

# UNDERSTANDING THE ROI OF SOCIAL MEDIA

## – BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE

BY KRISTIE NATION

The return on your investment in social media can be huge, not just in terms of online engagement, but also in the value that translates to offline benefits and getting patients into your practice.

According to the *2011 Social Media Marketing Industry Report*, 78% of marketers saw increased traffic by investing just six hours a week in social media. Whether you ask a social savvy in-house team member to manage your practice business page, or pay a third party social media firm to increase brand visibility, you can expect your returns to make the effort and expense worthwhile.



### STEP 1: GETTING STARTED

There are three things to remember when launching a social media campaign:

- First, identify your goals (more patients visiting your practice) and then identify your audience (those in need of specific cosmetic dental services).
- Next, create a clear plan that starts with a time line or calendar that can be filled in with clearly defined actions to be taken. Decide where each social media profile should direct traffic. For example, Twitter can be used to promote your Facebook wall, and your Facebook page should funnel traffic to your website.
- Finally, decide how you will gauge your success. Tracking and analytic programs can be used to follow visitors from platform to platform and let you know where your appointments are originating. Set a date for reevaluation and a goal for new patient acquisition, which, if met, can mean your plan was a success. If it is not met, it can indicate the need for improvement.

### STEP 2: MOTIVATING YOUR AUDIENCE

For every action you take online, you should be trying to get at least three more actions that are not directly a result of your effort. This means getting the fans of your practice to jump in and do your social media campaign FOR you. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- Ask questions, and listen to the answers. This can be as simple as creating a poll on your Facebook page or requesting feedback on new office appointment times. People love to weigh in and share their opinions.
- Provide up-to-date, important, and engaging information. Share short, interesting snippets. Those that start with “Did you know ...?” and end with a tantalizing nugget of information are more likely to be shared on social networks. These do NOT have to be dental facts. You are simply looking for “engagement.”

### STEP 3: MEASURING YOUR SUCCESS

This is where many practices fall short. Ultimately, most cannot tell you what all the social activity has really done for their practices. There are easy things you can do to accurately calculate the ROI of your social media campaign.

- Ask your patients. It’s old advice, but it still applies. When new patients come into your practice, have a card attached to the new patient paperwork that asks why they chose your practice. Did they see you on Facebook, hear about you on Twitter, find you on Yelp, get a referral from a friend? Ask the same questions when prospective patients contact your practice by phone.
- Track your website traffic. Use analytics to tell you where people are when they click a link to come to your practice’s website. Then see how many of those people end up booking an appointment either online or stopping on your “contact us” page.

Understanding your social media ROI will help you better plan your campaign and better realize the true benefits of such a campaign in online interaction and offline patient acquisition. **DE**

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