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What Does Social Media Really do for My Practice?

by **Beth Leach**

Nearly every orthodontist in the country has had thoughts of grandeur and doom while contemplating social media interactions. What is the value of social media to my practice? Does it increase new patient volume? How much does it cost me in staff time to produce the amount of social media that is viable for my practice? Can't I just turn it off and not worry about it? The answers are never simple and the right solution really has a lot to do with your practice location, size, age, and your desire to grow.

Social media does a number of things for your practice including build your brand, boost patient satisfaction, increase new patient volume, generate good will and reviews, and more. Many of us who use social media personally realize that the things posted on Facebook or Instagram are the moments of our lives that we want to feature, they build our persona, our personal brand. I like to think of social media as the next generation evolution of the 1970s cocktail party where mothers and fathers boast about their star athlete sons and smart daughters; no one talked about the kids who were underperforming, etc.

The same goes for your practice life, highlighting the amazing connections you have with patients and your community builds your practice brand. It cements the image of the good you do in the community into the minds of current and prospective patients. The more your practice is seen online and off by current and potential patients the better. In many cases you are involved in your local community much more than your patients know and social media allows you to build a practice brand that has value and meaning to the community. By sharing on social media you aren't bragging about your practice, you are informing and connecting in the way that most people in today's society connect. This connection is one of the best marketing tools you can have, and that is why its so important to your practice life.

There are a number of factors that determine your effectiveness in social media and these need to be

weighed when determining your plan for success. Some of the most important pieces of the social media pie include sharing on all platforms; adding relevant, well-written, and timely content; posting images and videos which reflect the practice and community; and asking for patient involvement in expanding your social media reach. Sharing your practice brand on all of the important channels (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Google business pages and Snapchat) is crucial as it helps people find you in their own choice of media.

Producing content that is important to your patients and potential patients (braces recipes, infographics about brushing with braces etc.) assists your patients and others near and far. The more relevant content you produce, the more relevant you will be to Google, and in turn the higher you will be listed in search. Yes, social media does actually help your website get found in Google. Posting images and videos that reflect your practice and community increases your connection with individual patients and the people they are connected with as well boosts your brand with the community in which you work. In addition, the more fun you have capturing images and video in the practice the more your practice brand will grow.

Finally, to really expand your social media base, you must get your patients to share your posts, hashtag your practice, and comment on what you share. This is one of the more challenging aspects of social media interaction, but it is one that if done well boosts your presence online to places that no one else has been.

If you need help with your social media planning, or just want to bounce a few ideas off the wall, please feel free to call me and discuss your next steps. ☺

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About the Author



Beth Leach is principal in two orthodontic related companies: PracticeMarketer, and PracticeRetriever. She is an expert in combining the latest online marketing strategies with the most effective traditional modes of practice promotion to generate high-level practice growth.