

Why You Can (and Should) Market Investments in Both AI and Sustainability

08/12/2024



iStock

In its quarterly [Outlook Pulse Survey](#) released April 2024, global financial services firm EY reports that the 1,200 CEOs surveyed worldwide prioritize AI transformation as an immediate productivity-boosting action and investment. In fact, 47% of those respondents anticipate investing in AI and other technologies over the next 12 months.

Comparatively, 16% of those execs surveyed note that they plan to invest in sustainability efforts (i.e., [decarbonizing](#) and achieving net zero) over the same period. This contrasts the many years of business investment that have led to notable progress on sustainability. However, as EY reports, the period of early wins and progress on front-end, low-hanging fruit initiatives and strategies is winding down.

AI is impossible to ignore in our world, in other healthcare sectors, and elsewhere. We certainly have published our share of posts and articles on ways to [market AI and other technologies](#) to one's patients and community. However, do not become lackadaisical in promoting other, better-established efforts favouring the bright, shiny new object. Your efforts to operate more responsibly, environmentally friendly and sustainably may just be

bearing fruit. There has been a long time horizon whereby you may have seen the results unfold.

Ask yourself: *Have we adequately shared our successes with members of our community?* If not, there is no time like the present to let your biggest “fans” know that you are committed to these efforts, have no intention of abandoning them, and that they are more than mere buzzwords or empty promotional material – that impactful strides are being made. Content that revolves around your efforts on this front also tells your community: *We understand that these are more than short-term issues that require short-term actions. We are in it for the long haul and are committed to contributing to making this world a better, healthier place for future generations and doing our part to heal the planet as well as patients.*

Not only is this the “right thing to do,” but it is also a sound business and practice strategy. Consider how the number of B Corps (Benefit Corporations) in Canada and the U.S. has been [climbing](#) dramatically since 2022. Consumers increasingly want to patronize those organizations that are “doing good.” If numerous practices check off all of the boxes in terms of expertise, experience, and services, then one’s environmental and social consciousness and efforts can make the difference and be what drives patients to your doors and not to the similarly qualified or technically competent peer down the street.

Additionally, certifications like those through [B Labs](#) demonstrate that the promise and commitment to sustainability are not just “lip service.” They provide an outside third party that can vouch for your efforts and progress on this front. So, it is not simply a “he said, she said.” There is actual documentation behind it. Along those lines, you may be wondering how to start when reprioritizing marketing or prioritizing these efforts for the first time.

Here are some helpful pointers:

- Create an [outline of everything](#) you have done thus far as it relates to becoming a more “green” practice.
- Do not think the “small stuff” doesn’t matter. It all matters and may be worthy of a mention, especially if you can quantify how these small details or investments have helped your office to operate more sustainably. These examples may be characterized as those above “low-hanging fruit.”
- Get ahead of marketing any other investments on this front. If you are in the process of deploying new or improved initiatives, include those in your list. That way, you can think beforehand about how to promote them.

- Identify any gaps. Are there areas you wish to deploy that you haven't thus far? What are the roadblocks to your doing so? Could you embark on these efforts in a way that doesn't break the bank? Often, there is an intersection between planning for marketing purposes and ideas for operational improvements.
- As you organize all of the things you are doing now or plan to do in the near future, brainstorm related certifications or accreditations that may be beneficial to highlight. For instance, besides B Corp status, you may have successfully completed the requirements for [programs](#) ranging from LEED to Energy Star and BOMA Best. If so, those need to be mentioned as they provide additional credibility. At the very least, discussing these certs and third-party validation efforts gets such programs on your radar. You may be closer to achieving validation/certification than you thought based on what you have already implemented in your practice.
- Think of this listing of what you have or will do on the sustainability front as an outline to organize your marketing and communications. With this outline in hand, you may wish to create a separate section of your website (or at least a page) dedicated to your green efforts.
- For any "in the works" efforts, be prepared to create announcements or "blasts" in emails or newsletters related to upcoming roll-outs, be it certain certifications or implementing new protocols and equipment to minimize incorrectly disposed of dangerous wastes. Here again, you are getting ahead of these efforts. The announcements need not be extensive or lengthy. A simple, short reference to what you are doing and how it fits into the big-picture efforts goes a long way.
- Think in terms of consistency. Many little, short posts or announcements can help these efforts to stay top of mind in a way that lengthy articles, months or even quarters apart would not. Plus, it helps to reinforce that this is more than a project to you; sustainability is embedded into the fabric of your practice.
- Integrate highly actionable and dynamic photos and videos into your sustainability content whenever possible. For instance, if your team regularly participates in local events for Earth Day or with organizations that are committed to sustainability every month (not just in April), be sure to get plenty of photos of your team planting trees or anything else that conveys well online and in the digital world. Your patients want to see this. This approach has the added benefit of putting a "human face" on your team. So, you are more than the highly qualified and trusted dentists, associates, hygienists, and other professional staff.
- Speaking of putting the human face on the content, be sure to always think in terms of implications and impact on your patients and other stakeholders. With technology, we mention the same thing. Do not get so caught up in the details about the sustainable practice of effort that you forget: *How does this help my staff better help*

my patients? What are the benefits of this effort for my patients and community? And why does it matter to them?

Speaking of technology and bringing it back to the start of the article, there is also a potential intersection between AI and sustainable practices and strategies: How are you leveraging AI to operate in a more sustainable and eco-friendly manner? Beyond that, how can you convey this blend of AI to support your sustainability program in a way that makes sense, is meaningful and memorable, and matters to your patients or the reader or viewer?

In summary...

It is essential to think beyond AI when it comes to marketing and communications, just as it will be important to think beyond whatever the next trend or technology may be that captures our attention and investment. While it may be exciting, you have time on your side regarding older efforts. Ensure you are not simply announcing the latest and greatest without following up on how those efforts have positively affected your team, practice, patients, and community. **Do not fall prey to “news cycle syndrome.” Ensure your investment and efforts get the ongoing attention they deserve to grow and improve your practice.**

About the Author:



Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of [Ekwa Marketing](#), has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dentists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with

Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing – Lila, by clicking <https://www.ekwa.com/msm/> or simply send a text to 313-777-8494.