

DOING SOCIAL MEDIA RIGHT IN THE DENTAL INDUSTRY

BY KRISTIE NATION

One of the major social media pitfalls for dentists is missing the boat when it comes to engaging with the community. If your practice's Facebook page is dead in the water, it's time to reevaluate your tactics.

In 99 out of 100 cases, there's nothing on the Facebook page that patients can relate to. If you are constantly posting stuff about teeth and gums and X-rays, because that's what dentistry is about, then you're missing the point. Day after day you'll wonder why people don't like your practice's page or comment on your posts.



This is because your average patient is not a dentist. People will look at technical posts and will not feel qualified to comment. In fact, they will probably skim and move on.

You have to create things in your practice worth talking about that everyone can relate to and feel moved to comment on. This could be a patient of the day, a "lunch on us" promotion, your own Veterans Day celebration, a balloon day for the kids — anything that excites patients when they walk in the door.

In other words, your patients should not have to be asked to follow your page. *They should do it independently because your practice is so fantastic that they want to stay up-to-date.*

According to Dave Kerpen of Likeable Local, the secret to Facebook success is to "...stop thinking like a marketer and start thinking like a customer... The secret to social media is in the 'social' more than in the 'media.' It's in being human, being the sort of person at a cocktail party who listens attentively, tells great stories, shows interest in others, and is authentic and honest. The secret is to simply be likeable."

Kerpen goes on to remind us that it is not enough to tell people to like a Facebook page. You have to give them a good reason why. Ask and answer questions, share pictures and videos. Above all, try to have the kind of page you would be interested in checking daily.

Jack Hadley of My Social Practice sums up the concept of being social in one sentence: "In marketing, social media isn't something you 'have'; it's something you 'do.'"

Hadley goes on to list seven keys to effective social media marketing for dental practices:

1. A blog and a Facebook page are not options for dental practices; they are required. Make a solid commitment to building your platforms by telling every patient about them.
2. Be real. Be interesting. Be *you*. Every piece of content does not have to be an explanation of dental technique. Share stuff about your staff, your charity work, even your day.
3. Don't crash the party. Social media is a conversation, and everyone hates it when the Avon guy shows up. Participate naturally, and ask questions about your patients instead of blowing your horn.
4. Engage your staff with hands-on material. Buttons, brochures, handouts, and other materials that talk about your social presence allow each team member to be an active supporter of your goals.
5. Share your passion. It does not always have to be about work. Maybe you enjoy working at the local pet rescue. Share a video of your experiences and watch people become involved.
6. Be a "giving" practice. Watch for opportunities to serve your community, and share your activities on your Facebook page.
7. Be patient. Rome was not built in a day, and neither were the most successful Facebook pages. Stay engaged, always reply to patient feedback, and keep growing your audience.

Don't let your dental practice fail at social media because your audience cannot relate. Start sharing real, exciting experiences, interacting in a genuine and meaningful way, and see patient participation skyrocket. **DE**

KRISTIE NATION is the founder and CEO of myDentalCMO, a marketing consulting firm that provides strategic marketing "treatment plans" exclusively for dental practices. The firm was founded with a mission to prevent dentists from wasting countless dollars marketing their practices ineffectively. She can be reached at kristie@mydentalcmo.com or (888) 557-6443.