

EVALUATING YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR 2012

SEARCH KEY WORDS:
words

BY KRISTIE NATION



What did you accomplish in the way of social media in 2011? By now, your practice should be online and expanding as you make connections and build relationships with your patient community.

Evaluating your social media efforts should be a lot like evaluating an employee. While you will certainly want to take a look at your ROI, that is more closely associated with your budget.

Your social media presence is more like a persona. You need to see how the face you present to the online world is performing. Ask any employee who represents you in the real world these questions about your social media presence:

AT WHICH THREE THINGS DOES YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE EXCEL?

- 1 Engaging patients on Facebook by posting polls.
- 2 Increasing appointments via traffic from your Facebook page.
- 3 Decreasing wait time at the dental office by telling patients about the option to fill out forms online before their appointments.

AT WHICH THREE THINGS COULD YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE BE BETTER?

- 1 Dealing with unhappy patients who post online.
- 2 Increasing followers on Twitter and Facebook.
- 3 Creating ongoing commentary and interest on your blog.

HOW CAN YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE IMPROVE IN 2012?

- 1 Jump in instantly when negative comments show up. Address them honestly, and then privately contact the person who posted for further resolution.
- 2 Research and follow local charities and causes on Twitter, and join their conversations. Consider offering a special discount for those who “like” your Facebook page.
- 3 Create valuable blog posts that pose a question, then ask the question on Facebook and Twitter by encouraging users to visit the blog and join the conversation.

Evaluate what your social media efforts have accomplished, what they have failed to accomplish, and what they can do to improve. This exercise will point the way for your ongoing actions in 2012.

You need to ask these three questions to ensure that you are effectively leveraging everything that social media has to offer:

WHO IS YOUR AUDIENCE ONLINE? Ideally, all of your patients use social media, but patient demographics certainly influence usage. There are some who are power users, and these will be the most valuable to you. Once you pinpoint who your most valuable patients are (hint: they should also be *lifetime patients*), you can attract more of them.

WHAT DOES YOUR AUDIENCE WANT FROM YOU ONLINE? It’s easy to figure out what your patients want from you in the office, but you need to be able to deliver what translates to value for them online. This is usually two items: *information* and *attention*.

WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR PATIENTS TO DO ONLINE? Naturally you want patients to come to your office for dental care. But you also want them to refer other patients, testify to your skills and compassion, and promote your practice. *Social media* is the perfect space for all of these activities.

Many professionals think social media is only for cat photos, controversy, and sexy topics. They ask, “How do you make dentistry sexy? Is my practice really relevant to people who use social media?”

Social media is about interaction, whether it’s in the form of showing off your favorite pet, debating government policy, or arguing over which actress should have won the Oscar this year. The same people who are talking about these topics may also be hunting for a dentist who understands their needs.

If you can do these two things, you will be well on the way to earning their trust:

1. **LISTEN.** People don’t just go online to read. They want to say their piece. Listen and respond, and the battle is half won.
2. **STAY REAL.** You don’t have to be the most super-duper-funniest dental practice ever. You simply need to provide access to honest and accurate information.

Social media offers you the perfect platform to communicate with patients — past, present, and future. Evaluating what you have done in 2011 and making a plan for 2012 is the best path to success! **DE**

KRISTIE NATION is the founder and CEO of myDentalCMO, a marketing consulting firm that provides strategic marketing “treatment plans” exclusively for dental practices. The firm was founded with a mission to prevent dentists from wasting countless dollars marketing their practices ineffectively. She can be reached at kristie@mydentalcmo.com or (888) 557-6443.