



PRACTICE MANAGEMENT



BUSTED: 6 social media myths debunked once and for all

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By Wendy Lewis

Many myths exist about social media and how it can help or even hurt your plastic surgery practice. Here, we debunk six of the most pervasive social media myths that may be getting in the way of you and your current or future patients.

1. My patients aren't Facebooking or Tweeting

Do the math. Facebook has 1.3B active users and Twitter has 170M active users, so it is almost impossible that at least some or most of your patients are not on social media. Even if they aren't yet using social for business, chances are they are using it in some capacity. Choose and use only the platforms where your audience is more likely to engage with you. Instagram, for example, skews young (18-34 is the target audience) so if you are hoping to reach patients who want facelifts, ablative resurfacing, and other anti-aging procedures, it's probably not the place you need to be on first.

2. SEO is more important than social media

Search engine optimization (SEO) and social media are complementary. Good social should work in tandem with an SEO strategy to enhance the effectiveness of both. Social is measurable, but only if tracking methods are inserted into content such as tracking URL shorteners, hashtags, etc.

3. Fans and followers don't become real patients

Everyone expects to be able to directly chart a “like” to a “patient,” which is not always possible. Most of the people with whom you will engage on social platforms already know you. Your current patients will be your biggest fans and most avid followers to start. Social media marketing is more about loyalty and client retention than pure acquisition. If you dismiss this theory, you may miss out on the opportunity to gain access to the fans and followers of your current patients. When someone engages with you on social platforms, anyone who follows them could potentially see, like, or share your content. You never know when one of the followers of your followers will be in the market for a breast augmentation or an acne solution. It happens.

4. Social media is only important during normal business hours

Social is a 24/7, 365/year platform. People post on social networks on their mobile devices at any time during the day or night. Each platform is also different in terms of peak times for interactions. For example, on Facebook, Sundays may be busier than Monday mornings and posts published at night may get more interaction around midnight. Twitter may be more popular during lunchtime in some circles. The best way to gauge this is to schedule posts for different days and times to see what works best for your specific fan base. Scheduling tools are imperative to optimize the times of your posts. For example, Facebook has a built-in scheduler on business pages. Hootsuite and other platforms enable scheduling on multiple sites as well.

5. An hour a day when the receptionist isn't busy is enough to be on social media

Your receptionist should be answering the phones promptly and dealing with patients efficiently, without the distraction of “liking” pages and retweeting. It takes time to build up engagement and reach on social platforms, and it requires a strategic plan that must consider the practice’s brand position. A haphazard approach to social is sure to fail. Someone must be minding the store, responding to posts and queries, and creating entertaining and interesting shareable content. Aim to respond to every reasonable comment as quickly as possible, and deal with negative posts head-on.

6. Social media is free

Nothing in life is free. Facebook is not free anymore if you are a business hoping to attract attention from new clients. Although most social media accounts can be opened for free, it takes time, strategy, and—yes—cash to really reap the benefits of these platforms. Advertising has become a fact of life to gain traction in major social platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. The importance of hiring someone with expertise who can write relevant content, add graphics and visuals of interest, and understand the nuances of marketing a physician’s practice instead of a shoe store, restaurant, or clothing designer, is another expense to consider. Set aside a reasonable budget that may include services for content creation, posting and engagement, advertising or boosted posts, visuals (stock photos, original graphics), video, photography, and programming.