



ORTHO2

# Evaluating the Past... Making Plans for the Future

As 2009 has come to a close, it ended more than just a year... it was the end of a decade. A decade full of new advancements, especially for those techno-savvy individuals, like my ten and eleven year old kids!

Looking back, we had the iPod in 2001. The Nintendo Wii in 2004. And let's not forget the debut of applications like Facebook, without which my kids could not play Farmville on their mother's Facebook page! (I keep telling my FB "friends" it's really the kids and not me who plays Farmville!)

Then there was the launch of the iPhone in 2007. With more than 100,000 applications, it has changed the way that Americans communicate on a daily basis. My son recently suggested I buy him one, saying that we can activate the Find My iPhone feature so I can "Find My Son" and know where he is all the time. Good try! Maybe when he's 16 and driving—though I'm not sure that by then he will think it's such a great idea!

With all of these amazing advancements, and the hundreds of others not mentioned here, one might assume that Americans were generally happy in the last ten years. As is often the case, however, technology does not always equal happiness.

A December 2009 survey report from the Pew Research Center indicated that more than 50% of respondents had negative feelings about the last ten years. The word most often used to describe the last decade: "downhill." It seems that we've had a lot to deal with lately.

The events of 9/11 may have had something to do with that terrible feeling people have when looking back on the past ten years. Or perhaps it is the war in Iraq or maybe a Hurricane named Katrina. It seems that even great technology can be overshadowed by more significant events... events that even iPhones can't help us explain

by **Alena Pacheco**

to our kids. The 9/11 terrorist attacks were rated on the survey as the most significant event of the last decade.

There were several bright spots in the Pew Research Center report that orthodontic offices should take note of.

*There were several bright spots that orthodontic offices should take note of*

Cell phones led the way with 69% of respondents saying that cell phones have been a change for the better. I can personally attest to the great benefit of getting a text message reminder not to miss my son's next orthodontic appointment.

The Internet, which has long been viewed as one of the best advances of the last few decades, continues to be widely embraced, with 65% of respondents rating it as favorable. So if you haven't already had a website designed, please run out as soon as possible and get one!

The results of Social Networking, however, are not as clear. Across all ages, approximately 35% rated sites like Facebook and Twitter as favorable. 21% say they have been a change for the worse and 31% say they have not made much of a difference. (12% were unsure.) That's surprising, considering statistics that indicated that by the end of 2008, social networking had overtaken e-mail in terms of worldwide reach. People are sending more than 4 million tweets a day and Facebook has more than 350 million active users. I guess we are using social networking, we're just not quite sure yet if we like it!

So what are we to make of all these statistics? As we evaluate our marketing plans for 2010 (which we should

---

Reprinted from  
**The Newsletter for Members and Friends of Ortho2**  
January 2010 - Volume 28 Issue 1

have done already!) how do we decide where to focus our time, energy, and resources? What new technologies do we need to embrace, and where should we choose to sit back and wait? It is time to run out and create a Facebook page or start sending hourly tweets?

Perhaps the most important point to recognize is that just as we embrace change in orthodontic treatment options, it's important to do the same with our marketing options. Where would orthodontics be today without embracing digital imaging and self-ligating brackets? The same may be said one day about Facebook and Twitter. Well, let's not get too carried away. I'm sure you can see the point of the analogy.

Great advancement can happen through technological change. Regardless of how people are rating the usefulness of social media and other new technologies, they are indeed using them. So perhaps it's time that we started using them, too. (Well, I better get going now...I need to update the status on my Facebook page and I'm sure the kids have crops to harvest in Farmville!) TTFN 😊

## About the Author

---



Alena Pacheco is the founder of Women in Orthodontics, an online forum dedicated to educating, empowering, and inspiring women in the orthodontic industry. She will offer a social networking class at our 2010 Users Group Meeting.

To view or participate in the Women in Orthodontics forum, visit [www.womeninortho.org](http://www.womeninortho.org). Alena can also be reached by e-mail at [alena@womeninortho.org](mailto:alena@womeninortho.org) or by phone at (888) 321-4744 or (559) 846-8091. You can even follow her on Facebook!