

SEVEN HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETERS

Even as social networks and platforms are continuously evolving, Wendy Lewis explains how the core values of what makes us social remain constant



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IN HIS NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER, *7 HABITS OF Highly Effective People*®, author Stephen R. Covey presented a framework for how to be productive, efficient and effective. His seven habits move the reader through three main stages: from dependence (relying on others), to independence (learning to make your own decisions), and finally to interdependence (cooperation to achieve something better than what can be achieved independently).

Covey's concepts lend themselves well to the emergence of social media marketing that has become an integral part of every digital marketing campaign. Having a strong presence on social media is a critical success factor for aesthetics clinics. Just as Covey described, you may start out by relying on others for guidance and help. As you get more proficient, you will start experimenting on your own and branching out. Finally, when you get comfortable with social media and have added some notches to your belt, you will become more inclined to collaborate with strategic partners and figure out ways to work together to maximize results.

Consumers and customers today are interacting online daily with their favorite brands, celebrities, and cosmetic doctors through an ever-increasing list of social networking platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube, and more. The biggest challenge is how well clinics can implement strategies to get the most benefits out of their efforts. A well-executed social media strategy will enable your clinic to cut through the clutter and stand out from the crowd. With the advancements made in social media tracking platforms, Facebook insights, and Twitter insights, you can effectively measure the key performance indicators (KPIs) that are most important to your clinic. If your progress is not measured, you are

missing out on the opportunity to set benchmarks and improve your results. Before you commence with a social media strategy, set metrics to determine what results you are aiming for. For instance, if your main goal is to create a following, measure followers, fans, and subscribers. If you are keen to generate traffic to your clinic website, then set a metric for unique visitors generated from your social platforms.

Follow these expert tips for best practices on social media that will help promote your clinic.

#1. Be strategic about the most valuable platforms

To get the most return on your investment from social media marketing, choose your platforms wisely. You don't need to be the first to jump on board all of them. New platforms and mobile apps seem to crop up all the time, but that does not necessarily mean that they are worth your interest unless the users are among your target patient audience. For example, if your clinic attracts mainly patients interested in anti-aging treatments, you will do best on Facebook and may skip Instagram, since the average Instagram user is under 30.

In my view, Facebook is still the biggest of all the platforms and the place to begin if you can only manage one. Twitter is among the best platforms through which businesses can interact with customers. YouTube and Google+ are important, as both sites are owned by Google and they rule the online world. But constant rumours of more changes coming for how G+ is used make us wonder if the effort will pay off in the long-term after a somewhat rocky road. YouTube is all video, which makes it more difficult for clinics to use without creating original video content of their own. The video options now offered on other channels may prove to be a good

CHART: FOUR KEY SOCIAL NETWORKS

PLATFORM	USERS	TRENDS
FACEBOOK	71% of adult internet users; 58% of adult population	Seniors are largest growing demographic; young people are flocking to Instagram from Facebook as their primary platform; Facebook is the #1 platform for those using only one social site
TWITTER	23% of adult internet users; 19% of adult population	Most popular among users under 50; skews slightly higher in males vs. females
PINTEREST	28% of adult internet users; 22% of adult population	Skews mainly female; good platform for promoting medspa services, product sales
INSTAGRAM	26% of adult internet users; 21% of adult population	Most popular among 25-35 year olds; skews higher in females vs. males

Source: Data from "Social media update 2014"; Pewinternet.org

alternative. Some relatively new platforms that aesthetics doctors are dabbling in are streaming video apps, like Periscope and Meerkat. However, it remains to be seen whether aesthetic clinic patients will join to watch video vignettes of treatments or a doctor giving a talk about the newest injectable.

#2. Content is king

The objective should be to create content that people care about and want to share. The more interesting your content is, the more engaging it will be for your fans and customers. Posting endless updates about new products, sales, and special offers, or other promotional news is not going to cut it anymore. Social media users are more sophisticated than that and they resent being sold to 24/7.

