

Top Tips for Increasing Social Media Engagement



It takes time to grow your base, but if you know your audience and strategize, you can see gains.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH

>> You know that social media is important, and you have taken all the right steps. Your dermatology practice is on major platforms, the profiles are complete, and you post regularly. Yet, nothing is happening. It is as if your posts are invisible, disappearing into the vast sea of content with hardly anyone noticing. Don't worry; you are not alone. Increasing the social media engagement rate is a common challenge. Fortunately, it is a challenge that you can overcome.

OPTIMIZE YOUR CONTENT

One of the first bits of advice that any social media expert will give is to create engaging content. It sounds simple enough but leaves the listener with one question: How? The answer to that one is not quite so simple, and it varies from one social network to the next. For example, the type of post with the highest engagement rate on Instagram is the carousel, a format that is not even available on many networks. However, there are several tried and true tactics that tend to garner high engagement in most situations. These include:

- **Ask questions.** This is one of the simplest and most effective ways to encourage engagement and open communication with your audience. It can be something fun like an outrageous photo accompanied by, "Check out this makeup trend!!! Would you wear it?" Or you can start a serious conversation with an ABCDE infographic and a question like, "How often do you check your skin?" You can even do some very small-scale market research with a question like, "Would your mom rather have a pampering peel or a Botox boost as a Mother's Day gift?"
- **Use hashtags appropriately.** Be careful here because too many irrelevant hashtags will make your post look spammy. However, they are an excellent tool for increasing brand exposure and post performance when used judiciously. Branded hashtags are great for contest entries and encouraging user-generated content.

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Popular, descriptive hashtags may appear in search results, and they help viewers instantly identify the post's topic. Research suggests that hashtags increase engagement by 50 percent or more.

- **Get visual.** Images catch attention. They can also communicate a concept, provide information, or evoke emotion at a glance without the need to read a lengthy block of text. In the highly distracting environment of social media, this instant connection is your friend. Posts with quality images and short accompanying text tend to perform well. In one survey, 68 percent of social media users said that images are their favorite type of content to engage with.
- **Use video.** For a few years, this has been the trend that you cannot afford to ignore, and it is still growing. Video is the content that social media users most like to see from brands, and more than half of them say that they want to see more of it. In order to get an edge in the highly competitive atmosphere of video marketing, make sure you keep up with the latest trends. Most recently, short-form and vertical format videos have been the highest performing types.

OPTIMIZE YOUR POSTING STRATEGY

Excellent content is essential—but it is not everything. You also need a good strategy for when, where, and how often to post it.

>> MARKETING MATTERS

- **Tailor your posts for each network.** Cross-posting and cross-promoting are great tactics, but it can be easy to take the concept too far. Every network is a little different. LinkedIn is great for professional networking, but your audience is not likely to appreciate silly dermatology memes. On the other hand, humor and fun perform well on Facebook, but that audience is probably not interested in your analysis of the latest laser therapy.
- **Post when your audience is online.** Optimal posting times will vary, depending on your region and the demographics of your targeted audience. However, research shows that midday is generally the best time for posting on Facebook and Twitter, while early in the day is best for Instagram.
- **Make use of new and creative features.** Consider stories, creative photo layouts, YouTube Shorts, Instagram Reels, Facebook Live, etc. The list of social media features and post types is virtually endless and constantly changing. Try out the ones you haven't used and see how your followers respond. Similarly, when new features appear, be among the first to try them, and ask your audience for feedback.
- **Be responsive.** Engagement is not a one-way street. Particularly in the isolation of the COVID-19 era, everyone is looking for ways to connect. When your social profiles receive comments or direct messages, reply promptly. When users share your content or mention your practice, engage with their posts.
- **Don't neglect the rest of your strategy.** Social media is an essential component of digital marketing, but it is far from the whole package. Your website, local search optimization, and internet-wide reputation management are the foundation of successful marketing for dermatology practices. A strong social presence will not compensate for a weak foundation.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Even the best tips for increasing your engagement rate come with one caveat: your mileage may vary. Statistics and experience tell us what usually works best. However, every audience is a little different. Perhaps the best and most helpful tip of all is to know your audience.

Start by reviewing your analytics to determine the current average engagement rate on each network. As you revise your strategy, keep a close eye on those analytics. Pay attention to what types of posts, times of day, and

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other factors lead to higher than (your) average engagement and which ones perform below average. Perpetually review, analyze, and revise your strategy according to your data.

FINAL THOUGHTS: HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Unless you are fortunate enough to launch a spectacularly viral video, your social media performance is not going to change overnight. It probably will not even change dramatically in the span of a week or a month. When you revise your strategy, you turn the wheel and begin going in the right direction, but it will take some time to get there. ■

Naren Arulrajah, President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, 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. If you're looking for ways to boost your marketing results, call 855-598-3320 for a free strategy session with Naren. You may also schedule a session at your convenience with the Senior Director of Marketing - Lila, by clicking www.ekwa.com/msm/ or simply sending a text to 313-777-8494.