

Digital Clinical Education in the MENA region - An interview with Florian Piquet, Regional Marketing Leader

Corporate Communications: When did MENA start its digital webinars strategy?

Florian Piquet: We started our first series of digital webinars in July 2019. Last year, we hosted seven successful sessions for endodontic and restorative which gathered approximately 700 attendees from the Middle East.

This year, we had scheduled 15 webinars with John Crouch- also on lab topics. Shortly after the Coronavirus pandemic hit, we all continued working from home office however our webinar concept was ready to go.

When developing the strategy, we initially proceeded with the digital education direction due the structure of the MENA business. MENA is not a country, but rather we're a full region from Morocco to Pakistan and encompass 22 countries. Only four of them (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Kuwait) have sales representatives. For the rest, Dentsply Sirona business is fully dependent on our dealer partners. We also have the chance to have English as a natural second language in the Middle East and an incredible passion for social networks which allow easy announcement for webinars. Our Facebook page has more than 50,000 followers!

Corporate Communications: How does your MENA webinars program look like now? What has changed?

Florian Piquet: Live customer webinars are provided with a mix of international and local external speakers. There are also a lot of live webinars with internal Dentsply Sirona speakers. Digital education is really a self-feeding concept. The more live webinars we do, the more new email addresses we collect to communicate our future webinars. All webinars are stored in our on-demand library and then communicated again to the market on offerings of on-demand webinars. Customers have to register to be able to download them.

Three aspects of our digital strategy have drastically changed in the last two weeks. First, the frequency: just this week alone, we had 15 webinars communicated on our social networks! Second, the type of speakers involved into our program: at the beginning, we were only focusing on international speakers provided by the dental product groups, as we have this past relationship with John Crouch. Now with more software knowledge, there is a switch to local MENA speakers. This turned out far more efficient as they already have local followers and present issues and problems, they face every day in the Middle East. Finally, the third big change is the scope of portfolio covered by our webinars: at the beginning, there was a big focus on our endodontic and restorative business, but now we also address lab, CAD-CAM, imaging, implant and digital orthodontics. We really leverage the strength of Dentsply Sirona!

I want to stress how important the follow-up by sales reps is. Our team wants to keep a human interaction beyond the screen. They are encouraged to engage customers on the Clinical Education aspects rather than sales during this period: next topics they could attend, additional product knowledge, feedback on how to implement these innovations in the dental practice, etc. We are focused on keeping and building a stronger relationship with our customers now, which will transform into sales without any doubt.

It is worth mentioning that MENA is not doing webinars for end-users only. All our product specialists and clinical educators train our different dealers across the region. It's another full separate set of digital activities put in place in a short amount of time.

Corporate Communications: Did the webinars turn out to be a great success?

Florian Piquet: Before talking about actual results, I want to highlight the positive human impact of this project during this time of crisis. It really bonded the MENA marketing team together with a clear goal and a common focus. It was definitely intense but liberating for my team to be successful when everything is so challenging around the world.

In two weeks, we have rebuilt our educational program, and this week, we reached approximately 1,000 attendees via our webinars. Numbers keep growing, and we are expecting 2,000 more attendees for next week. Every day, the team is breaking our own records. In terms of geography, we can reach customers from all across the region: 30% from Saudi Arabia, 30% from Egypt, 15% from UAE, 10% from Kuwait and GCC countries, 10% from Maghreb and 5% from Lebanon. Compared to our 2019 experience, I would estimate that the regular number of attendees have been multiplied by five during the COVID-19 crisis. There is a demand for Clinical Education from the dentist population, and we're answering it as Dentsply Sirona.

