MetLife Quality Resource Guide

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Social Media in Dental Practice

Educational Objectives

Following this unit of instruction, the practitioner should be able to:

- 1. Understand different online social media platforms.
- 2. Identify the demographics associated with each social media platform.
- 3. Understand online blogs and how to incorporate them into a marketing plan.
- 4. Be HIPAA compliant when using social media within the practice setting.
- 5. Recognize the importance of online reviews and how to acquire positive online reviews for your practice.
- 6. Use social media to promote patient access.
- 7. Use social media for oral health education.

Introduction

arketing in today's world for a dental practice must be multifaceted. It has been stated that a patient or client will need to be "touched" ten times by a dental office before they decide to make an initial appointment. This is compared to only once or twice a decade ago.¹ It is imperative that the "touches" a practice has with an existing or potential patient are meaningful and create a lasting impact. Social media is one piece of this marketing puzzle. Having a strong presence on social media platforms will help build a dental office's brand and reputation. Offices engaging the public through social media are seeking rapport and trust from their patients and can utilize this platform as an educational tool for their followers.

Arming a dental practice with a strong online presence through social media can have a huge impact on a dental practice's marketing, though finding the correct tools for a practice's philosophy and marketing plan can be a challenge. There are a variety of options in the social media world. It is important to consider the audience when deciding how to incorporate social media marketing into a dental practice because different social media platforms appeal to different people. A dental practice needs to first determine who their online audience will be. Once a practice has determined its audience, incorporating social media can be accomplished by creating a presence on the specific social media platforms that best suits that audience. Once a social media campaign is in place for a dental practice, it needs to be well written and executed, as well as maintained on a daily basis. This can be a huge task for a dental practice. It is important for a dental office to identify the correct people to launch the campaign and ensure the online presence is maintained well.



Facebook

Facebook by far is the most widely used social media platform today. It has evolved into a daily activity for a large number of Americans and is a great way to reach existing and potential patients. Seventy-one percent of "internet users" in America have a *Facebook* profile. This translates into fifty-eight percent of the total population (Table 1). The number of seniors (>65 years old) using *Facebook* continues to rise and is up to fifty-six percent in 2014 compared to thirty-five percent in 2012.² Women technically use *Facebook* more than men, but only by six percent; both genders are present on *Facebook* and easily reachable.³

FIRST EDITION

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Brooke Loftis Elmore, DDS Private Practice – Temple, Texas

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The following commentary highlights fundamental and commonly accepted practices on the subject matter. The information is intended as a general overview and is for educational purposes only. This information does not constitute legal advice, which can only be provided by an attorney.

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Address comments to: dentalquality@MetLife.com MetLife Dental Quality Initiatives Program 501 US Highway 22 Bridgewater, NJ 08807 There are different types of *Facebook* applications. Facebook "profiles" are for individuals while a business would create a Facebook "page." To create a Facebook page, a current Facebook profile user would initiate the page by creating it from his/ her profile. Once created, any Facebook user could "like" the page. After the page has been "liked" by a user, posts to that page will start to appear in his/her news feed. Any Facebook user can create a page and it is the best way to promote a dental practice on Facebook. The creator is then the administrator of the page and can add other administrators with editing rights. Administrators can update the page or make posts. Ideally there should be more than one administrator to manage the page, make new posts, and ensure accountability.4

Promoting a dental practice through a *Facebook* Business Page can be fun and exciting. Sharing pictures, community events and "giveaway contests" are a few examples of ideas to post to promote the practice and engage patients. Also, a practice has the potential to reach new patients by having existing patients interact with their page and repost or "share" the page's activity.⁵

The office will want to optimize the items shared on *Facebook* and ensure that viewers will see them. Here are a few factors to consider when posting on a dental office's page:³

- Highest traffic occurs mid-week between 1-3PM. Consider this in determining when to post status updates.
- On Thursdays and Fridays, engagement is 18% higher.
- 50% of 18-24 year olds go on *Facebook* when they wake up. Make the content in posts in the mornings relevant to this age group.
- An average Facebook visit is 20 minutes. Keep posts short and engaging so followers will read and share.