The ultimate goal is to engage your customers and give them something that they actually want, and that they cannot get anywhere else. Informative, entertaining, and well-presented content updates with the right balance of words, hashtags, visuals, and links is what it takes to grab their attention. Think of what types of content appeal to you. Humour is always a good choice.

Social media engagement relies on daily interactions among users. While it is fine to use tools to help you with the burdensome task of posting, engaging with your audiences in real time is still the most effective way to grow your audience. So, use autoposting platforms to help you with the basics, but do not rely on this tactic for all of your social media channels. For example, Facebook allows you to schedule drafts and posts, which is a neat tool and can be

a major timesaver. Social media users also expect to get a response very quickly to a comment, complaint or question. Setting alerts to notify your community manager or page admin when a new comment is posted can help facilitate this process. Facebook now rates your response times on the right column of your business page. Twitter users require an even faster response rate because the platform is primarily used on mobile devices and is a real time feed.

Furthermore, it is a good idea to repost content more than once, especially if it performed well and even if it didn't. You can also repurpose your content by changing a graphic or a link or tweaking the words and hashtags. It may also be helpful to reach fans and followers at different times, in different time zones or days of the week. You may often find that just making a few small changes will get better engagement with your audience. For help with scheduling posting, look into Hootsuite.com or Sproutsocial.com that can greatly improve efficiency when posting to multiple platforms.

#3. Visuals, videos, and links enhance your content

A picture speaks a thousand words. Content that includes an image is typically more appealing and thus, will achieve more impressions, shares, likes and comments. Numerous studies have shown that a social media post with an image or other visual gets 70-80% or more engagement compared to a post with only words and no image or link. Even tweets with images have been

shown to get much higher rates of retweets.

Personal images are clearly the best route to take, such as photos of the clinic, clinic staff, your community, a cake baked by a patient as a thank you, the doctor in action or at a speaking engagement, etc. These communicate more personally with your fans and followers. If you are taking photos of people, make them 'happy snaps,' show actual people's faces, use their names if possible,

get their eyes and smiles, and shots of people engaging with each other. Remember to play it safe by never posting photos of any patients without their express consent; for example, group shots at patient seminars.

Do not just lift any photos or other visuals off google or another site. This practice is risky and may result in copyright infringement that can end up in legal action being taken against the doctor, the clinic or the individual. To be safe, take your own photos, and get express written permission from patients to use their photos online (which can be taken down at any time at the patient's request). There is a vast range of photo editing apps available for a small fee or even free that will help to personalize your pictures by using filters, frames, symbols, graphs, icons, backgrounds, fonts, and more. Among the top rated photo apps are FilterBaker, TouchRetouch and AfterFocus, all of which can really help to kick up your photos to pro status.

You may also choose to license appropriate images as needed. Stock photography sites offer a huge supply of photos of varying quality that can be manipulated to make them your own. Try to avoid using the same popular stock images of women's faces that can be seen all over the internet. Select images that are fresh and modern, without dated hair and makeup, and look more realistic and relatable for your customers.

The most economical way to use these sites is by a monthly or annual subscription where images can be licensed literally for pennies in some cases. They also offer illustrations and vectors that can add a fresh look to your graphics.

#4. Adding hashtags helps you get found

On most social media platforms, hashtags are searchable, except for Pinterest. In this way, they can stimulate engagement for your content and expand its visibility. For example, choose some key hashtags to use frequently, and then add more for specific content, and pay attention to what is trending. So you may use a hashtag for your clinic and the doctor in posts, and then add something more specific such as #beautytips, #skincarewisdom, #beautysplurge, #liquidfacelift, and #cosmeticsurgery. So if someone is searching for #beautytips, your content will show up. If you choose hashtags that are too general or obscure, your content may not show up at all.

Look at what big beauty brands are doing to get ideas for what might resonate with your patients. Also consider creating unique hashtags for special promotions and contests. SkinCeuticals created the

HOW TO ENHANCE YOUR POSTS

- Original photos, snapshots
- Stock photos
- Links to website, article, news site
- Videos
- Original graphics with clinic branding
- Infographics
- Quotographics, inspirational quotes
- Memes
- GIFs
- Slides
- Graphs

#BetterTogether hashtag for a recent contest where customers were encouraged to upload a video or photo of something that they think worked better together.

