



# How to get your dental practice into the “In” group

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**ONLINE MARKETING** on Facebook and other social media sites is a lot like ... trying to work your way into one of those **high school cliques** that we all secretly desired to be part of. If you do not fit the criteria, you do not have a prayer of fitting in; there's no faking it. But if you can walk the walk and talk the talk, you just might find yourself welcomed into the inner circle.

Why are social sites so important to the success of your practice?

A report by Pew Research reveals that not only has social media use doubled in the past two years, the user demographic has shifted. Former college students are becoming part of the consumer base with the most purchasing power. These are the people making the money and the decisions about their health-care providers.

In order to be accepted by this audience, you have to ring true. High-power sales tactics will get you booted from their clique faster than you can say “Open wide!” There are several ways to increase your influence in the realm of social media:

**Be authentic.** You cannot expect everyday users of social networks to fall for hype and artificiality. The new generation of network users are savvy and on the alert for anything that seems the least bit forced. Your campaign needs to be laid back, friendly, and use real incentives instead of fancy sales talk to succeed.

**Example:** Instead of creating high-power sales copy/ads to post to your Facebook page, post a friendly informational video tied to a promotion for people who “like” it. This approach allows you to promote offers like Free Whitening for Life as part of your Facebook page without coming off as a salesperson. The act of “liking” is a simple,

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easy step toward converting the reader from an onlooker to a patient.

**Define yourself.** If people do not know who you are and what you stand for, they cannot identify with you. This means you have to promote your similarities to them before you start promoting yourself as the answer to their question or the solution to their problem.

**Example:** Use your Twitter account in tandem with your Facebook page to hook up with trending topics. Put your two cents in, and invite readers to do the same. Followers will be more likely to interact when they realize there is a personality behind a Facebook account instead of an advertising exec.

**Put your best face forward.** Video is becoming the most effective way to get fans to interact in social media. A quick 60- to 90-second video is easy to create and upload, and you do not have to be a model or actor to pull it off. Allowing different members of your staff to make videos is a great way to get exposure for your office family and make patients feel as if they know everyone in your practice.

**Example:** Demonstrating a technique or showing off a new reception area is a simple way to get your prospective patients into your office before they even walk through the door. Conclude with the invitation to come take a tour of your practice, or follow up with a special offer. You can target different demographics with each video.

The main rule of Facebook is that to make friends you have to be a friend. So dedicate some time each day to a little networking. Partner with other practices in related fields to promote them in return for a mention on their pages. This is a great way to bring everything to a local level.

**Example:** When a cosmetic dentist “likes” a Facebook page for a day spa or a hair removal clinic in the area, the spa or clinic may well return a “like” to the dentist’s page. This creates a wider pool of prospective clients for all concerned. Related niches in the health and beauty industry can be a great place to start building contacts.

You do not have to be a guru to make social media work for you. **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](mailto:kristie@mydentalcmo.com) or (888) 557-6443.*