

Up the Authenticity Factor on Your Dermatology Social Media



Strike the right tone and find the balance needed to truly engage with your current and potential patients.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> In modern digital marketing, a social media presence is considered almost as essential as a website. Most dermatology practices have profiles on a few major networks and post a few times a month to keep them active. However, very few invest the time and effort to make the most of the opportunity. Now, it is more important than ever.

WHY YOU CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO IGNORE SOCIAL MARKETING

Social media use has been increasing for years, and it jumped dramatically due to COVID-19 restrictions. From researching and shopping to alleviating boredom, many people moved offline activities online. With people feeling isolated and craving connection, social media was a natural digital destination.

In a survey conducted at the height of the pandemic (reported by DigitalCommerce360.com), nearly three-quarters of respondents said their social media use had increased. Additionally, most people reported a change in the content of the newsfeed, describing it as overwhelmingly stressful.

Naturally, these record-high levels of social media use will drop a bit as people begin going out again and some normalcy returns. However, as the “new normal” takes hold, we all know it will be different. Fears of physical contact will linger, as will the need for connection. That, coupled with the fact that habits tend to stay once established, means that social media’s role as a hub of activity is here to stay.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTICITY

Businesses, particularly those in the healthcare sector, have ethical and legal obligations to professionalism. Public communications are typically written in formal language,

using carefully produced images and an impersonal tone. Many dermatology practices use a similar style for social media posts. Unfortunately, it does not resonate with audiences on these networks. Consumers want honest comments, candid snapshots, conversation, and most of all a feeling of connection. It is, after all, social media.

Maintaining professionalism while keeping up with the inherently casual nature of social media can be a bit of a balancing act. Your practice’s page should be friendly and inviting, with some personality or even humor in the posts. Yet, you need to be careful not to cross the line with any posts that could be viewed as offensive or unprofessional in any way. Additionally, you need to be mindful of the fact that it is a public forum, and patient privacy protections apply.

The key to achieving this difficult balance is authenticity. Don’t try too hard to project a polished image of your practice. Instead, let your audience get to know your clinicians and staff, give them some insights on your approach



DID YOU KNOW?

72% of respondents to a summer 2020 survey say their social media use increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media posting increased for 43% of respondents (DigitalCommerce360.com).

to dermatology, let them see what your office is like, and demonstrate your interest in community. Simply stated, your audience isn't looking for perfection, they are looking for authenticity.

Social media users are inundated with people and brands striving to project an image, which is sometimes far from reality. Long before COVID-19, they craved authenticity. Now, daily life feels a bit surreal, and people value human interaction more than ever. They do not want carefully prepared statements and over-produced videos.

SIMPLE TIPS TO MAKE YOUR MEDIA MORE SOCIAL

Keep it short and sweet. The maximum post length varies greatly from one platform to the next with Facebook being one of the most generous. A Facebook post can be over 60,000 characters, roughly equal to about 40 pages of text. That doesn't mean you should turn your post into an e-book. In fact, HubSpot research found the ideal length for best engagement to be just 40 characters.

Storytelling. It began with Snap Chat Stories, a feature so popular it was soon replicated on other social networks. Today, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp have "Stories" features with more than 500 million users each. This type of post is considered fun, spontaneous, personal, and most importantly authentic. If you aren't posting stories, start now.

Candid photos. If you are familiar with social media marketing at all, you probably know that visual content is king. Posting pictures of your office and team is a great way to customize and personalize your page. Ironically, the more effort you put into staging the perfect photo, the less impact it will have. For example, if you have a birthday party for a staff member, don't have everyone stop and pose for a group photo. Instead, snap a few candid shots. Researchers from University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business recently conducted a study, which confirmed that people find candid photos more genuine and interesting.

Live video. Editing and postproduction can be pricey, even for a short video. Moreover, those polished clips lack the authenticity that social media users crave. Don't be afraid to post short, genuine, raw videos. Even better, try live streaming. It is the ultimate in authenticity, and the ideal format for interactivity. Not surprisingly, 82 percent of consumers say they would rather view live video from a brand than a typical social post. The possibilities are virtually endless, ranging from hosting a skincare Q&A to livestreaming your presentation at a conference.

Add a sprinkle of emojis. In face-to-face conversations, actual words only comprise a portion of the communication. Non-verbal communications add context, emotions,

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subtle nuances, and other information. Plain text is one-dimensional, lacking depth and sometimes leaving room for misinterpretation. That is why 95 percent of the online population has used emojis, with most people using them regularly. Used appropriately, emojis can add personality, bring your social posts to life, and improve engagement. However, be careful not to overdo it. Emojis should be used sparingly and impactfully.

A BALANCED EFFORT

The two biggest mistakes dermatology practices make in social media is trying too hard, and not trying hard enough. In the first scenario, they put so much effort into perfect posts that they lose authenticity. The page looks like nothing more than an advertisement for the practice. In the second scenario, they don't make an effort to monitor the accounts and respond to communications, post on a regular schedule, or evaluate analytics and find out what their audiences want. All too often, practices do both—and the result is a lot of wasted effort. It only takes a few simple changes to tap into the power of social media marketing. ■

For help upping your social media game, reach out to Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, at 855-598-3320. He has been a leader in medical marketing for over a decade. Ekwa provides comprehensive marketing solutions for busy dermatologists, with a team of more than 180 full time professionals, providing web design, hosting, content creation, social media, reputation management, SEO, and more.