

Does Facebook Generate Facelifts?

The social networking site can boost your business, if used properly

As consumers have become desensitized to traditional media—such as print advertising, direct mail, television, and radio spots—the challenge is to find new ways to capture their attention. Many of the most popular social networking and new media opportunities are ideal for solo and group practices to reach out to their existing patients, as well as to target new groups of patients in a cost-effective way.

Marketing has cumulative benefits. For example, patients may respond the third or fourth time they come across your practice, or after they receive confirmation from an external source that you are the one of the best surgeons in the community.

The key is to craft the right message that is consistent with your brand, geared toward the right audience and presented the optimal number of times. For marketing to be effective,

it must be highly targeted, consistent, and ongoing. When you cast a wide net, your message fails to target a specific group, and you may attract patients who cannot afford your fees or who are just shoppers. Rather than spend thousands of dollars per month on print advertising, radio, and cable television, those precious resources are better used online.

Marketing for aesthetic practices has blossomed to include variations on marketing tactics, such as social media that are used in every other service industry, such as hotels, travel, dining, designers, and salons.

WHERE TO BEGIN

Social media can best be described as a category of online tools and platforms that people use to share their opinions, experiences, and viewpoints. It can take many forms, including text, images, audio, and video content.

The most popular social media platforms for plastic surgeons are podcasts, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter. The top-viewed video platforms are YouTube and Flickr.

In order to capitalize on these new outlets, practices need to be strategic with a social media campaign and manage the time being spent on each.

Someone once said, "Facebook is about connecting with old friends. Twitter is about connecting with new ideas." The exact origin of this statement is unclear, but the points are well taken. If you prefer to keep your Facebook profile private and dedicated

to real friends and family, you should probably leave your degree off your User Name, because patients will surely find you.

Increasingly, doctors have a Facebook profile and a Page and Group under their practice name. Technically, according to Facebook rules, a business should not maintain a personal profile, but rather businesses are relegated to belonging to a Page and a Group.

Unlike personal Facebook Pages, businesses may engage in Facebook ads, which is the basis of the revenue stream on the site.

UBIQUITOUS NET

Merely having a presence on Facebook or Twitter is not going to deliver much in the way of exposure or practice growth. Although Facebook and Twitter operate somewhat differently, the best strategy is to integrate your accounts on both of these powerful social networking platforms for maximum exposure. A definite methodology driving these technologies has created the hype and exploding popularity.

It is important to engage potential patients with interesting content that is "on brand," meaning that it should be consistent with your practice profile. By monitoring these tools and engaging with other users, you have an opportunity to network and increase your exposure. Build up your access to followers, fans, and friends. Ideally, each message you post should be spread across every social media platform you are



using so that your strategy is integrated.

Dabbling in any social media outlet is a colossal waste of time. These platforms require a dedicated user or users who are monitoring them several times daily for the information to be current and relevant.

Facebook has the potential to generate buzz among beauty and health media, reach new patients, and engage your existing patients in a dialogue. To work, postings should always be routed back to your Web site, which serves as the main online presence for your practice. Therefore, if your Web site is not maximized or updated regularly, directing potential patients to it through social media is destined to fail. ■

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HOW TO CREATE A FACEBOOK PAGE

Go to www.facebook.com/pages/create.php

Choose "Health and Beauty" under the "Local" section and fill out any necessary fields.

Press "Create Page."

Sign in if you already have a Facebook account. If you do not, fill out the necessary fields to create an account.

After signing in, you can edit any information you want on your page. You may add pictures, events, and information about your practice. Just press "Edit Information." To add a picture, click on the big question mark.

See also PSP's Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/PSP-Plastic-Surgery-Practice.

PlasticSurgeryPractice.com

