The Socius team brings more than 300 years of combined experience in all aspects of digital marketing, from SEO content writing and web design to pay-per-click (PPC) advertising and web development.

Socius serves as an extension of your practice. That means that as your business grows, our team will work with you to make sure we have the right marketing strategies in place to reach your practice goals.



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