

Effective Social Media for Dental Practices

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Participating in social media is a must for most dental practices. It's estimated that three-quarters of US consumers consult social media as part of their purchase decision-making process. This means that, by using social media skillfully, you can amplify the power of your patient referral marketing strategies dramatically and very economically.

Put a team member in charge. The volume of work involved in building and maintaining a presence in social media is modest, but to make it worthwhile you must be prepared to monitor your social media feeds regularly and post to them at least every week. Unless you're highly experienced with social media (and can spare the time without limiting your productivity), you should appoint someone on your staff to take responsibility... probably your marketing coordinator.

Start with Facebook. It's by far the biggest player in this field and appeals to the broadest range of social media users. Whereas other platforms are specialized in terms of content and demographic appeal, Facebook is a multifaceted conversation that anyone (and any business, like your practice) can join. As you participate in the online conversation, you'll begin noticing interconnections with other social media sites, like Twitter, Instagram and Google+. You can then branch out in directions that look promising.

Encourage followers. Ask all your patients to "like" and begin following you. Once your practice is in the mix, you'll learn how to coax a growing number of people to pay attention to what you're saying and showing online. Offer informative or interesting content and your audience will grow.

Talk about Dentistry, *Plus*. Mindful of your branding for the practice, be sure that many of your practice's posts build its value. News about your practice... technology added, specialized staff training, awards, etc... will steadily build your reputation. Also include posts about team members' hobbies, vacations, anniversaries and other personal news that will "flesh out" your practice for the prospective patients who haven't met you yet.

Use Graphics. Pictures engage people more quickly than words and can be very entertaining. Get in the habit of posting interesting photos and even video clips and people will keep coming back for more.

Social media has emerged as a powerful and popular form of communication, and participating costs virtually nothing except time. Start participating now and you'll soon discover what an incredible marketing tool it can be for your practice.

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