A dental practice can pay to "promote" their business page or "boost" their posts on *Facebook*. Promoting a page is where an advertisement will be seen by an audience in the right side of their news feed and boosting a post is where a dental practice

Social Media Platform	Percentage of Online Users	Appeals to						
Facebook	71%	Men and women of all age groups, usage among seniors continues to rise annually						
Instagram	26%	Young adults, ages 18-29, women predominantly						
Twitter	23%	Men with college education or higher, annual income >\$50,000						
Pinterest	28%	Women of all ages, increase recently in >50 year olds						
LinkedIn	28%	Men and women, mostly age 30-64, college graduates, higher income households						
Snapchat	14%	Mostly women, age group 18-24						

Table 1 - 2014 Social Media Statistics for Americans^{2,11}

would pay to have their posts show up higher in their audience's news feed. By paying to promote or boost on *Facebook*, a dental practice has the potential to reach more viewers. It does not mean that everyone who sees a dental practice's post will interact with it, but the fact that individuals not currently patients view it may resonate. Paying to boost certain posts, especially those that educate people on an oral health topic, would be ideal. These boosted posts can extend a message to an audience that has never been reached before. And by expanding the scope, a dental practice may start to see a return on investment by reaching more people and engaging their community.⁶



Instagram

With a few changes to the *Facebook* algorithm, some businesses have found it easier and more cost effective to post to *Instagram* instead of *Facebook*. These businesses found that they were not showing up in their patrons news feed on *Facebook*, causing a slowdown in the organic growth of their company. A company's profile feed published in *Instagram* differs from *Facebook* because everyone who follows that profile on *Instagram* will see every post published. *Facebook* does not guarantee that followers will see every post published.⁷

Instagram is one of the fastest growing social media outlets for businesses. Posting images with an associated hashtag (ie. #ilovemydentist) continues to gain popularity among many age groups. Twenty-six percent of adult internet users peruse *Instagram*. The largest group of users (53%) is the 18-29 year old population.² This sets up the perfect audience for a dental practice, especially orthodontic practices. Many orthodontic practices have been successful with integrating *Instagram* in their social media plan.⁸ Besides young adults, women frequent Instagram.² A dental practice may choose to share success stories of patients and also promote community events that it is involved in.⁷

There are a few keys to success for creating and incorporating an Instagram account for a dental practice:⁷

• Keep the pictures real and personal; patients and followers want to see real people and staff members. It is important to post pictures of patients (with their written permission), doctors, and staff interacting at the office or in the community.

- Always have a hashtag to accompany a picture. A hashtag is the symbol "#" followed by a few words that describe the picture. Create a hashtag to consistently use for a dental office on every post. When someone searches key words or the hashtag, they will see all of the related posts. Photos that are posted with a hashtag tend to get more "likes" than photos that do not have a hashtag.
- Tag people in photos. A tag means that followers in the tagged person's network will also see the photo. It allows the post to reach a wider audience than just the followers of a dental practice. Respond to any comments and add any comments to photos that an office is tagged in.
- Do not be afraid to post a video. Videos can only be 15 seconds long and tend to create more comments than photos.
- Make sure to post on a schedule. Try to be consistent with posting to not overwhelm or underwhelm the practice's audience.

Promote the dental office's profile by creating awareness among the practice's patients. Let them know the dental office is on Instagram by sending it out in an email, posting it on other social media platforms, and creating a sign to place at the reception desk. Add the Instagram icon to all of the practice's marketing materials to make sure patients know to find the practice on Instagram.⁷



Twitter

Twitter is an interactive social media site that allows you to post quick updates or messages. A "tweet" is limited to 140 characters. A good idea for a dental practice twitter feed is to post links to educational material or dental news. Re-tweeting links to dental-related topics in the news is an interesting away to engage patients with cutting edge technology and advances in dentistry.⁵ Most *Twitter* users are men under the age of 50, but this online platform has seen a rise recently in Caucasian men over 65, and those with an annual income over \$50,000.² Try to follow as many other dental related *Twitter* accounts as possible including colleagues, dental products, and associations to broaden the dental practice's presence on *Twitter*.⁶



Pinterest

Pinterest is the third most popular social network in the United States.9 Almost thirty percent of adult internet users are using Pinterest. Most are women, but there has been a rise in male users over the last few years.² Users can create a pinboarding style profile where they can "pin" ideas to be shared on boards. It is an interactive website where pinners can browse other people's boards and "re-pin" ideas to their boards. Eighty percent of pins are re-pins.9 Dental related Pinterest boards range from "tricks to teaching dental health to kids" to dental office success strategies. Pinning oral health or therapy tips on a dental Pinterest board to educate patients allows a dental practice to interact with followers on Pinterest. Patients may start re-pinning a practice's pins and eventually spread awareness of the practice. Pinterest can be an educational tool that drives more patients to a practice by exposure and becomes an online referral source through re-pins.5,9



LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a social media platform where dentists can engage and network with the dental community. This online social media site is most popular with college graduates and higher-income households.² *LinkedIn* allows professionals to interact with one another and make posts to a news feed. It is the ideal site to create a professional brand for a dental office and could ultimately drive more interest to an office's website. Patients can search for dental practices on *LinkedIn*. *LinkedIn* can also be used as a recruiting tool to find candidates to add to a dental team. This professional networking is the most important use of *LinkedIn* for many dental practices.

