

# SNACK-SIZED SOCIAL MEDIA: MAKING YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE ADDICTIVE

BY KRISTIE NATION

When it comes to social media, many people find out it's like Lay's Potato Chips – you cannot just read one post or “like” one page. Presented with information overload, many people fall prey to “social media bloat,” and stop sharing the items they like best.



How can you take advantage of the addictive power of social sites without overdoing it? One way is to learn where your patients (new and existing) hang out online, how they use social media on each platform, and why they are

more apt to “eat” certain posts than others.

- Facebook users tend to check the news feed multiple times with the most action being in the afternoon and massive attention given to images as compared to text. Studies show that women with children use Facebook heavily when looking for information or making decisions about health. For pediatric and orthodontic practices, this makes Facebook a priority in any social media campaign.
- Twitter users often search hash tags to find local information. Potential patients can find dentists in their area using #dentist #city as search terms. (This works both ways. Dentists can reach out to people tweeting about needing to find a dentist in a specific city as well.)
- LinkedIn users know their platform is all about personal endorsement, and professionals on the site will seek out dental providers they view as also being professional. In addition, they tend to spend time on their platform before and after work instead of during the day like Facebook and Twitter users.

For those who think this is too complicated and that social media will eventually “just go away,” restoring dental practice marketing to the “old-fashioned” word-of-mouth arena, don't be fooled. Social media *is* the new word-of-mouth, and if you are not participating in the conversation, you are being left behind. Eighty percent of your client base is on social media, and most of your competitors are, too.

So how do you get potential patients to choose your practice as compared to your neighbors? You have to make

yours more palatable. In other words, you have to be appealing, easy to eat, and as addictive as a snack food.

## THE RECIPE EFFECT

When people post images of their home-cooked meal or dessert on Facebook or Instagram or Pinterest, the automatic request from most viewers is “share your recipe.” It's an almost Pavlovian interaction, followed by an increased likelihood of sharing it on their wall for later reference.

You can create the same response by using snack-sized content such as a 15-second video, a 150-word blog post, a meme with a relevant caption, or a colorful infographic to encourage people to view your content and share it with others.

When you create content that people want to “eat,” you can also take advantage of what I like to call “the recipe effect.” Provide real value, and then encourage people to share on their walls so they can access the information later. Like that delicious-looking recipe for a peanut butter and chocolate torte, they will not be able to resist hanging on to the information and sharing it with others.

The more stuff you share that people find interesting and useful, the more they will come to look forward to your posts, and the more prone they will be to click through to content hosted on your site. You are much more likely to convert someone from a curious researcher into a new patient if you can get them to actually visit your website.

Domain-sponsored stories are one way to accomplish extra website traffic. I will cover that in a future column. For now, ensure that your prospective patient stays addicted to your wall by providing free snacks every time they “drop in.” Eventually, they will ask for your recipe, and you will have that chance to convert them from a “like” into a patient. **DE**

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