Staying on top of trending hashtags is also useful to join the conversation and to create a bridge between your clinic brand and your customers. However, not every post should be stuffed with a chain of hashtags. Use them more judiciously, at the maximum rate of three in a single post. Instagram users are the biggest fans of hashtags and you will often see posts that are literally all hashtagged terms and thus render them unreadable. If that is your strategy, your photos must be totally gorgeous to attract the readers' attention. Fuzzy photos taken on your phone, or pictures out of context with poor angles and lighting are as bad if not worse than no visuals at all. Social media users have high standards for photos—especially on Instagram.

#5. Tell patients how to find you in the social space

The main target audience for your social media posts and interactions are patients who already know you. So don't leave it up to chance that they will know how to find you on the social platforms you are active in. Whenever possible, choose the same name on as many platforms as possible for consistency. For example: Aesthetic Clinic Brighton or Jones Aesthetics. Post social buttons on all other marketing materials, including website landing pages, email marketing, blog posts, brochures, invitations, print adverts, newsletters, and appointment cards. Also include social network links on each platform to connect with other platforms that you are active on. For instance, add tabs on your Facebook page to link to your Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram. Lastly, post a sign in a pretty frame at the front desk in your clinic waiting room alerting patients and guests that you are on social media, which platforms, and how to connect with you.



#6. Connecting with fans and followers

Interacting with fans is a vital component of social media; it's about having a two-way conversation. But not all social media platforms work the same way. Therefore, the best approach to each should be fine tuned to target the user you are trying to connect with so that you can reap the benefits of the social networking sites you are active in.

Conducting contests and competitions is always welcome and can spark a lot of engagement. Complimentary products or non-surgical treatments are a good choice for prizes. Gift cards are particularly appreciated as well. Giveaways are also fairly simple to do, especially around holidays. These tactics can all create buzz and generate new fans and followers. But it will not be worthwhile to use any of these tactics unless you have a sufficient fan base to make it impactful.

On my own beauty site, Beautyinthebag.com, we are very active on all social media platforms. One of the strategies that has been successful for us is to promote regularly scheduled posts and events throughout all of our platforms to maximize exposure. For example, we host bi-weekly #GorgeousGiveaways every other Monday starting at 11am, and we choose the winners every other Sunday. We also

host frequent #TwitterChats on Tuesdays at 1pm. Another popular feature is our #BeautyGurus, which are profiles of makeup artists, aestheticians, cosmetic doctors, dermatologists, plastic surgeons, and others that go live every Sunday at 12 noon. By incorporating regular intervals for these special initiatives, our fans have become accustomed to checking them out at

those exact times. We begin everything as a post on the site, and then repackage the content in a unique way for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram and post that content at different times to cast the widest net.

Whatever route you take, be sure to keep the 'social' in social media.

#7. It's not all about you — it's about them

Learn the difference between talking at

your fans and talking to them. Even if you have scores of followers, if you do not engage with them properly, it is kind of a wasted effort.

It is not uncommon to find content online from clinics and practitioners that is all about pure self-promotion: 'The first clinic in the State to...', 'The Best Cosmetic Doctor in New York,' etc. This will only take you so far. First of all, it is neither clever nor imaginative. It is also not entertaining or eye catching. Think of your social media platforms as a place to share information, interests, and passions. By the same token, if every post is just about a '3 for 2 Offer' or '20% off Fillers,' fans will lose interest and eventually opt out.

Take the time to think about how to engage with them effectively. What do they like? What are they looking for? What will they want to share with their own followers? If you don't know, just ask them. Use a survey to find out, or ask your patients to give you some insights on what rocks their world.

At the end of the day, stay true to your brand and remember that social media can be a minefield a minefield for healthcare practitioners so don't risk crossing any lines that may be blurred. Running a medical clinic as a licensed practitioner is not the same as managing a retail store or a restaurant. The stakes are much higher, and patient privacy regulations apply.