Users can post professional resumes to be viewed by others. Dental offices can search for keywords to fine tune the recruitment process. Unlike any other social media platform, *LinkedIn* only allows positive feedback from highly satisfied customers or colleagues who can "endorse" you for your skills.¹⁰ *LinkedIn* can provide the ability to post educational material in the practice's news feed. By providing information on technology or procedures offered in a dental practice, the news feed can reach existing patients and other *LinkedIn* professionals and disseminate oral health education.



Snapchat

Snapchat is one of the fastest growing social media platforms. Fourteen percent of all American internet users are on *Snapchat*.¹¹ It is highly popular among millennials (age 18-34); forty-five percent of Snapchat users fall in to this group. If a dental practice wants to capture this audience, it would be wise to include Snapchat in its online presence. It is fun and less serious than its social media counterparts including Facebook and Twitter. Through Snapchat a practice would take a picture, share it, and it instantly erases ten seconds later. It is a momentary burst to capture an audience. One might question the disappearing act and how that could positively impact a social media marketing strategy, but it is proven people have a short attention span. Forty-three percent of humans give up on long emails after thirty seconds and thirty-two percent tune out coworkers after fifteen seconds. Snapchat fits nicely with today's lifestyle. A dental practice can use it to make brief announcements or share photos from the office. It is fast and easy to use. First, download the app, sign up via a Twitter or Facebook account, log in and start sending content. The contact list is generated from the Twitter or Facebook contact list. Each time the app is opened on a mobile device, it is ready to take a picture or video, add color or text, select recipients from contacts and hit send. If a practice's goal is to stay on the cutting edge of social media and market to a "younger" crowd, then Snapchat is a must have within their social media plan.12



Google+ and YouTube

Google+ is Google's attempt at creating online social media platform similar to Facebook. There are 2.2 billion Google+ profiles but less than eight percent have active profiles.13 However, dental professionals need to be aware and engaged on Google+ because it can have a direct impact on a dental practice's Google search results. Most dental practices have a website and depend on *Google* search for exposure. If a dental practice creates a following on Google+ by acquiring "plus ones" the equivalent to Facebook's "likes" it can increase the organization's SEO (Search Engine Optimization) ranking.⁵ Recently, Google announced that a YouTube user would no longer be required to be a Google+ user and Google would be refocusing their Google+ efforts on other Google products. In light of this development, it appears *Google+* may be waning from the social media world but is important to include in a dental practice's social media repertoire.

On the other hand, *YouTube*, another *Google* product, continues to remain widely popular. Nearly half of Americans use *YouTube*.¹⁴ Although it is not a social media platform in the sense of interactive personal profiles, it is easy to search for or share videos on *YouTube*. Posting videos to *YouTube* for educational purposes allows a dental practice to interact with those who may not be active on other forms of social media.

Developing a Social Media Marketing Plan

here are many different ways to approach social media, but the most important aspect is ensuring that a dental practice actually has a "plan" for their social media campaign. The following is one marketing approach for social media:

 Which sites should a dental practice use? This will be different for every practice and time, resources and audience should be considered when determining which online platforms to use.

- Fill out profiles completely. Keep it exciting for readers and be personable.
- Develop the dental practice's voice and tone. Make sure these align with the dental practice's mission. The voice should be the mission statement and the tone should be the implementation of that mission.
- Pick a posting strategy. This will all depend on the practice. When, how often, what posts to make are great questions to start answering. For example, a dental office could make a target to post images to *Facebook* five to ten times a week, to tweet five times a day, post to *Google+* five times a day, and to *LinkedIn* once per week. Consistency on the quality and time of postings is the key to being successful with social media.
- Analyze, test and iterate. The more a dental practice posts, the more it will find out about the timing, content, and frequency that fits. Social media is a dynamic arena. Analyzing and detecting what did and did not work and implementing changes are important.
- Automate, engage and listen. Services exist that can help create automated systems for a dental practice that will post to several platforms at one time on a specific schedule. A practice must stay engaged in posts and reply in a timely manner to any comments. Listening to the audience and adjusting as necessary is imperative.¹⁵

