

SOCIAL MEDIA IN 2013 – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PICTURES!

BY KRISTIE NATION

Bringing your practice up to speed with social media in 2013 means being aware of exactly how powerful images can be in the social realm. Numerous studies show that image-driven content creates a higher level of social engagement than any other type of post. This holds true for social platforms.



Exactly how powerful are images? Let's take a look at five different statistical measures:

1. SMM guru Dan Zarrella examined the top 10,000 most "liked" Facebook pages. He revealed that photos generated not only the most likes, but also the **majority of shares** across all types of posts.
2. Facebook has announced that photo albums generated **180% more engagement** than other types of posts in 2012, with individual photos right behind at 120% more.
3. HubSpot noted that the human brain processes images **60,000 times faster** than text.
4. One month after the introduction of Facebook timeline for brands, visual content **boosted engagement by 65%**.
5. Members of other social sites use Pinterest heavily. In fact, 98% of people surveyed with a Pinterest account said they also have a Facebook and/or Twitter account. More than 20% of Pinterest users say they have purchased an item after seeing it on Pinterest.

The images your dental practice shares on social media could be the most influential content of all when it comes to measuring the impact of your social campaign.

The time required to post an image (particularly if the image is copyrighted by your practice) is not much more than the time required to post a text, however, the reach can be exponentially greater. But just posting the image in one location, such as Facebook, could mean your practice misses out on a vast opportunity.

While Facebook is one of the most heavily used and recognized social sites, there are others that embrace visual content even more strongly. If you embrace all platforms, your image-based message will reach more viewers and have a wider impact than if you restrict your social efforts to Facebook alone.

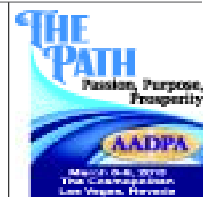
Here is a simple five-step process to help you maximize the reach of your images:

- Start with Facebook. Post your image on your Timeline with a short comment and invitation to share. (Always include a call to action. Your post is three times more likely to be shared if you ask than if you do not). Check your page "insights" and try to post your image at peak engagement times for your practice's page.
- Pin the image to a Pinterest board. Make sure the image includes the direct link back to either your Facebook page or your practice's website, and include a new description.
- Tweet the image you just posted on Pinterest by using the Twitter button. Use a hash tag if appropriate to engage viewers. Again, aim for peak engagement times.
- Post your image to Google+. This platform is image-friendly.
- Finally, post to Instagram. This can be done by uploading the original image file, or by saving it from your Facebook Timeline and posting it to Instagram with a simple description. (You can also share directly from Instagram to Tumblr, Flickr, and other visual social sites.)

While Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and Google+ are the main platforms you should use when launching a visual social media campaign, there are dozens of other platforms available as well. Include inspirational messages alongside images of your "success story" patients to promote even more engagement. And, don't forget to commemorate your practice's community efforts.

Plan on becoming picturesque in 2013. You'll be amazed at the increase in social engagement you can achieve simply by changing your focus from plain text posts to image-based content. **DE**

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