BROWN BEAR DIGITAL

Dental SEO

Where a dental practice can win page one, from a study of 34 Google results pages.

A practice owner's guide | 2026 edition

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SECTION 01

The short answer

01

Most dental SEO advice hands every practice the same checklist. We pulled the top 10 Google results for 34 dental searches and found that page one is not one race. An insurer's dentist finder sits on page one for "dentist" in every city we checked, while independent practices hold most of the top-three spots for implants, cosmetic work and orthodontics. Good dental SEO picks the searches a practice can actually win.

What to do about it:

1

Stop chasing "dentist" plus your city in organic results.

An insurer page holds that lane. Win it in the map pack with a complete Google Business Profile instead.

2

Build one page per major treatment, for your city.

Implants, cosmetic and orthodontic searches are the most open lanes, and independent practices win them.

3

Publish a plain cost page.

Cost searches are some of the biggest in dentistry, and few practices try to rank for them.

4

Give every public-facing dentist a profile.

One office listing becomes several chances in the map pack, with reviews that name the dentist and the treatment.

WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

Across 28 local dental searches in 10 US metros, independent practices held 69% of the top 10 results. For "dental implants" in a city they held 17 of the 18 top-three spots. For "dentist" in a city they held only 14 of 30. National DSO brands showed up in just 7 of 280 local organic results.

Who this guide is for

Owners of one-location general practices, marketing leads at groups with several offices and associate dentists, and specialists such as orthodontists and oral surgeons who wonder whether the general playbook applies to them.

SECTION 02

The Dental Page-One Map

02

On October 18, 2026, we pulled the top 10 organic results from Semrush for 34 dental searches across 10 US metros and sorted every result by who owns it. Map pack and ads are not counted. In Phoenix, a Delta Dental page held #1 for "dentist phoenix," while the implant search there had no insurer on page one.

Search type	Who holds page one	What it means for you
Dentist in a city	Independents 55%, directories 20%, insurers 10%, health systems and dental schools 9%. An insurer page appeared in all 10 cities.	→ The hardest lane, with difficulty scores of 38 to 58. Win the map pack here, and win organic clicks elsewhere.
Dental implants, local	Independents 77%, and #1 in all 6 cities. 17 of 18 top-three spots.	→ The most open lane, and often the easiest: difficulty 18 to 43.
Cosmetic dentist, local	Independents 78%. Sites built on one dentist's name held 17% and took #1 in Los Angeles and New York.	→ A lane for named dentists with real case photos.
Orthodontist, local	Independents 73%, named-orthodontist sites 20%. Dental schools and Delta Dental pages mixed in.	→ Winnable with orthodontist pages and treatment pages for the city.
Condition	Cleveland Clinic #1 for all 3. Health systems 40%, practices 30%.	→ Not a first target, except aftercare questions you already answer for patients.
Cost	Aspen Dental, CareCredit and insurers took 7 of the 9 top-three spots.	→ A plain cost page from a practice is still rare. Few practices try.

69%

of local top 10 results went to independent practices. Directories held 4 of 84 local top-three spots.

7 of 280

local organic results went to national DSO brands. Their big showing is on cost searches.

Source: Brown Bear dental SERP study, Semrush, October 18, 2026. Some "independent" practices may be DSO-owned under a local name.

SECTION 03

Winning "dentist" in the map pack

03

Delta Dental's find-a-dentist pages appeared on page one for "dentist" plus the city in all 10 metros we pulled, and held #1 in 4 of them: Los Angeles, Chicago, Phoenix and Seattle. Across all 34 searches, a Delta Dental page showed up in 17. You will not outrank an insurer's directory with a blog post. For most practices, the realistic way to show up for "dentist" plus your city is the map pack.

Door one: the map pack

A complete Google Business Profile, the right categories and steady reviews. That is where a practice competes for the city term.

Door two: the insurer directory

If you are in-network, the insurer's directory already ranks and your listing is on it. Check your name, address, phone and dentists in every network you belong to.

Business Profiles for dentists, associates and groups

- **A dentist who sees patients at a location** and can be reached there during office hours can have a profile of their own, and the name may include a title or degree.
- **A solo dentist** who is the only public-facing practitioner shares one profile with the practice, named "Practice Name: Dentist Name."
- **Support staff** should not get profiles.
- **Keep the basics identical** on Google, Apple, Bing, Yelp, your insurer directories and your site: same practice name, address and phone number.

> **ONE LISTING OR FOUR CHANCES**
>
> A practice with three dentists and one office profile puts every review, photo and "near me" match on one listing that says "dentist." A profile per dentist, with reviews from their own patients, gives the practice four chances in the map pack instead of one, and gives the implant dentist a listing where "implants" can show up in reviews and photos.

In Bryan's AI visibility audits, odd variations of a practice's name, address or phone number are the most common actual error he finds, and the easiest to fix.

