



**PRACTICE**

**SOCIAL MEDIA**

# Kristie Nation

## Using Instagram for your dental practice

**ARE YOU USING INSTAGRAM FOR YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE?**

If not, perhaps you should be. Of the 2015 Fortune 500 companies, 250 are using Instagram—double the number from 2013.<sup>1</sup> If subsidiaries are included, Fortune 500 companies' usage of Instagram this year actually exceeded their usage of Facebook and Twitter for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

**INSTAGRAM IN DENTISTRY**

Dental practices can take advantage of the benefits Instagram has to offer in various ways. Since Instagram is a visual platform, it is most effective when used for emotional, positive content: Think patient smiles, office upgrades, Patient or Team Member of the Month announcements, special events and promotions, behind-the-scenes images, and photos of dentists and staff members participating in community events.

Hashtags significantly increase interaction on Instagram. Use industry-specific hashtags, like #dental, #dentalcare, #dentist, and #dentists, as well as more generic terms like #smile (wildly popular), seasonal tags like #HalloweenCandy, fun tags like #ToothFairy, and localized "geo" hashtags for posts about community involvement.<sup>2</sup>

**BIG BRANDS DOING IT RIGHT**

Dental practices can benefit from approaching social media like the big companies do. After all, these companies have spent millions on marketing research, and certain broad truths remain static across industries. A couple of the early Fortune 500 brands that embraced Instagram include Starbucks and Southwest Airlines.

One of the very first adopters of Instagram, Starbucks remains the second-highest brand in the Fortune 500 list when it comes to raw follower count and the top brand when it comes to interaction.<sup>1</sup> They are also the Fortune 500's "Best All Around Instagram Account."<sup>1</sup> The brand's 2012 "Behind the Scenes" campaign offered transparency into the making of their product, and it paid off tremendously by building consumer trust.<sup>3</sup> Dental practices depend on trust of their patients, so this could be a great example to follow.

Southwest Airlines was another major brand to jump on Instagram's potential. They encouraged people to share their travel experiences, then reshared them across Instagram and Twitter, winning the hearts of travel geeks across the globe.<sup>4</sup> Encourage patients to snap pics with the dentist and share them on their own feeds, tagging your practice for additional fun and exposure.

**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 mydentalcmo@gmail.com or (877) 746-4410.

The following accounts are all Fortune 500 leaders on Instagram in various categories:

- **Nike**—Most popular Instagram account<sup>1</sup>
- **Publix**—Most impressive Instagram growth<sup>1</sup>
- **FootLocker**—Most avid Instagrammers<sup>1</sup>
- **Disney**—Best Instagram videos<sup>1</sup>

**FILTERING**

While Fortune 500 brands rarely, if ever, use filters (their images tend to be professional, polished, and branded), dental practices can encourage the use of and have fun with filters. Using filters also means that your #nofilter-tagged posts will get even more attention, which is perfect when you are trying to showcase things like tooth whitening. You can also have a "filter of the day" occasionally and encourage followers to post their favorite smile with the appropriate filter.

**PAY-TO-PLAY INSTAGRAM**

Once you feel comfortable using Instagram for your dental practice, you can start checking out advanced features. Instagram allows you to use three different kinds of sponsored posts:

- **Photo ads** are simple, clean, and easy to use. Add text encouraging the viewers to visit your practice website or call.
- **Video ads** let the dentist connect directly with viewers and start building that all-important trust.
- **Carousel ads** allow smartphone users to swipe through a gallery and click the call to action.

Don't miss out on Instagram as an important tool your practice can use for more online visibility! It's a fun, interactive platform your staff and patients will all enjoy. **DE**

**REFERENCES**

1. Ganim Barnes N, Lescault AM, Holmes G. The 2015 Fortune 500 and social media: Instagram gains, blogs lose. UMass Dartmouth website. <http://www.umassd.edu/cmrr/socialmediaresearch/2015fortune500>. Published February 2016. Accessed August 2, 2016.
2. Mickelson M. #Hashtags should make you smile. ProSites Blog. <http://www.prosites.com/blog/post/2015/10/09/Hashtags-Should-Make-You-Smile.aspx>. Published October 9, 2015. Accessed August 2, 2016.
3. Raj B. Brand value lessons from Starbucks Instagram campaign. Hashmeta. <http://www.hashmeta.com/blog/brand-value-lessons-from-starbucks-instagram-campaign>. Published August 17, 2014. Accessed August 2, 2016.
4. Southwest Airlines and Instagram marketing: How Southwest connects with passengers. Expio. <http://expioconsulting.com/southwest-airlines-instagram-marketing>. Published November 2015. Accessed August 2, 2016.