



## Is Social Media Right for Your Practice?



**Considerations for  
Marketing Your Practice**  
*From The Dental Care Plus Group*



The numbers are big: 1.11 billion on Facebook, one billion on YouTube, 500 million on Twitter, 225 million on LinkedIn and 48.7 million on Pinterest.

You may have asked yourself when and where to jump into the social media mix and whether your practice can keep up with the ever-changing, constantly-in-motion social media phenomenon.

### **Do it right or don't do it at all**

"Dentists can see great benefits from using social media to grow their business, and reach potential and current patients," says Social Media Consultant Amy Marshall, COO in charge of social media and research for the Columbus division of Fathom, a digital marketing firm.

"Social media sites give you an opportunity to get in front of people before they ever do a formal search. The sites also allow you to show a different, more personal side of your practice than you can present on your website. You can showcase the people who work in your practice, especially when they're doing a lot of great things in your community."

To make social media successful for your practice, however, "you have to have someone who owns it, loves it and gives it the attention it needs. If you don't have the resources or time—you shouldn't do it."

She notes the potential harm to your practice's reputation if sites are set up, people get used to interacting and then do not have their questions answered or issues resolved because you've stopped checking your sites.

### **Where do you start?**

You may have spent a lot of money on your website, but that's not always the first impression you make, Marshall says. People searching for a local dentist may find you

initially on a Google results page. "Do a search on yourself to make sure there are no bad reviews and you are showing up properly," Marshall advises.

Her next suggestion is to "start small and do it really well. Choose one or two networks. Don't try to be on all five networks at once." Marshall says her social media priorities for a dental practice would be:

- 1) Look at Google reviews of your business and find ways to incorporate positive reviews – ask patients for reviews on surveys, at the bottom of invoices or on an iPad at checkout. Promise a small reward for completing the survey.
- 2) Set up a Facebook page as a great way to connect with your community. "A local business I know uses Facebook purely for communicating about charity functions. Or you can tell people about your staff or the cool things your patients are doing." She also recommends creating a tab that allows people to request appointments.
- 3) Try posting some short videos of procedures on YouTube or post before-and-after pictures on Pinterest.
- 4) Use contests to engage people or ask patients to submit photos to post.

### **So, what does it take to manage your sites?**

"If you're doing it yourself, managing your social media networks can take from 30 minutes to two hours a day, depending on how many networks you use and how complex your strategy is," Marshall says.

A schedule of postings might include: Facebook two to three times a week, Twitter five to 10 times a week, once a month on YouTube, and Pinterest every now and then.

If you choose to hire a social media consultant, Marshall says that person can help in a number of ways to:

- Build a strategy and make a plan the office can execute
- Use ideas generated by the practice and help execute them
- Train someone on the staff to manage a social media presence
- Manage all your networks (she estimates costs ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 a month, depending on the number of sites).

To find a reliable consultant, Marshall suggests looking around your community and noticing who is doing a great job with social media. Ask friends and business associates whom they would recommend.

### **Measuring results**

To determine if the time you are spending on social media is worth the investment, track and measure monthly metrics. Begin by recording volume metrics such as Facebook Likes, Facebook "Talking about this," Twitter Followers, YouTube Channel Views and Video Views. Use a simple Excel spreadsheet to show the monthly metrics and trend the success over time. You can add other metrics as you go.

If you want to follow trends in social media, Marshall recommends the blog "Social Media Examiner."

*Amy Marshall, COO for Fathom, was an owner of Webbed Marketing, an online marketing agency, from 2006 through 2011, when the company was purchased by Fathom. Fathom, headquartered in Cleveland, OH, provides full digital services to companies to help grow their business from SEO, Paid Search, Social Media, Analytics and other tools. The company focuses on health care, education, IT and manufacturing industries.*

Contact [amarshall@fathomdelivers.com](mailto:amarshall@fathomdelivers.com)  
@amymarshall  
[614-291-8456](tel:614-291-8456) x221