SECTION 04

Treatment pages and cost pages

04

The pages that win local dental searches are specific: one page per major treatment, written for the city you serve. A page about "dental implants in Plano" beats a general "Services" page. For "dental implants" plus a city, an independent practice held #1 in all 6 metros, and 4 of the 6 winners had "implant" in their domain name.

Each treatment page should answer, near the top:

- Who the treatment is for, and who should try something else first
- Which of your dentists does it, and their training for it
- What the visits and recovery look like
- What it costs, and how insurance and financing usually work
- How to book, with the phone number and form easy to find

The cost searches where Aspen Dental shows up and you don't

Cost search	Monthly searches	In the top three
dental implants cost	About 90,500	Aspen Dental and CareCredit
veneers cost	About 74,000	Aspen Dental and CareCredit
root canal cost	About 74,000	Delta Dental at #1, plus Aspen Dental and CareCredit

Only 2 of the 9 top-three spots went to independent practices. That is a gap, not a wall: "veneers cost" and "root canal cost" carry difficulty scores of only 23 and 29. A practice that explains its real price ranges, what insurance usually covers and its financing options is competing with an insurer's explainer and a financing company, not a hospital.

> **A COST PAGE THAT WORKS**
>
> A practice outside Atlanta adds "What a Root Canal Costs at Our Practice": the self-pay range for front and back teeth, what most PPO plans usually cover, why a crown often follows, and how to get a written estimate before treatment.

SECTION 05

Reviews, trust and the AI layer

05

Dental care is what Google calls "Your Money or Your Life" content, where its systems give more weight to experience, expertise, authoritativeness and trust. On a dental site, that means the dentist's name and credentials on clinical pages, a reviewed-by line with a date, and claims that match the clinical consensus. Ask for reviews by dentist and by treatment, so a review mentions "Dr. Lee" and "my implant," not just "great staff."

THE HIPAA RULE FOR REVIEW REPLIES

Respond to every review, but never confirm that the reviewer is a patient or mention any treatment. HHS has settled with dental practices over exactly this: Elite Dental Associates in Dallas paid $10,000 in 2019 over Yelp replies, and New Vision Dental paid $23,000 in 2022 after Yelp replies that disclosed patient information.

The safe reply to a one-star review:

1. **Thank the person** for the feedback.
2. **Say the practice takes it seriously.**
3. **Invite them to call the office,** without a single detail about their care. A reply that says the patient missed a follow-up visit can be true and still be a disclosure.

Technical basics and AI search

- **Show the main content without waiting for scripts.** Sliders, chat widgets and video headers that hide the main heading and text are the problem we run into most on dental sites. Vercel's late 2024 analysis found that OpenAI's crawlers, ClaudeBot and PerplexityBot did not render JavaScript at all.
- **Write pages that are easy to pull apart:** a heading, a direct answer, then the detail. Bryan's view is that schema is worth keeping tidy, but it is not the big lever for AI search.
- **Lead with the specialty.** The most common AI visibility finding is that the treatments a practice wants to be known for are buried, so AI tools describe a general dentist. Say it in plain words on each dentist page and treatment page, and repeat it across your listings.
- **Keep third-party sites consistent.** AI tools read review sites, directories, insurer listings and local news before they recommend anyone.

SECTION 06

Orthodontists, implant practices and oral surgeons

06

The Page-One Map shows the competition changes by specialty. Before you pick a plan, look at which searches your patients run.

ORTHODONTISTS

Compete with schools and named sites

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

Independents held 13 of 18 top-three spots. In Chicago, a dental school held #1 and a Delta Dental page #2.

WHAT TO BUILD

- A full page for each doctor
- Invisalign, braces and early treatment pages for the city

About 3,800 searches a month for orthodontist marketing and SEO terms.

IMPLANT AND COSMETIC

Work the most open lanes

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

An independent held #1 for implants in all 6 cities. Named-dentist sites took #1 for cosmetic in Los Angeles and New York.

WHAT TO BUILD

- One implant page per city you serve
- Real cases with signed photo consent
- Veneer and whitening pages with a price range
- Cost pages

DSO brands like ClearChoice and Nuvia sat lower on page one.

ORAL SURGEONS AND SPECIALISTS

Win the recovery questions

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS

For "wisdom teeth removal recovery," 5 of the top 10 results were oral surgery practices, even with Cleveland Clinic at #1.

WHAT TO BUILD

- Recovery pages from the aftercare you already hand out
- Referral-friendly pages for general dentists

Roughly 1,100 searches a month for oral surgery, endo and perio terms.

SECTION 07

Cost, timing and hiring help

07

There is no reliable public survey of what US practices pay for dental SEO, and none of the three agency guides we reviewed named a monthly price. Ask for a written scope and a monthly figure before any call ends.

The payback worksheet

Step	The math	Your number
1. Total investment	Monthly SEO spend times months. 12 is a fair first look.	_____
2. Value per new patient	Collected revenue per new patient, after write-offs, times your margin if you use one	_____
3. Patients to break even	Step 1 divided by step 2, rounded up	_____
4. Inquiries needed	Step 3 divided by the share of organic calls and forms that book	_____

Bryan's rule of thumb from plastic surgery: a $1,500 to $2,000 monthly retainer over a year costs about the same as two procedures that came in through organic search. Dental fees per visit are lower, but patients stay for years, so run your own numbers.

