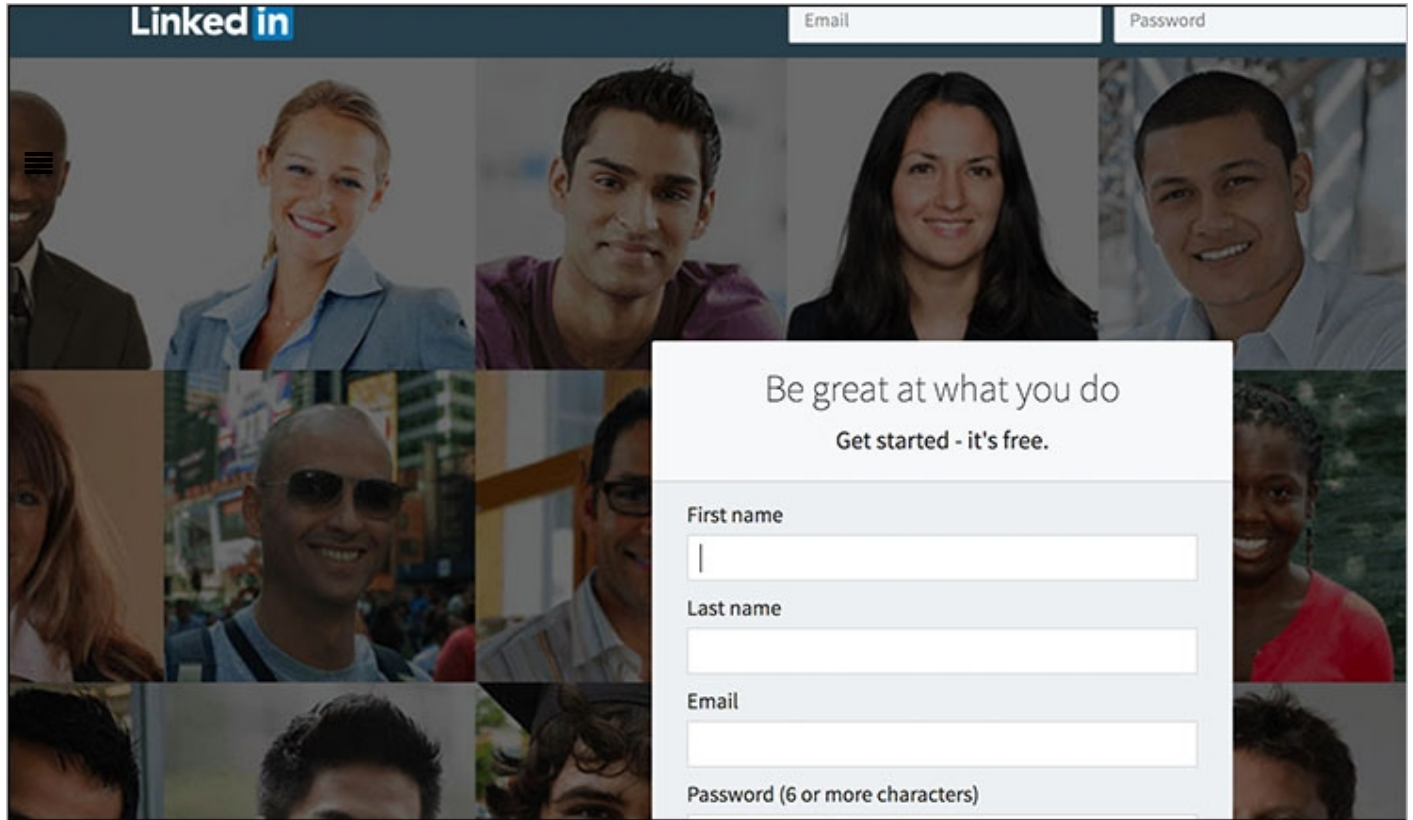


Use LinkedIn to Promote Your Dental Practice

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When you consider social media marketing for your dental practice, you likely think of Facebook or Instagram. LinkedIn probably isn't your top priority, and it possibly isn't even part of your marketing strategy. For more than a decade, it has been regarded as little more than a job-hunting website, or perhaps a place for your online resume.

