



PRACTICE

SOCIAL MEDIA

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Have your New Year's promises fallen flat? Make social media resolutions that actually stick

THE NEW YEAR IS A TIME FOR RESOLUTIONS—making them, trying to keep them, and (all too often) giving up before January is over. Maybe you decided that 2017 would be the year for social media and your practice, but now you're realizing that it's already February and your well-laid plans still haven't materialized.

It's not too late. You can start today and launch your practice into the world of social media by developing just five habits.

PLAN AHEAD

Every month, sit down and plan the next month's social calendar.¹ Make sure you list the major holidays, look for some minor ones to add interest and fun (e.g., Taco Day or Take Your Daughter to Work Day), and generate ideas to fill your calendar out to at least 30 posts.¹

Approximately 24 of the posts should be nonpromotional, while the remaining six can directly promote your practice, dentists, team, and any special offers, events, or community efforts. Aim to complete this task by the 10th–15th of each month for the following month.

PICK YOUR PLATFORM(S)

You might want to focus on one platform or experiment across a range of platforms. Your choice should take into account the following factors:

- **The average age and gender of your patients**—Women are likely to spend more time on Pinterest or Instagram, while men prefer Google+ or Facebook.[#] Older patients are more likely to use Facebook than Instagram.[#]
- **The type and length of the posts you want to share**—Obviously, images do well on Pinterest and Instagram, two-paragraph posts are better suited to Facebook, and short posts are ideal for Twitter.²
- **The amount of feedback you expect**—With any social media platform, staying on top of responses is crucial. Facebook and Twitter make it easy for users to reach out directly on the platform, and both must be monitored closely in case of any issues that need to be addressed.

MAKE VIDEOS

Even if it's just once a week, generate a simple, fast, and candid video with the help of your smartphone. Post the

videos you create to YouTube and link to them on Facebook. After Google, YouTube is the world's biggest search engine,³ so take advantage of the versatility it offers to let you connect with your core audience. Of all of the types of content on Facebook, video posts generate the most responses.⁴

POST CONSISTENTLY

If you can only post to one platform once per day, start there. If you can manage two posts or two platforms a day, that's great. But you have to be consistent, so don't let a week drift by without a post. If you find it difficult to make time to publish a post each day, spend a few hours at the start of the month prescheduling posts using an app such as HootSuite or Buffer. Facebook has an internal post scheduler as well. Then you can post spontaneously or for extra visibility when you have time.

PAY TO PLAY

Consider budgeting a small amount of money each month to promote your practice's Facebook posts. If a post shows signs of good traction—with lots of likes, comments, or shares—you can pay to boost its reach. Other platforms also have advertising programs that might work for your practice.

Even after January has passed, *now* is always a good time to make a resolution. This year should be your practice's time to shine online, so dip your toe in the pond of social media and see how many ripples you can make. **DE**

REFERENCES

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