> **HOW LONG IT TAKES DEPENDS ON THE LANE**
>
> Implant pages, cost pages and specialist searches face thinner competition and can move within a quarter. "Dentist" plus a major city is a long map pack project, and a 90-day promise is a guess. Semrush's dental SEO guide puts meaningful results at 4 to 12 months.

Ask an agency for 4 things before you sign

1. **A page-one review of your top 5 treatments in your city,** showing who ranks and why.
2. **A plan for your Business Profiles:** one per office, one per public-facing dentist, with categories.
3. **How they report booked first visits by treatment,** not just traffic and rankings.
4. **The names and cities of two current dental clients,** so you can search their main terms yourself.

SECTION 08

Is your dental SEO aimed at searches you can win?

08

Answer for your practice as it stands today. Each "no" is a gap. Start with the lanes the Page-One Map marks as most open: treatments, cost and specialist searches.

Question	Yes	Partly	No
SEARCH TARGETING			
Have you checked who holds page one for your top 5 treatments in your city?	☐	☐	☐
Have you moved effort for "dentist" plus your city from organic rankings to the map pack?	☐	☐	☐
Does every major treatment have its own page written for the city you serve?	☐	☐	☐
LISTINGS			
Does each public-facing dentist have a Business Profile of their own?	☐	☐	☐
Are your practice name, address and phone identical on Google, Apple, Bing, Yelp, insurer directories and your site?	☐	☐	☐
Is your practice listed correctly in every insurer network directory you belong to?	☐	☐	☐
PAGES			
Does each treatment page say near the top who it is for, which dentist does it, what recovery looks like, what it costs and how to book?	☐	☐	☐
Do you have a plain cost page for your top treatments with self-pay ranges, insurance coverage and financing?	☐	☐	☐
Do your dentist and treatment pages lead with the specialty you want to be known for, in plain words?	☐	☐	☐
TRUST AND TECHNICAL			
Do you ask for reviews by dentist and by treatment?	☐	☐	☐
Do your review replies avoid confirming that the reviewer is a patient or mentioning any treatment?	☐	☐	☐
Do your main heading and text show without waiting for sliders, chat widgets or video scripts?	☐	☐	☐

YES	PARTLY	NO
_____	_____	_____

SECTION 09

Frequently asked questions

09

Q **Why does Delta Dental outrank my practice for "dentist" in my city?**

Its find-a-dentist pages ranked on page one for "dentist" plus the city in all 10 metros we pulled, and held #1 in 4. You will not beat it with a blog post. Compete in the map pack, and make sure your listing is right in every network directory you belong to.

Q **Which searches should a practice chase first?**

The treatments you want more of, in your city. Implant, cosmetic and orthodontist searches are where independent practices hold most of the top-three spots, and implant terms carry lower difficulty scores than "dentist" plus a city.

Q **Should every dentist in the practice have a Google Business Profile?**

Every public-facing dentist who sees patients at the location can have one, under Google's guidelines. A solo dentist shares one profile with the practice, named "Practice Name: Dentist Name." Support staff should not get profiles.

Q **How do I reply to reviews without breaking HIPAA?**

Thank the person, say you take the feedback seriously, and invite them to call. Never confirm they are a patient or mention any treatment. HHS has settled with dental practices over Yelp replies.

Q **Should I publish prices?**

Yes, as ranges, with what insurance usually covers and your financing options. Cost searches are huge and mostly held by Aspen Dental, CareCredit and insurers, and a plain practice cost page is still rare.

Q **How long does dental SEO take?**

It depends on the lane. Implant, cost and specialist pages can show movement within a quarter. "Dentist" plus a major city is a long map pack project. Semrush's dental SEO guide puts meaningful results at 4 to 12 months.

Q **Does AI search change the plan?**

It raises the stakes on the same work. Lead each dentist and treatment page with the specialty, keep your listings consistent, and make sure crawlers can read your main content without running scripts.

SECTION 10

Next steps

10

1. **Run the self-audit** on the previous pages. Be honest.
2. **Search your top 5 treatments in your city** and note who holds page one for each.
3. **Build the first treatment page or cost page** in the most open lane, and give each public-facing dentist a profile.
4. **Talk to someone who does this for dental practices.** A clear look at which searches your practice can win, and which to stop paying for.

WORK WITH BROWN BEAR

Brown Bear builds the page-one map for dental and medical practices, then does the listing, page and AI search work that follows from it. brownbear.digital/industries/dentists | bryan@brownbear.digital

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bryan Passanisi is the founder of Brown Bear Digital. He has 15 years of experience across SEO, paid search, and AI search strategy, and received a 2025 Semrush AI Visibility Award with the QuickBooks team. He started Brown Bear to give businesses direct access to senior search expertise without the agency overhead.

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