As recently as 2016, there was widespread speculation (<http://www.zeebiz.com/companies/news-microsoft-buys-linkedin-here-are-5-companies-that-it-bought-and-shut-down-soon-after-2273>) that LinkedIn would shut down after Microsoft purchased it. Instead, the network has experienced explosive growth, with a broad user demographic.

What does this mean for your dental practice? It means opportunities, not only for professional networking but also for patient retention and acquisition. With half a billion users (<https://blog.linkedin.com/2017/april/24/the-power-of-linkedins-500-million-community>) and more than 9 million companies represented, LinkedIn has quietly grown into a social marketing powerhouse.

Who Uses LinkedIn?

There are millions of healthcare professionals active on LinkedIn, so it should come as no surprise that it is an excellent place for establishing professional connections and finding quality employees. However, it also is a rich marketing opportunity.

The average LinkedIn user (<http://wersm.com/2015-social-media-demographics-for-marketers/>) is an adult over the age of 30, with an annual income exceeding \$75,000. Membership is nearly equally divided between males and females. These people are typically college educated, working professionals.

LinkedIn demographics probably resemble your target market. Statistics (<http://healthland.time.com/2012/05/16/cdc-higher-income-and-education-levels-linked-to-better-health/>) show that people with higher incomes and more education are more health conscious. Additionally, career-oriented individuals tend to be image conscious, making them an excellent market for cosmetic dentistry.

Getting Started

One of the most unique features on LinkedIn is the user profile. Whereas most networks offer little more than a short biography and basic contact information, on LinkedIn, you can detail your entire professional history.

When you join, it seems like you face an unending barrage of questions to answer and information to fill in. Most users skip some, or most, of these questions during the initial signup process. Unfortunately, many of them neglect to complete their profiles later. This is one of the most common mistakes.

Review your profile, and add any missing information. The most important aspects include:

- **A photo:** A high-quality, professional profile picture is essential.
- **Headline:** Instead of a general term like “dentist,” make your headline descriptive and distinctive. For example, “holistic dentist, thought leader, and founder of My Practice.”
- **Keywords:** Search engine optimization is not just for websites. Google often includes results from social networks, including LinkedIn. Include your top, targeted keywords in the headline and summary, as well as in your content.
- **Summary:** Use this area to describe your qualifications, special areas of interest, and experience. It should be clear, concise, and well-written.
- **Business page:** Your own profile is about you. Create a business page for your practice.

Content for LinkedIn

The rapid growth of LinkedIn is partially attributable to changes in the network, which made it more versatile and user-friendly. In 2015, the Pulse app was fully integrated with LinkedIn, giving industry experts and influencers a unique platform and targeted audience. A more recent and possibly more significant update came late last year, when native video was introduced.

On most social networks, the best performing content is friendly, casual, relatable, and maybe even humorous. The goal is to humanize your practice and create an emotional connection with your audience. LinkedIn is different. It is designed for business, and the most effective content is professional, informative, and valuable.

Use LinkedIn to post information that is of interest to your peers as well as patients. The goal of content marketing here is to showcase your knowledge and position yourself as an expert in the field. A few examples of topics well-suited to this professional atmosphere include:

- Insights and advice about practice management
- Original dental research
- Discussion of clinical trials
- Case studies
- Oral health advice for working professionals
- Topics of interest to local businesspeople
- Job openings at your practice

Choosing and Using Groups

One of the most useful features of LinkedIn is groups. Although some forms of groups are available on most networks, they are typically dominated by hobby enthusiasts, cultural or political topics, and general chit-chat. LinkedIn groups are all business.

