



PRACTICE

SOCIAL MEDIA

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4 reasons dentists don't use social media—and why your practice should

FOR MANY PROFESSIONALS in scientific and medical fields, the world of social media may seem superficial, inaccurate, and overwhelming. However, being willing to navigate one or more platforms has almost become a requisite for success in the modern world.

If your dental practice hasn't ventured into the social landscape, it may be due to one of the various myths that persist about social media marketing. The top four reasons dentists fail to use social media are actually reasons they *should* be turning to social media to increase visibility, encourage practice growth, and enhance their practices' reputations.

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MYTH NO. 1: SOCIAL MEDIA ISN'T APPROPRIATE FOR SERIOUS PROFESSIONALS.

Many in professional fields see Facebook and Twitter as offbeat, unprofessional networks and tend to gather on LinkedIn instead. This is unproductive, however, for those who are trying to reach out to the general public; LinkedIn is still closer to a job-networking site and fails to connect businesses with those who are seeking information.

While Facebook may have been born from a misogynistic joke between college fraternity brothers, today 80% of Fortune 500 companies use the platform to reach their target audiences.¹ Eighty-three percent have Twitter accounts, and eight of the top 10 tweet almost daily.² If social media is deemed appropriate by General Motors, JetBlue, and Nike, it is appropriate for a dental practice.

MYTH NO. 2: PEOPLE DON'T USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR IMPORTANT RESEARCH.

While the running joke is that social media platforms are for posting pet pictures and detailing the specifics of daily meals, many consumers use their favorite platforms for advice on everything from what car seat to buy for a newborn to which dentist can best treat an impacted wisdom tooth.

In fact, a recent survey by the National Research Corporation revealed that over one-third of respondents have sought health advice from peers on social media, over 45% look for health information on social sites as opposed to scholarly medical sites, and nearly 60% will rate their experiences with providers on social platforms.³ This provides an opportunity for a dental practice to provide high-quality information.

MYTH NO. 3: IT'S ALL OR NOTHING.

Many dentists balk at getting started on social media because the advice they are given is often overwhelming. A speaker at

a continuing education event will be swift to advise a multi-pronged approach and insist that accounts be opened and maintained on a wide range of platforms—including Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Google+, YouTube, and Instagram.

In reality, the smarter way to get started on social media is to pick one platform—usually Facebook or Instagram—and learn to excel on that platform before test-driving others. If a dental practice figures out how to effectively leverage Facebook first, adding a second social network makes more sense.

MYTH NO. 4: THERE'S NO ROOM IN THE BUDGET FOR MORE MARKETING SPENDING.

Perhaps the most persistent myth is that social media is too expensive—in terms of actual dollars and in terms of hours devoted to platform activity—to be a viable form of marketing. Advertising is expensive, and without the ability to accurately measure ROI, social media can seem like a money pit.

However, if social media is analyzed like any other form of marketing, if goals that have a real impact on the practice are set, and if a monetary value is assigned to these goals, suddenly the picture changes. Digital marketing spending on social media has exploded in the past five years, and it's expected to expand by 126% over the next five years.⁴ If your practice isn't allocating a share of its marketing budget to social media, it should be.

Don't be afraid of social media. Used properly, it can be a powerful tool to provide both existing and new patients with accurate information, reassurance, and confidence—and it can pay out huge dividends in return. **DE**

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