How to be HIPAA compliant with Social Media

he Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is built on trust. There is a large amount of personal information shared between a patient and the dental team. Patients trust that their information is secure and protected within a dental practice. Ensuring that the patient's trust and privacy is protected should be priority in a dental practice when considering what information to share online. In the social media world, information travels fast and is difficult to erase. Once a dental practice publishes an image or information to a social media site it will be there indefinitely. In order to protect a patient and his/her privacy, a dental practice needs a plan.¹⁶ When a dental office dives in to the social media world, it is imperative that there be safeguards and systems in place to protect a patient's personal information and respect their privacy. There should be clear guidelines and repercussions for the dental team to follow. A dental practice should obtain a written consent in advance that states the patient has given permission to share their image and limited information online. When posting to social media platforms, post the minimum patient identifying information possible.¹⁷ One person, preferably the office manager or the practice's marketing coordinator, should be responsible for approving and posting anything that contains patient information on social media.

To Blog or Not to Blog? ...That is the Question

blog on a dental practice's website can be the most important patient education tool. It is an easy way to take the questions patients are asking and publicly answer them. If one patient has the question, it is very likely another patient in the practice is concerned about the same. A well-written and maintained blog can set a dental practice apart from others. A blog is an excellent way to introduce new technologies and services provided in a dental practice to the community.5 A practice should develop a plan for a blog by deciding what topics to address and how often to post. Start by focusing on technology and services offered within the practice, which will aid in patient education and awareness. A good goal for most dental practices is aiming to post a new blog once a week; although some post once a month and some every day. A few good examples of dental blogs published by dental practices on their websites can be found online at "The Lemont Family Dental Blog" and "Southcenter Dental Blog. 718,19 Maintain professionalism and cover a wide variety of topics to help keep the blog engaging and educational for patients.

Online Reviews -The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

Ithough online reviews are not a social media platform of their own, they are important to consider when developing a dental practice's online presence and marketing strategy. Social media and online reviews go hand in hand. Most people who have interacted with a dental practice on a social media site will peruse the dental practice's online reviews prior to scheduling an appointment. The most widely read reviews by potential patrons are found on Google and Yelp. Other sites for reviews to consider are Healthgrades and Facebook. Dental practices should consistently monitor reviews and respond promptly, especially to negative comments.²⁰ A dental practice does not want to respond inappropriately to negative reviews. The response should not be personal or defensive and should never be taken offline. Below are a few examples of good responses from the dental office after receiving a poor Google review online.21,22

Google Review: 2 Stars

"I had sent an e-mail requesting appointments for myself and two family members using their website. I was never contacted for follow up nor was the appointment ever confirmed. After contacting the office, I was given the brush off. I don't know if the dentist is any good but sad to say, his office staff in Little Elm needs some work on follow through. I will not be giving this office a second chance."

Response from office:

"We are so sorry you had a bad experience with our site. For some reason, we couldn't find a record of your request to us. This is our fault and we should have been better about following up and making this easier for you. We've had a meeting about this and hope to improve our level of service concerning online appointment requests. We're also getting in contact with our web hosting company to see if there is a glitch in the website. Again, we are sorry and would love the chance to make it up to you. If you are open to giving us a second chance, please let us know."

Google Review: 3 stars

"This office is very modern and nice. The doctor seemed very caring even though I had to return several times after the procedure I had done because of issues that they said were "normal". His staff is very well trained and professional with the exception of one of his nurses that I specifically asked not to be placed with again due to her poor attitude. My last appointment I was placed with her again despite my requests. Eventually I had the tooth checked by another dentist and luckily I am feeling much better."

Response from office:

"Hello Nat. Thank you for your review of our practice and I apologize for your overall experience. We built our office and train our staff to focus on patients as people first, which is the reason we continually receive such positive reviews online and in the community. I'm glad you're feeling much better now and I really appreciate you telling us about your experience. We will review this with our staff and make improvements where possible to prevent any patient from experiencing this again. Thanks for your feedback."

Most practices want to know how to obtain positive reviews for their office. Placing signs in a reception area or in operatories that ask patients for online reviews is one option. A personalized email from the doctor, hygienist, or dental assistant is another alternative to request a review.²³ However, it is important not to overwhelm patients with review requests. When a patient has had a great experience and is complimenting the office, it is the opportune time for the provider to personally ask for the online review. In most cases, the direct request from the doctor is the most effective way to secure a good online review. Do not incentivize patients for reviews, this is against Google's policy and can lead to a penalty.²⁰ A dental practice also does not want to find itself caught in an unethical situation by incentivizing a patient to write a positive review. The best reviews come honest and easy from elated patients who have had a wonderful experience in a dental practice.

