



## PRACTICE

### SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Is your dental practice on Instagram?

**IN 2010**, 97% of dentists who used social media said they used Facebook, while 38% said they used LinkedIn, and 32% said they used Twitter.<sup>1</sup> In 2018, social has become massively visual, and Instagram is now attracting the attention of savvy dentists seeking to showcase their work.

Although Facebook and Twitter are still popular destinations for dental offices seeking to create a social presence, Instagram is making a place for itself as a platform for dental practice promotion. The visual nature of the platform and its ability to connect users within tight geographic areas make it ideal for practices looking for new ways to connect in their own communities.

Of internet users aged 18–29, 64% are on Instagram, compared to 40% of internet users aged 30–49.<sup>2</sup> Of internet users overall, 18% check their Instagram feeds more than once a day.<sup>3</sup> Integrated with Facebook feeds and sharing hashtags with Twitter, Instagram has become a way for dentists to expand their social reach and share their patients' smiles.

There are many ways you can leverage Instagram's popularity to improve your practice's reach.

### CREATE A BUSINESS ACCOUNT

As with any social platform, the best promotion methods and platform metrics are available to those who use business accounts instead of personal accounts. There's nothing wrong with a dentist having a personal Instagram account and even cross-sharing posts from time to time, but a professional, practice-centric Instagram account is a must. A personal account can be linked to a professional account using hashtags or profile links in the personal account bio.<sup>4</sup>

### MAKE YOUR ACCOUNT LOCAL AND BRANDED

Include your dental practice name, phone number, city and state, and a link to your website. Make a list of hashtags to use that connect to your local practice area. If you are in a well-populated area with lots of other practices competing for business, you may wish to be as specific as neighborhoods.

### HASHTAG, HASHTAG, HASHTAG

While Twitter is hashtag-heavy and even Facebook has jumped on the hashtag train, Instagram users live for hashtags. Hashtags sort your content into searchable categories, so you'll want to use obvious hashtags like

#dentistry, and you shouldn't be afraid to be more specific and tag your specialty, such as #orthodontics or #pediatricdentistry. You could even go as far as #braces or #Invisalign, and don't forget to use generic tags, such as #happysmiles and #whitenyoursmile. Always use a consistent hashtag for your practice itself and add hashtags for your geographic location. You can use up to 30 hashtags on a single post,<sup>5</sup> so build a strong list and tag each image with as many as apply.

### SEEK OUT INFLUENCERS

If you can find a local Instagram influencer in the health or beauty vertical (someone who has a massive following and lots of interaction), you might consider providing some services to that person in exchange for posts. Influencers help more than 64% of marketers boost their brands.<sup>6</sup> This could be a wise way to allocate some of your marketing dollars, rather than spending them on ads alone.

### TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INSTAGRAM'S STORY FUNCTION

In 2017, Instagram copied the Story function from Snapchat and quickly outpaced its fellow image-sharing platform's counterpart. For dental practices, the potential is unique: with permission from a patient, an entire case could be documented and shared as an inspiring story on the platform.

### CONSIDER PAID ADS ON INSTAGRAM

While ads were slow to take off on Instagram, business account owners are now finding that they pay off. In early 2017, the number of monthly advertisers on Instagram surpassed the one million mark, and more than 120 million users in that one-month time span used Instagram to visit a website, get directions to a location, or call, email, or direct message a business.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, Instagram is a powerful visual tool worth adding to any practice's social media marketing. With so much potential to showcase smiles and a user base heavily into fitness and health, it's the next big thing for dentists seeking to enhance their online profiles. **DE**

**Editor's note:** References are available online. Visit [dentaleconomics.com](http://dentaleconomics.com) and search "Nation."

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