

# GUERRILLA SOCIAL MARKETING FOR YOUR PRACTICE:

## 7 MUST DO ACTIONS

BY KRISTIE NATION

There are two things to remember when marketing your dental practice online. First, you need to know where your audience is. Second, you need to know what they want to see. Once you identify where your audience is hanging out and what they are looking for, you can formulate an effective marketing plan.

So, where are your existing and potential patients? Data from Pew Research says they are on social networking sites.

In fact, more than 65% of Internet users belong to at least one social network (Facebook being the overwhelming leader). In the 18- to 29-year-old age group, that percentage jumps to 83%.

What are these users looking for? Information. In fact, nearly 60% of Internet users have specifically looked for health-care information online. Many of them are women, who now make the majority of decisions about family health care. If

you are not contributing to the information to be found, you are missing out on a huge potential audience.

What does this mean for your dental practice? How can you take advantage of the fact that an overwhelming majority of people in your community is likely to seek information about dental care online?

The answer is guerrilla marketing, social style. A multi-pronged plan of attack is necessary to make your practice competitive online.

- 1. Content.** Social media marketing has to be social first, without overt marketing techniques. Nothing chases viewers away from a Facebook page faster than a hard sell. Your campaign should instead be information driven, with unique content developed for your Facebook page on a regular basis.
- 2. Timing.** Don't add posts to your Facebook page in fits and starts, or add hundreds of posts in one day to make up for a drought. Instead, aim for *at least five* posts per day with a focus on posting when your potential information seekers are online – early morning, early evening, and weekends.
- 3. Engagement.** No one likes the person in the room who only talks and never listens. Ask questions, run polls, and engage with your community. The more interaction you can get from those who “like” your page, the more reach you have. Activity is more important than a bulk number of “likes.”

**4. Branch out.** Many online publications have Facebook Commenting activated, so search the Web for articles about your industry and leave a helpful, informative comment. This is a great way to drive traffic to your page where more information will be readily available to readers. In addition, explore other social networks. Facebook may be the granddaddy, but do not ignore lesser cousins such as Pinterest, Twitter, and LinkedIn.

**5. Use widgets.** If your practice has a website or blog (and if it does not, now would be a great time to address this), you should have Facebook and other social media widgets prominently placed to encourage viewers to “like” or “follow” you.

**6. Say thank you.** Showing appreciation to your patients and their families is one of the most important things you can do. Ask patients for permission to post their smiles on your page, and make sure to mention what great patients they were during their visit to your office.

**7. Stay on top of conversations.** In many cases, an unhappy patient's comment can be turned around with swift, accountable action. Take responsibility, and move the conversation offline into email or a phone call as quickly as possible. Post a resolution as soon as the matter is fixed. You will find that solving a problem with professionalism and courtesy can actually be better than never having a bump in the road at all.

Your guerrilla social marketing plan should always revolve around the goal of increasing your patient base through outreach and information sharing. Using these tactics to manage your presence on Facebook and other social networks will help your practice increase its visibility, and will establish it as the go-to source for solid information and excellence in care. **DE**

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