

4 STEPS TO INCREASE FACEBOOK ENGAGEMENT FOR YOUR PRACTICE

BY **KRISTIE NATION**

You've set up your practice's Facebook page. You've managed to get patients and community members to "like" your page. You've even (finally!) gotten a handle on posting regularly. However, no one seems to interact with you. How can you increase engagement on your Facebook page?



STEP 1: DEFINE ENGAGEMENT.

The first thing you must do is define what you consider to be valuable engagement. Two main kinds of interaction can happen on your practice's Facebook page: impressions (based on liking, commenting, and sharing) and conversions (based on increased business for your practice).

While getting people to like, share, and comment on your posts is valuable because it indicates that you are being heard and listened to, the best engagement goes beyond the Facebook platform itself and comes back to your practice in two key ways: an increase in word-of-mouth referrals and a decrease in patient attrition.

STEP 2: AVOID COMMON MISTAKES.

There are a dozen things you can get wrong on Facebook, but we'll just focus on the top three. By side-stepping these Facebook blunders, you can increase your chances of meaningful engagement:

1. Posts that are too long can hurt engagement. Facebook's own guidelines tell us that posts that are between 100 and 250 characters (not words!) get 60% more likes, comments, and shares than longer posts. (Blame Twitter!)
2. Posts that require a complex response also limit engagement opportunities. People don't like to feel intimidated, so make calls to action simple. For example: "In ten words or less, what is your favorite thing about coming to our practice?"
3. Posts that fail to include a call to action get 48% less interaction than posts that do. Ask for likes, for comments, for shares, and for click-throughs to your practice website. If you don't ask, most people won't bother!

STEP 3: POST CONTENT THAT IS ENGAGEMENT-WORTHY.

You probably know by now that social media isn't primarily an "advertising platform." You have unlimited chances to connect with your target audience, but you have to be smart

about it. Social media isn't about selling your service; it's about selling the idea behind your service. You aren't offering a dental cleaning; you are offering healthy teeth for a lifetime.

- A picture is worth more than a thousand words (or 100 characters!). A study by HubSpot revealed that images on Facebook garner 39% more interaction than text posts. They also pull in 53% more likes, generate 104% more comments, and lead to 84% more click-throughs!
- Smile, and the world smiles with you. Using emoticons such as a smiley face or winky smiley face can actually increase engagement on your posts — to the tune of a 33% higher comment and share rate and a 57% higher like rate!
- Use "gamification" to draw people in. Ask them to "pick their favorite," run a quiz, or hold a trivia contest. Post the results on your practice website and invite people to come over and view them. Engagement could rise, on average, by 30%.

STEP 4: INTEGRATE, INTEGRATE, INTEGRATE.

Using Facebook is pointless if you don't tie it in to your practice in more than name. We've talked about using Facebook to drive traffic directly to your practice's website, but several other marketing verticals should also be connected, including:

1. Your other social media accounts — Tweet out your latest "quiz" or "contest" on Twitter to combine your audiences.
2. Your review system — Ask patients to "check in" and/or leave a review directly on your Facebook page. Then, be sure to monitor your page closely to thank people and keep an eye out for dissatisfaction.
3. Your printed material — Including your Facebook page URL gives potential patients the chance to check you out online to see what kind of image your practice is presenting.

These techniques can help you boost interactions and increase conversions. Facebook engagement won't fall into your lap; you do have to work with it! **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 (877) 746-4410.