

MARKETING

Make The Phone Ring With Social Media Advertising

By Leon Klempner, DDS, and Amy Epstein, MBA*

There was a time not too long ago when all a dental office had to do to enter the world of digital marketing was set up a Facebook business page and periodically post fun pictures. That's no longer the case.

Over the years, Facebook has evolved into a powerful advertising platform. With a user base of over 1.7 billion, it's a given that your dental practice should consider leveraging this powerful tool to proactively seek new patients, if your current marketing efforts aren't enough to keep you at 100% of capacity.

Seeking Patients

Notice we didn't ask, "how will they find you?" Facebook is not like Google. Users aren't searching the network for their favorite local businesses. It's up to you to seek out potential patients.

Most practices don't have large followings on their Facebook business pages. For the most part, your fans consist of some current families and possibly a few patients. Even if you did have thousands of people liking your page, Facebook is shrewd about displaying your content to only a small percentage of them (a practice known as throttling), unless you purchase advertising. To penetrate the local marketplace, you'll need to begin using Facebook ads to reach people not yet connected to your practice on Facebook (or anywhere else).

Content Is Key

The ads you create on Facebook aren't like other digital ads. They mimic the way "organic" – or posts from friends or brands you follow – look and feel in the news feed. The key is sharing useful and creative content that speaks to the type of patient you want to attract and offers them something of value. It should link to an article, blog post, or other informative piece of content, preferably hosted on your website. Think about the posts you click on from your own Facebook account. There's a reason you found it interesting enough to click on. Facebook ads are the same way. They need to be informative so they can catch your target audience at the right time with the right message.

Good content is the key to success. That goes for the ad itself and the information it links to. For the ad, we're not talking about just a listing of your practice name and number. Components of a good Facebook ad include a captivating headline, some subtext that entices the viewer to click on your content, and, of course, an appealing image. Once a user clicks on your ad, they will be directed to the content which is housed on your website. At this point, you will have delivered on the promised information and they will be motivated to explore the rest of your site. You have established yourself as a trusted expert and they will contact you when they are ready.

Targeting Your Audience

The biggest benefit to advertising on Facebook is that it lets you put your practice in front of people who are not already connected to your page. This is a new audience in need of your services that may not yet be aware of your practice. This is achieved through demographic targeting. Facebook has collected tons of data about the people who use its social network. While this information is anonymous, you can design a campaign that strategically circulates your advertising to a select group based on age, gender, income, interests, how old their children are, and, most importantly, if they live within a specific location radius around your practice address. That means you're targeting the subset of users most likely to come to your practice. This is a powerful tool and best of all, it's not expensive.

A Budget for Your Business

You don't need to spend a lot of money to attract new patients. That sentence should make any dentist smile. Facebook advertising allows you to set your own goals and budget. It's a flexible and powerful platform that doesn't commit you to significant ad spending. At the moment you only need to spend \$5.00/day to activate an ad. Of course, the more you invest, the bigger your return. It's easy to track your return on investment (ROI) since you get instant updates on ad results. Moreover, you can set a budget or time frame that the ad runs, as well as set the goal of your ad. For example, you decide if your goal is for people to ultimately end up clicking through to your website (click-through-rate), or the ad is served up so that more people see it (impressions.) You also set the length of time your ad runs even if you don't spend your entire budget.

Converting Patients

Finding new patients can be achieved on a cost-effective basis through Facebook's advertising program since it targets people with specific interests and demographic

criteria in very specific locations. They've spent years collecting information and your office can tap into that vast data trove to capture the attention of local Facebook users. With the right ad, targeted to the right audience, you can convert the casual Facebook user into your next patient. 🏹

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PERSONAL FINANCES

Winning The Disability Insurance Claim Battle

Doctors should carry long-term disability insurance until they reach financial independence, in order to protect their family against loss of income due to their sickness or disability. As doctors grow older, there's an increasing chance they will suffer a sickness or injury resulting in their disability. For dentists, this is often a claim based on a back, neck, or wrist injury.

When doctors begin experiencing symptoms, they often rest assured believing that they have an iron-clad contract promising benefits from a highly-reputable insurance company. Accordingly, they expect to receive those monthly benefits quickly, after only a routine claim filing process.

What a fantasy! That ranks right up there with the Easter Bunny, Santa Claus, and "the check's in the mail." The fact is that some insurance companies want to make the claim process as grueling as possible, in order to limit payouts. In fact, some pay bonuses to their employees who delay or deny legitimate claims!

So if a disability event strikes you, don't prepare to file a claim. Instead, prepare to fight a battle!

Filing an incomplete or erroneous claim will most likely result in a denial. Once your claim is denied, your only recourse to receive benefits is to sue the insurance company. This often results in years of litigation, with legal fees and other expenses amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

It's far better to be totally prepared in advance, and file a complete, error-free, and timely claim. Here are some tips to make that happen.

When to File

Many doctors experiencing an illness/disability that affects their ability to practice dentistry, initially focus on selling their practice to avoid a severe decline in its value. Once the dust clears and the practice is sold, the doctor then files his claim for disability benefits. In most cases, the claim is denied by the insurance company, on the basis that the disability occurred after the practice sale, and the doctor cannot be disabled once he has "retired." Accordingly, doctors need to make sure their claim is filed **prior to** the date of their practice sale.

What to Include

In their haste to file a claim, many doctors provide incomplete information. They reason that eventually "all the facts will come out" and their claim will be approved. That's not how it works! Once a claim is filed, the first step the insurance company will likely take is to request all medical records. If those medical records are incomplete, and don't adequately disclose the full extent of your symptoms **and** how they affect your ability to practice dentistry, your claim will likely be denied.

So it's critical to make sure your medical record is complete prior to filing. Accordingly, you should contact your attending physician to make an appointment for a complete examination. Prior to the visit, you should send that physician a detailed letter outlining the full extent of your symptoms/problems and how they impair/eliminate your ability to practice dentistry. During the exam, you need to make sure that you are adequately tested to verify those symptoms and that the doctor includes the results of those tests and your discussion on how they impact your practice of dentistry, in your medical record.

It's Not Over Till It's Over!

If the disability claim is approved, and monthly benefit payments begin, most doctors breathe a huge sigh of relief. They believe the game is over and they have won! From the insurance company's standpoint, they've only lost the battle, but still plan to win the war. How so?

After benefit payments begin, insurance companies often employ video surveillance to determine if the doctor is performing any social or recreational activities that are inconsistent with the stated medical symptoms. For example, lifting weights at the gym while receiving disability benefits for a "bad back," or playing several rounds of golf weekly while receiving benefits for a "hand/arm that has gone numb," will stop disability payments on a dime. Likewise, expect periodic visits from an insurance

