

SHOULD YOUR PRACTICE BE FOCUSED ON BLOGGING OR FACEBOOK – OR BOTH?

BY KRISTIE NATION

Does your dental practice primarily post on Facebook, or is blogging your preferred method of outreach? Some marketing experts will say that a business blog beats out social media for professionalism and high-value traffic. But when it comes to interaction with your local community, Facebook does have an excellent platform in place that simulates word-of-mouth marketing.



BLOGGING VS. FACEBOOK

The primary advantage of a blog over a Facebook wall is that you have complete control. You decide what to post, when to post it, how to format it, and how long it will remain published. Your posts are visible to anyone who visits your blog, and you can drive traffic straight back to your appointment page.

Unlike with a Facebook page, you never have to worry about your blog suddenly changing the rules, hiding posts from many of your subscribers, or annoying readers with sponsored posts and advertising.

But in order to gain traffic from your blog, you have to get it in front of your audience. This can be tricky. You will have to learn SEO, and fight for search engine rankings in order to bring people to your blog. In contrast, Facebook lets you bring posts to where the people in your community already hang out.

WHY NOT BOTH?

Blogging and social media really go hand-in-hand. A well-written blog supported by a solid Facebook campaign could be the perfect way to increase traffic to your practice.

A good blog has three features:

- It is easy for the search engines to read
- It is easy for the target audience to find
- It is easy for the target audience to read

Publishing well-written, optimized blog posts on a regular basis will improve the chances of your blog being discovered and read. But you can tip the scales a little further in your favor by using Facebook to promote and supplement your blog posts.

DOS AND DON'TS FOR BLOG/FACEBOOK INTEGRATION

- Do install social network “buttons” on your blog. This makes it easy for viewers to find and like you on Facebook.

This results in even more opportunities to connect. Add “sharing” buttons as well, and enable Facebook commenting on your blog, if possible.

- Don't simply update your Facebook page with a link to your latest blog post. This will be seen by social network users as self-promotion, and any followers you have will soon abandon your page.
- Do keep a close eye on the competition to see how their practices are leveraging blogging and social media. You might see a great idea you can implement on your own blog or Facebook page.
- Don't forget to refer patients directly to your blog and Facebook page from your practice. Include your online information on business cards and offer an incentive for “liking” you on Facebook or following your blog.

MEASURING THE ROI OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA EFFORTS

Finally, don't forget to quantify the results of your blogging and Facebook postings. Here are just two possible ways you can do this:

1. Assign a point value to each action taken on a post. For example, a “like” on a Facebook post can be worth one point, a “comment” worth five points, and a “share” worth 10 points. If a blog post is reblogged, count it as 20 points.
2. Offer a limited-time promotion on both your practice's Facebook page and your blog. Track where each patient gets their promotion code from, and learn which site is generating the most new appointments.

Your blog and Facebook page should work hand-in-hand to increase appointments and referrals to your practice. You should not choose one or the other. Instead, work both types of platforms in tandem to increase your chances of success. **DE**

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