

# USING TECHNOLOGY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN DENTAL PATIENTS

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Have you noticed that your patients seem to be getting younger and younger? If so, you're not imagining things. Millennials are just barely trailing Baby Boomers as the [largest adult population](#) in the U.S. This younger generation, which is currently between the ages of 22 and 36, is expected to outnumber Boomers as soon as 2019 as their numbers swell to 73 million.

As Millennials take ownership of their health and start families of their own, they will be looking for healthcare providers who can meet their needs and expectations. What's at the top of their wish list? Millennials want faster and more convenient services and seek practices that use digital communication tools. To attract new patients and keep them coming back, dentists need to keep up with tech trends that will delight and engage this growing demographic.

## Bye bye, Boomers: The patient pool is changing

The Baby Boomer generation, which was defined by the surge in births following World War II, is reaching its golden years. As the older population shrinks, Millennials are quickly taking the lead. Immigration is adding more numbers to this group than any other, which will dramatically impact the patient pool for dentists over the next few years. How can dentists take advantage of this massive growth opportunity? The key to attracting Millennial patients is by understanding what they want.

## What do Millennials care about?

Your Baby Boomer patients appreciate a handshake and face-to-face conversation. Millennials value connection, too – but it better be digital. Millennials came of age in the internet era and are quick adopters of new technology. Instead of opening up the yellow pages or walking into your office, this generation is accustomed to pulling out their smartphones to communicate and search for what they want. Millennials care about technology, and they perceive that a provider who uses technology is more knowledgeable and more up to date on the latest care.

## Use technology to get more Millennial patients in your office – and keep them there

To attract a tech-savvy generation, dentists themselves need to embrace technology in their practices. Without question, every dental practice looking to appeal to Millennials needs a mobile-friendly website. In 2017, Millennial internet users spent an average of [223 minutes per day](#) on their mobile devices. They're used to navigating bright, clean websites that make it easy to get all the information they need with a few clicks. Your website is the online face of your practice. It doesn't have to be flashy, but it should look modern and professional to attract new patients.

Another way to encourage more Millennial patients to make an appointment is by making the booking process fast and convenient. Online appointment scheduling is booming, with an [estimated](#) 66 percent of U.S. health systems to offer digital scheduling by the end of 2019.

In the dental world, appointment scheduling is a delicate task best handled by front office staff. However, you might want to consider allowing your patients to request appointment times on your website. By using a system that syncs with your practice management software, patients will be able to view availability and request a cleaning outside of your normal business hours. Then, your staff can follow up via phone, email, or text to schedule the appointment. Online appointment requests save your staff time and allows them to offer the best service to patients currently in the office.

## For retaining patients, mobile is everything

Millennials spend a ton of time on their phones, but that doesn't mean they're likely to pick up when you call or to return a voicemail. Even email is passé with this generation. Millennials are far more likely to engage in texting to make and confirm appointments. In fact, a national research [study](#) by Sesame Communications revealed that 97% of patients surveyed preferred to confirm appointments through a text message rather than a phone call.

Of course, your front office staff doesn't have time to text message each patient individually. Luckily, your practice management software is more than capable of doing the heavy lifting. If you haven't already, you can set up a text message campaign that automatically sends each patient a mobile reminder from your office. Patients can confirm their appointment with a simple text reply, and their appointment status will automatically update in your calendar.

A mobile website, online booking, and an automated reminder system implies that a dental office is high-tech and modern, and therefore its dentistry is, too.

## Your patients expect you to be tech savvy. Are you up to the challenge?

There's no getting around it. Investing in technology is critical for attracting Millennial patients to your practice and keeping them coming back for years to come. If you don't have a dedicated IT team on-site to help with the shift to digital, contact us. At TechForce, we can help you decide on the right hardware and software for your needs – and make sure they work together in perfect harmony.

Give us a call at (800) 886-2093 to chat with one of our friendly dental tech experts.