



Instagram 101 for Dentists – How to Expand Your Audience and Popularize Your Practice

April 26, 2019

by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing

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The internet is fast turning out to be the biggest “city” across the globe, with hundreds of millions of people logged in at any point in time. For dental marketers, this is a networking boon, as you no longer have to rely on expensive mainstream-media campaigns, to promote your practice.

Today, social media is becoming the place to go – to catch up on trending news, and to create conscious trends that are indeed newsworthy. Instagram is a booming social-media platform, and an absolute must-have on every socially-aware dentist’s marketing list.

Here are some quick stats on Instagram as a global social platform:

- 1 billion users, with a balanced profile in the US
- Actively used by the youth (71% of users are under 35)

- Over 90% of American users also link to other social media platforms (like YouTube, Facebook, etc.)

As you can see, Instagram is truly a great way to connect with your potential patients. Here are some proven Instagram tips to help you use this platform to your business advantage.

Build a “Socially-trendy” Instagram Brand

As a dental marketer, you should understand the potent value of an appealing brand presence. If you create this appeal consciously in your Instagram profile, it can serve as a persuasive platform to popularize your practice. For this, here are three straightforward tips to get you started.

1. Hook your audience with an interesting and informative bio

The Instagram bio is the first thing your audience “sees” about you or your dental practice. They also see it often, yet take less than a second to form a lifetime opinion. Finally (and most importantly), your audience makes the decision to “follow” you based on this bio.

For all these reasons, your Instagram bio needs to pack a punch, so it hooks your audience and connects them to your business. Instagram also allows you to have one clickable link in this bio. Business users frequently update this to

connect their followers to their web page, their Facebook or YouTube posts, or even the landing page of a recently launched campaign.

2. Choose a “business” account on Instagram

If you are using this platform to promote your dental practice, it makes sense to go with a business account. Yes, you lose some minor perks that are associated with a private account (like keeping your Instagram posts private). However, entrepreneurs often find these irrelevant to promoting a business. With a business account, you will also have access to Instagram’s business tools, which can help you:

- Link to your Facebook Business account, so the social media for your company stays seamless and consistent.
- Get Instagram’s insights into detailed statistics about your account, to help you better understand your audience.
- Direct your audience to your business through a “Contact” button. (This can include your business number, email, or even a website address.)
- Increase online visibility within your industry.

- Redirect your audience to your online business campaigns, through posts with clickable links. (This is not allowed in private accounts.)

3. Stay consistent with your dental brand

Instagram posts allow you to use both text and pictures. Here, ensure that both are consistent with your dental practice brand. This means that you consciously use the logo, color palette, fonts, motifs and other design elements of your brand, so your audience quickly learns to associate your Instagram profile with your business.

Your brand is also likely to have been designed to connect with your audience, so you do not have to replicate this effort again on Instagram. Finally, this increases your brand's recall value and strengthens your overall business.

Set Clear Marketing Goals for Your Instagram Account

It is important for business owners to associate their Instagram activity with the success of their business. For this, set clear goals, just like you would with other marketing platforms. This includes addressing:

- WHAT you want to promote on Instagram – like your brand, your practice culture, your dental services and products, an upcoming campaign, etc.
- WHY your audience should care about it (what is in it for them).
- HOW they can take it forward, and connect with your business.

Here are three tips to make this seamless.

1. Post constantly and consistently

This is marketing 101. If your audience knows upfront to expect a post from you, they are more likely to visit your account. Here, experts suggest that business owners post at least 1-2 times a day to keep their audience engaged and connected. (More posts will neither help nor harm your business.)

2. Attract your audience with gripping captions and hashtags

Do you remember those three-second ads that appear out of nowhere, yet tempt you to check them out for sure? Instagram allows you to do this with captions. This is the reason they compel you to keep it brief (about 2200 characters) yet exciting (this is on you). In addition to this, #hashtags can be a great way to build your exclusive brand presence in the online world. In fact, you should especially design your hashtags to highlight your brand.

3. Stay current and hence relevant

A good marketing platform will allow you to study the results of your campaigns, and update your campaign to stay relevant to your audience. With an Instagram business account, you can use the analytics and statistics generated from your posts to better understand your target audience, and hence fine-tune your future posts. Here, good Instagramers also find ingenious ways to connect their posts with other trending news/ posts, so they always stay current and hence relevant.

Engage with Your Target Audience

The only way your dental business can thrive on the internet, is when it inter-connects with your target audience. In fact, any platform can get monotonous and stagnant when it is a one-way street. To avoid this rut, here are five tips to engage actively with your target audience.

1. Spread the Instagram love

This is where you collaborate with other Instagramers relevant to your industry, so you both get twice the love. If you are a dentist with your own private practice in a well-known building, perhaps you can join forces with a business in the same building– like a massage therapist or an aesthetician – so both your businesses are advertised on both your Instagram profiles.

You can also find ways to support other businesses advertised on Instagram, so their audience also comes to know about your business. This way, your business has multiple entry points to broadcast its presence in the Instagram world.

2. Share #Stories

If there is one challenge entrepreneurs frequently face on Instagram, it is to personalize their profile without diluting their brand. You do not want to alienate your audience by using Instagram solely as a business-marketing tool. Here, #stories with plenty of #hashtags are a great way to personalize your connect with your online audience.

You can share your own startup story, or the story behind a recently launched dental service or product. You can also share stories of the people that make your practice so wonderful, yet so humane. (Remember to back these up with pictures of their real faces.) As the wise Native Indian proverb says, “Tell me a fact and I’ll learn. Tell me a truth and I’ll believe. But tell me a story and it will live in my heart forever.”

3. Interact with your audience

When fellow Instagramers comment on your posts, respond to every single one of them at an individual level, this reiterates that you are listening to them just as you appreciate their audience.

You can also quickly build your community by reposting from your audience. In fact, studies have found that reposts are more likely to go viral than individual posts.

4. Include #Contests

Contests and competitions are a great way to excite your audience, and hence get them engaged. Here, you can invite their participation through:

- Images – For instance, you can ask them to share their own photo stories where they used and loved your product.
- Comments – Perhaps you can invite them to create the tag line for your new dental service, or create innovative hashtags for a recently launched product.
- Likes for your posts – Perhaps you can run a monthly contest where users with maximum likes on your posts get a free T-shirt with your practice logo.

5. Keep your posts interesting

The day your audience begins to predict your posts, your Instagram account is as good as redundant. Your Instagram needs to be unique, not just from other users, but also from other online portals and social media platforms. This means that you cannot afford to put the same few posts on #Facebook, #Instagram, #Twitter, #YouTube, your business #Website, and expect a diverse audience across these posts.

However, you can and should use your posts across platforms, to feed into each other, with deliberate, exclusive and intriguing snippets. This can be a great way to build your brand and expand your online presence.

Takeaway

In summary, an increasing number of dentists are learning to expand their business purely through the tools provided by the internet. Gone are the days of long-winding sales campaigns and expensive paid ads. Today, the key word is “personalized engagement”. Instagram can help you seamlessly achieve this ideal, if you use it well for your dental practice.

About the Author

Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists. With a team of 180+ full time marketers, www.ekwa.com helps dentists who know where they want



to go, get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855-598-3320 to speak one-on-one with Naren.