

MAKING THE MOST OF THE 5% TO 10%

BY KRISTIE NATION

Is social media replacing search engine optimization (SEO)? This is the question that many are asking. The answer is: not really. But 100% of your social media efforts can be geared toward SEO!

Social media gurus may be trying to push the notion that all SEO is now social. But in reality, it is still only 5% to 10% of the optimization equation.

- If your dental practice has a great Facebook fan page, it still does not make up for a clumsy, outdated website that is heavy on Flash and other elements that hamper true SEO.
- If your Twitter feed is crammed with chatter, it still does not make up for poor quality content or a lack of relevant inbound links.
- If your Pinterest page is full of pictures that other people love, it still does not make up for failure to optimize your dental practice site for relevant local search keywords.



Social media activity works to create engagement around your practice brand. But this does not automatically translate to more site visits and appointments scheduled. While having people talk about your practice is a good thing, having them call or click on your “request an appointment” button is much better.

In other words, SEO can keep your practice’s website afloat without social media, but social media alone cannot ensure top rankings. For that, you need correct site architecture, quality content, relevant inbound links, originality, and an exceptional user experience in your practice and on your website.

That’s not to say that social media is not important. It is! That 5% to 10% that it should represent in your overall marketing plan can be vital by contributing to increased patient engagement, production, and profits. Social media:

- Makes it easier to communicate directly with patients and potential patients
- Taps into the kind of medium that encourages sharing about your practice
- Creates ways to reach out and collect data on your target demographic
- Allows people to connect with you in a comfortable format

Social media has been worked into search engines’ algorithms and impacts the way rankings are determined. But it’s like any other factor, just one of dozens of things Google looks at when determining the overall value of a website.

There are definitely things your practice needs to be doing to maximize the influence the 5% to 10% factor can have.

Facebook allows practices to have dynamic interaction with patient communities. Don’t use it as a bulletin board for boring practice updates. Invite questions, supply meaningful information, ask for input on your latest dental technology, and create a place where people can gather for clear, reliable information.

Twitter provides access to your follower’s day. Use the bite-size Tweets to share something that packs a punch every time, whether it’s a little-known fact or news of a breakthrough. Do not clutter feeds with self-promotion; just appear in them offering something of interest. Others will grab and retweet you organically.

YouTube allows you to put faces on yourself and your staff, whether giving a virtual tour of the office or demonstrating proper flossing techniques. YouTube videos are incredibly easy to share on other social sites, as well as on blogs and websites. A well-done video can have a huge reach.

Pinterest can be a fun, visual way to present information about your practice, staff, and skills. Before-and-after photos (with permission from patients), short bios of each staff member, pictures of recommended dental-health accessories, and other pinned images can create an educational board for patients to enjoy and which to refer.

LinkedIn now offers public company pages that can be used to boost your practice’s online image. Status updates and office news can be presented in a natural way, as your practice’s professional newsfeed.

Social media may not be all there is to SEO, but it’s definitely on the scoreboard. The 5% to 10% makes a difference in the way people (and search engines) see you online. **DE**

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