



Getting real about social media marketing

Social media experts Lou Shuman and Rosalea Peters discuss the formula for effective social media marketing.

[compiled by Dr. Lou Shuman]

Each month, Dr. Lou Shuman consults with a dental digital marketing specialist to discuss the latest developments in social media trends, SEO strategies, website optimization, online reputation management and more.

This month, he sits down with Rosalea Peters from WEO Media, to talk about social media marketing in dental practices.

We read and hear quite a bit about social media in dental practices. What's new in social media?

Facebook is still on an active growth trend. It's still the most popular social network worldwide, bringing the total audience to 1.71 billion users. More than 90 percent of Facebook's users are on mobile devices, which makes it even more necessary to ensure content you are linking to on Facebook has been optimized for a mobile platform (e.g. your website). Twitter has had its ups and downs this year, and is still trying to find even footing with their advertising options, but can be a great place to network within industries and participate in a deeper Twitter com-

munity. Instagram and Snapchat are still moving upward, with Instagram adding their story feature to compete with Snapchat, and more and more businesses are using Snapchat stories to reach younger consumers that trend away from using Facebook.

What should dentists and practices keep in mind when they approach social media marketing?

Social media should be one part of their overall practice brand, and it should be a mixture of professional and fun. Social media IS social,

and if people aren't engaged and interacting with your posts, it can actually be quite detrimental. Not every post is going to pull 100 likes and comments, but the overall trend of your newsfeed should show fan/business interaction. It's important to remember that social media didn't start out as an advertising tool, it was originally started to build and facilitate community; and that is still where the highest success lies.

Social media seems pretty complicated at times. One of my favorite comparisons when speaking about SEO is going to find a book at Barnes & Noble. Is there a similar comparison we can use for social media?

Let's use Facebook as our example, since that is where dental practices will likely spend most of their time. Think of using Facebook the same way as you might approach preparing to go to a party. When you're getting ready to go to a party, you walk into your closet and you think about what to wear. If you're going to a business function, you'll probably dress more conservatively. If the invite is to a friend's holiday party, you'll be looking for something festive and personal. If you're labeling Facebook as a type of party, with a specific type of audience, it will tend to skew more towards festive and personal, rather than strictly business.

However, in both cases, the way you dress and present yourself usually reflects your personality and values. In the same way, putting together your Facebook branding and newsfeed posts should reflect your personality and values, while remembering the audience (type of party) you're trying to engage with. Do you want your page to be the one at the party droning on about his latest investment? Or do you want to be the one who can mix it up with witty banter and insightful comments?

Are there any pitfalls dentists should watch out for?

It's important to remember that

social media, like anything else, doesn't have a magic formula for success. Just like there isn't a magic diet pill or an easy payday, in order for your marketing to work, you need to be consistent and put in the effort.

Some clients that I have worked with have seen tremendous growth in a short period of time, as their brand starts to permeate the market and they have the support of collaborators, friends and strategic partners. Other clients have taken longer to see their growth goals, as we work to find what message speaks most to their constituency. What I do see is that if you don't take the time to make the posts, it becomes harder to retain that upward trend. If there is any formula to making social media (or any marketing effort) work, it is that consistency plus effort will equal results.

So if there isn't a magic formula, what are the best practices you recommend?

From an esthetic point of view, make sure your branding is consistent across all of your social media properties. Take the time to have professional-looking cover art and profile images, and make sure that the name of your practice is written the same across all properties. You'll want to review your cover art regularly as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and other platforms often change their layout and it will affect how the images are displayed. For SEO purposes, it's also important to make sure that your address and phone number is written exactly the same on your website, your social media properties and any other online directories. Google uses the NAP (name, address, phone number) to verify that all of these properties do indeed belong to the same business and gives you ranking credit accordingly.

When you're thinking about

content, or what to post, consider the Golden Ratio. This means that 30 percent of your content should be your very own, 60 percent should be curated from others and 10 percent can be purely promotional. It's very hard to stay within this ratio, because so much of what a business tends to share on social media is about them, but studies show it works. For dental practices, when you're thinking about the 30 percent of your own content, keep it a mixture of educational and fun. Think about what your patients engage with already on social media — are they more likely to think a post about root canal therapy is exciting or are they more likely to enjoy a picture of the office dressed up for Halloween? It may depend on your patient base, and it's simple to include a short poll as your patients check in to get an idea of what information they want to see from you. After two to three months of gathering data, you should have enough sample data to make a decision about how much of your content should be educational versus "fun" content.

For your curated content, find local non-profits that you already align with, or other community organizations that focus on health. Share their content, and encourage your patients to tell you who they would like you to support. Invite dialogue and you'll see some great results. I can't emphasize it enough: work at this consistently!

It seems like social media requires some planning and thought. How much time should a practice spend?

Marketing in general for a practice should take careful planning and thought. As Fred Joyal says, "Everything Is Marketing," and it's true. The way the office is laid out, the way the staff greets patients and how they look, the online presence from

website to social media to review directories — it all plays into the decision making process for a new patient. Social media should be one piece of the overall puzzle when you lay out your three-month, six-month and yearly marketing plan and budget.

However, I generally find that practices that spend one to two hours a week on social media end up having the best results. These dedicated hours each week can include: putting together and scheduling out posts.

It's also important to recognize that whomever is given that role in the office have some knowledge of what social media marketing entails. Social media is a vast ocean of options and algorithms, and it's easy to drown in those details. If it's not feasible to have a person dedicated to your social media, then find a reputable marketing agency, preferably one that understands the dental industry. ●

ABOUT ROSALEA PETERS

Rosalea Peters is a social media expert for WEO Media, designing and implementing social media campaigns. She graduated from Corban University in Oregon with a Bachelor of Science degree in Education, and taught before transitioning into the dental field. After managing a pediatric dental practice for several years, she joined WEO Media where she has worked in both the marketing and operations departments. Rosalea sits on the Marketing Committee for The Dental Foundation of Oregon and serves as the social media manager for Cellerant Consulting Group.

ABOUT LOU SHUMAN

Dr. Lou Shuman is a long-time contributor to Dental Products Report and a member of the DPR editorial board. He is the President and CEO of Cellerant Consulting Group. He is the Chariman of the Technology Advisory Board at WEO Media, a Venturer-in-Residence at Harvard's Innovation Lab, and founded a dental education internet company.

G·U·M

Paroex

CHLORHEXIDINE GLUCONATE
ORAL RINSE USP, 0.12%

Efficacy without
the alcohol!



dosage cup is only supplied
with the 16 fl oz bottle

FDA Approved
Alcohol Free Chlorhexidine Rinse

For Details / Order Now Visit:
www.paroex.com

SUNSTAR

G·U·M **BUTLER** **GUIDOR**

Interested? Circle Product Card No. 77