

Can Social Media Help Your Dental Practice?

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We've all heard the statistics.

- 74% of online adults are using social media.
- The average Facebook user spends 40 minutes a day on the platform.
- 100 million people use Twitter each day.

You know your patients are on social media, but can it really help your practice?

Social media is overwhelming. It's complicated. It's time consuming. It's ever-changing. At the same time, it offers amazing opportunities. Those practices that find a way to step up to the challenge will have a distinct advantage.

1. Drive Traffic To Your Website

Your website is your hub. All your marketing efforts should lead here, the one property where you have 100% control, and the ability to convert visitors to new patients. Social media can help drive **direct traffic** with clicks to your site, and can also improve your **search engine rankings**.

To drive traffic, publish useful, interesting or entertaining content to your own website, share links to that content on social media, and get people to share your links. With the right social supporters sharing your content, the results can be exponential.

Search engines use social media engagement levels to assess the authority and quality of your website—key factors in determining search ranking. According to a 2014 study by Adobe, Pinterest, Google+, Facebook and Twitter all have a significant impact on search.

Social media posts themselves can appear in the search results too. Google+ is particularly good for this. And not just when you post them, either. Google+ posts can resurface in search results over and over.

2. Establish Your Expert Status

People make buying decisions based on trust. Social media can help you establish yourself as a doctor people trust.

Profiles – Are your social media profiles complete and up-to-date? Do your graphics look professional? The quality of your social media profiles reflects the quality of your practice.

Education – Before people choose a new dentist or commit to a new procedure, they research online. In fact, 38% of people surveyed had used the internet to find a doctor or dentist within the previous 12 months. If your content is geared towards answering their questions, they will find you as a resource—and as their new dentist.

Reviews – Google reviews show up on your Google+ page, and impact your placement in local search results. Your patients can ‘recommend’ you on Facebook. Consumers read online reviews, so make sure you’re managing yours.

Expert Activities – Have you written a book? Published an article? Been invited to speak? These all demonstrate that you are looked to as an expert. It’s OK to brag about yourself a little, or let your staff do it for you.

Connections – Social media is just that—social. Whether it’s a local mommy blogger, a conference speaker, or a member of the media, you can ‘get to know’ people with the potential to exponentially increase your exposure.

3. Foster Relationships With Patients

They say the easiest person to sell to is someone who’s done business with you before.

Increased Treatment Plan Follow-Through – Stay front and center on your patients’ radar. Maybe they haven’t gotten around to scheduling that crown. Maybe they had to cancel an appointment and never rescheduled. When they see your posts on social media, or read your article about the health risks of gingivitis, they are more likely to take action and get that appointment scheduled.

Referrals – While word-of-mouth is still the most common way of referring a friend, that number dropped by almost 10% last year. And the number of people following recommendations online is growing.

4. Customer Service & Reputation Management

For many, social media has become the go-to place for customer service. If they post a question or complaint on your Facebook Page, they expect a response. On Twitter, 27% of users follow brands to provide feedback, but *56% of customer tweets are ignored*. Don't be the practice that leaves questions or feedback unanswered.

Social media is an integral part of people's daily activity and online experience. By maintaining an active social media presence, you can drive traffic to your website, establish yourself as an expert, foster relationships with patients, manage your reputation, and provide customer service.

You don't have to do it all yourself. You can outsource general content like dental tips and quotes. Your staff can interact with patients and post photos. You can network with influencers and post while you're traveling. With training and teamwork, you can make social media manageable—and use it to grow your practice.

Sources:

The average Facebook user spends 40 minutes a day on the platform

(<http://www.jeffbullas.com/2014/07/29/25-facebook-facts-and-statistics-you-should-know-in-2014/>)

of people referring by word of mouth dropped by almost 10% last year, while the number of people following recommendations they see on social media is growing

(<http://www.brightlocal.com/2014/07/01/local-consumer-review-survey-2014/>)

On Twitter, 27% of users follow brands to provide feedback, but *56% of customer tweets are ignored*. (**Sources:** 27% follow to give feedback

<http://www.marketingprofs.com/charts/2013/10336/digital-influence-blogs-beat-social-networks-for-driving-purchases>; 56% of customer tweets to companies are being ignored.

AllTwitter)