

# Social Media and Your Dental or Medical Practice

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The ubiquitous nature of social has made it an important place for consumer and brand interactions. People want quick access to the brands they like and they want those brands to engage with them in a way that makes them feel special and unique. This expectation is increasingly spilling into the healthcare space as well. Your patients are using different social platforms to not only look for healthcare brands, but they are also using social to look for healthcare specific information. Even a single, one-time social interaction can open up a patient to a variety of social influences such as opinions of other patients, reviews about a practice, and treatment options among others.

So if you are on social, then chances are potential patients will come across your brand at some point. The big question however is this – *how do you want patients to view your dental or medical brand on social?*

## How can Healthcare Brands Connect with “Social Patients?”

A large majority of all patients use social for various reasons, such as asking for advice, to look up a healthcare practice/professional, to read patient reviews, etc., both before and after a healthcare consultation. This behavior provides healthcare providers and brands with an opportunity to use social platforms to build brand presence.

Some of the ways of building a social presence for your dental or medical brand is by sharing unique attributes of your practice, talking about the different services that you offer, providing advice on service/treatment outcomes, or even to introduce or talk about specific or new services. However, when talking about any new treatment or service options, it is always prudent to mention that the service meets all the guidelines as laid down by a healthcare authority such as FDA or ADA. This adds credibility to what you are saying; and if there is one thing that moves social folks, it is brand credibility.

You can also share other aspects of your dental or medical brand that make you unique – talk about your staff and their role in ensuring optimized patient experiences, mention any philanthropic activities, and highlight your best patient testimonials.

## How Social Media can Impact Patient Outcome?

Social is a powerful tool for communicating and interacting with patients and other physicians, for educating your patients and for sharing ideas. You can use social to involve your patients in managing and monitoring their oral and physical health. Healthcare monitoring and management is particularly important for patients with other underlying conditions such as hypertension, coronary disease and diabetes, etc.

Engaging with patients through social media can help in building a better sense of responsibility on their part. A dental practice can provide regular oral health updates to their patients, talk about preventive care, educate them about important aspects of oral care such as gum disease – symptoms, treatment, diet, etc.

There are so many resources out there on healthcare; but sadly a large majority of those resources provide incomplete or even worse wrong advice/information about health conditions. And while not all healthcare advice is appropriate for every kind of patient, knowledge about a health condition can help encourage patients to consult with their own healthcare professional to see if it's right for them.

So while there are multiple ways in which you can use social to impact patient outcome, the most effective way of doing so is by increasing awareness as it sets a positive precedence of building a social audience that is more informed and aware.



# Social Media and your Dental Practice



## INTRODUCTION

The highly interactive nature of social has disrupted traditional marketing by creating a platform for highly personalized patient and brand engagement in real-time.

### Social Media is Transforming Healthcare



90%

of millennials say they would trust medical information that is shared on social media by others.



66%

of healthcare professionals use social media for professional purposes and are more likely to use open forum as opposed to an online community of only healthcare professionals.



49%

of patients expect a healthcare practice to respond to appointment requests and follow-up discussions over social within a few hours.



### Social for Dental Practices should be About



Creating social connections by focusing on building genuine relationships with a community of engaged patients.



Encouraging communication between a patient and a dental brand in way that is honest and delivers specific value to the patient.



Delivering personalized brand interactions by not only listening to what patients say about the brand but also by actively responding.



Offering patients something of value in the form of interesting, useful, and highly relevant information.



### 4 Steps to Creating a Strong Social Presence for your Dental Brand



#### Go where your Audience is most Active

Identify the platforms your audiences are most active on and focus your brand building efforts in that direction. While some patients might be active over Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn you may find your younger audience more active over Snapchat, Instagram, and YouTube.



#### Get Proactive about Social Branding

Encourage conversations, respond to queries, ask for feedback on how your brand is doing, and provide content on a consistent basis.



#### Use Visual Media to Build Audience Interest

Posts that include visual elements such as photos, images, and in particular videos get much higher engagement rates than posts with only text.



#### Partner with Social Influencers

Social influencers already have their own well established and loyal social following. Partnering with these social giants can greatly improve the reach and engagement potential of your dental brand. Actively share, like and reply to posts from influencers and thank them when they share or promote your content.



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## Use Social to Improve your Digital Footprint

The thing about a digital footprint is that once it is there, you just have to continuously build it to reflect a positive brand. Again, social can be a great platform for achieving this goal. Social makes it easy for healthcare brands to proactively improve patient experience by carefully monitoring their social behavior and activity; following social conversations can give you an idea of what patients are thinking, the kind of advice they are interested in, and what you can do better to meet their needs and expectations.

Health support groups on social for specific disease(s) or Twitter chats for example can provide insight into what is urgently attracting patient attention. While a majority of people engaging in these conversations might already have the condition that the conversation is centered around, a substantial section of this audience will also include people who want to be educated about the condition so they know what to watch out for or how to prevent it, or are in contact with someone who might be suffering from the disease. So right there you have different audience sections with different interests about the same health condition. Appealing to these people with content in the form of articles, blogs, videos and conversations that are specific to their needs is a great way of building social footprint. If you can position yourself as an authority, then social audiences will naturally come to you for advice or to be better educated.

## Dealing with Negative Feedback on Social

Social is the last place where you want to get into an argument with anyone. You can always engage in a healthy debate, or a mildly opinioned conversation; just don't give people the opportunity to speak negatively about your brand. When you encounter negative comments, thank the person for their comment, acknowledge their right to an opinion, politely provide your side of the story/opinion, and ask them if there is any way for you to remedy the situation. If you receive a positive response then go ahead. But if not, then it is best to not engage further.

Lastly remember that any communication between patients and healthcare professionals are highly regulated. Consult and coordinate with your legal counsel and compliance experts before engaging with patients on any digital platform, social included to reduce/avoid any risk of liability.

## Conclusion

Social is a fantastic place for building a positive and interactive channel of communication with your patients. Engagement via social can be highly rewarding if you understand what your audience needs and what you can do to deliver on their expectations. You can use social to build authority, attract a highly engaged audience base, and to expand your brand presence using quality-based and highly relevant content.

### **About the Author:**

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