

8 Ways to Use LinkedIn to Gain Mileage for Your Practice

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LinkedIn is the social network for professionals, including healthcare professionals such as dermatologists. If you are keen to foster valuable professional relationships and connections through social media, LinkedIn is one of the best options available to you. The network has emerged as a formidable social media force, with more than 250 million members across the world. LinkedIn is forging ahead with a vision to create economic opportunity for the largest number of professionals in the world, and there is no reason for a dermatologist not to be a part of this vision.

Here are a few important ways to leverage the power of LinkedIn to the advantage of your dermatology practice.

1. CREATE A DETAILED LINKEDIN PROFILE

Your LinkedIn Profile is akin to the bio page that you may already have on your website. The difference here is that on LinkedIn your profile receives very high visibility, shows up more prominently in search results, and gets shared with a relevant and targeted audience. Spend dedicated time to build your LinkedIn profile in a detailed manner.

This is a professional network, unlike other social networks, where the profile will reflect on your professionalism. Include your academic qualifications, certifications, experience, areas of specialization, honors and recognitions, professional affiliations, and community work. As far as possible, each section of the profile must be completed in detail. Include all medical and cosmetic services and procedures that you offer.

2. OPTIMIZE YOUR PROFILE FOR LINKEDIN SEARCH

LinkedIn has an internal search mechanism that lets your profile be known to others who may be searching for a dermatologist. An enriched and comprehensive profile is likely to rank higher in the search results. Include relevant key-

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words that people from the medical community, associates and influencers, and potential patients are likely to search for in the LinkedIn search bar.

On LinkedIn it may not be necessary to include many long-tail keywords such as ‘medical and cosmetic dermatology practice in New York City, NY.’ Such keywords are more suited for a website search, but on LinkedIn search, an individual is more likely to search for ‘NYC dermatologist.’ Therefore, optimize your LinkedIn profile keywords carefully.

3. SIZE MATTERS: MULTIPLY YOUR NETWORK

Engage actively on LinkedIn to multiply the size and reach of your network. Search for relevant peers, associates, influencers, and potential clients on LinkedIn and send them invites to join your network. Do not hesitate from promoting your network and sending out invitations to others who share common interests to join in.

The larger the size of your network, the greater its visibility in LinkedIn search results. This will effectively help expand the network further. Apart from first tier direct relationships, even second and third tier connections matter on LinkedIn in the long run.

4. ENHANCE REPUTATION WITH LINKEDIN ENDORSEMENTS

LinkedIn has a unique system of allowing network members to 'endorse' other members within the network for special skills, experience or achievements. It is a great way for a dermatologist to build referrals and consolidate his or her online reputation and credibility.

A high number of endorsements for a professional immediately improves the perception about his or her status and credibility in the eyes of others. A strong online reputation can go a long way to help a dermatologist establish thought leadership in their area of expertise. Endorsements of other deserving members should also be made out liberally.

5. PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN SPECIALIZED LINKEDIN GROUPS

Joining and actively engaging in relevant LinkedIn groups can be an excellent way to boost overall network activity. It can help expand the size of the dermatologist's network, and also improve chances of higher rankings in LinkedIn search results. It is easy to find the right kind of groups to join using relevant keywords to search through the network.

Apart from groups related to dermatology, it is a good idea to involve with groups that are likely to include potential patients from the local area. However, group engagements should not be used for blatant self-promotion, but to build relationships and reputation. Meaningful contribution to the group and dissemination of unique and useful information in the dermatologist's area of expertise can go a long way to promote credibility and reputation.

6. ANALYZE THE LINKEDIN INSIGHTS

LinkedIn provides valuable insights about your profile by keeping a track of the network members who may have shown interest in it. LinkedIn knows the moment someone views your profile, and unlike Facebook, it shares that useful information with you.

Paid LinkedIn services allow for more detailed analytics to let you have the power of information about your potential clients, peers, and competitors. Even as a non-paid member, you will be able to use LinkedIn's "Who's Viewed Your Profile" feature. You can continually fine-tune your profile on the basis of your target viewership vis-à-vis actual viewership.

7. BE RESOURCEFUL TO OTHERS ON LINKEDIN

LinkedIn is a place for relationship building, and not a place for hard selling your services. Therefore, do not let yourself

be perceived as someone whose only goal is to seek customers or receive favors from others. On the contrary, your image on LinkedIn should come across as that of a helpful, useful, and resourceful professional who is willing to reach out to others, help them with sound advice, and empathize and connect with them at a personalized level.

If you have valuable information or specialized knowledge in an area of concern, share it with others within the network. If people perceive you as a resourceful person, the subtle long-term gains for your practice can be significant. Using LinkedIn for blatant self-promoting or advertising can be seriously counter-productive. Avoid that temptation and focus on leveraging the network to create an excellent PR for your practice.

8. ENCOURAGE YOUR STAFF TO USE LINKEDIN

You can multiply your networking efforts on LinkedIn with the help of your staff who can also engage actively on the network. This can be a very simple but highly effective way to proliferate the networking base of your dermatology practice. Each staff member can create his or her own LinkedIn profile and develop direct and indirect connections and join relevant groups.

When you and the employees connect with each other, it creates an opportunity to leverage a much larger number of first-, second-, and third-tier connections who would include potential clients from your local area. Staff networking on LinkedIn also becomes an interesting way to stay in touch, stay motivated, and appreciate and recognize each other's skills and achievements on the network. ■

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