There are several services that exist to help a practice or business secure positive online reviews. One service allows a practice to enter the patient's contact information, triggering an email to the patient requesting a rating from one to five stars. If the patient rates a dental practice with "five stars", it asks for a written review. If the review is completed, it will give the patient an opportunity to publish the "five star" review to numerous review sites immediately. If someone has had a bad experience or less than "five stars," the rating goes back to the practice. It separates the patients who have had a great experience from those that had a less than ideal experience. The practice then has the opportunity to address a patient's concern before a review is posted online.24

Conclusion

he social media world is an entirely new realm for many. Diving into all of these platforms may seem overwhelming. Start small and remember to keep it fun, positive and to the point. Conversational and casual postings can create the most interest and engagement. Social media arenas are great places to educate patients and showcase cutting edge dental technology. If a dental practice plans to engage users with contests, there are certain guidelines and governmental regulations to follow and they are important to know prior to running sweepstakes or contests online. For example, if a dental practice plans to engage followers on Facebook in an online contest or sweepstakes, it needs to follow all federal and state laws and regulations for Facebook contests listed online on the "Facebook Page Terms."²⁵ There are several services who can provide guidance and assistance to dental practices when creating their social media presence.⁸ Whether a practice decides to post, share, like, instagram, tweet, link, or pin, social media can open a whole new world of opportunity.

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POST-TEST

Internet Users: This page is intended to assist you in fast and accurate testing when completing the "Online Exam." We suggest reviewing the questions and then circling your answers on this page prior to completing the online exam.

(1.0 CE Credit Contact Hour) Please circle the correct answer. 70% equals passing grade.

- 1. Which of the following social media platforms is MOST popular in the U.S.?
 - a. Snapchat
 - b. Google+
 - c. Facebook
 - d. Instagram

2. Which statement is TRUE regarding Facebook Pages and Profiles?

- a. A Facebook Page is for personal information while a Profile is geared more towards businesses.
- b. A Facebook Profile and Page are synonymous.
- c. A Facebook Profile is for personal information while a Page is more geared towards businesses.
- d. A Facebook profile is for businesses and personal information while a Page is for advertisement only.

3. How often should a practice's social media presence be monitored?

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Quarterly
- 4. When developing a Social Media Strategy, a dental office should consider which of the following:
 - a. Audience
 - b. Social Media Platform
 - c. Maintenance Schedule
 - d. HIPAA
 - e. All of the above
- 5. Which of the following social media platforms appeals to men with a college education or higher and an annual income over \$50,000?
 - a. Facebook
 - b. Instagram
 - a. Pinterest
 - b. Twitter

6. Snapchat is the slowest growing social media platform and appeals to millennials.

- a. True
- b. False
- 7. Which of the following is TRUE regarding Instagram?
 - a. Always include a hashtag with your post.
 - b. Videos can be up to 30 seconds.
 - c. Use stock photographs only.
 - d. Do not tag people in photographs.

8. Which social media platform appeals most to professionals?

- a. Facebook
- b. Instagram
- c. LinkedIn
- d. Snapchat
- 9. A patient gives a dental practice a negative review online. The BEST way to respond is:
 - a. No response needed. It is better to not publicly address a negative comment.
 - b. Respond promptly and address the patient's concerns in a kind manner.
 - c. Respond promptly and make excuses for the patient's concerns.
 - d. Respond in 2 weeks. Allow the patient some time to think about their review.
- 10. It is important to consider HIPAA when diving in to the social media world. A dental practice SHOULD:
 - a. Always obtain written consent when posting patient photos or information.
 - b. Limit the amount of identifying information posted.
 - c. Have written guidelines for social media postings.
 - d. Have one person responsible for posting anything that contains patient information.
 - e. All of the above.

REGISTRATION/CERTIFICATION INFORMAT	ION (Necessary for	proper certification)					
Name (Last, First, Middle Initial):							
Street Address:		Suite/Apt. Number					
City: State	e:	Zip:					
Telephone: Fax:							
Date of Birth:	Email:						
State(s) of Licensure:	License Number(s):					
Preferred Dentist Program ID Number:		Check Box If Not A PDP Member					
AGD Mastership: 🗌 Yes 📄 No							
AGD Fellowship: 🗌 Yes 📄 No Date:							
Please Check One: General Practitioner Specialist	Dental Hygien	st 🗌 Other					

Quality Resource Guide – Social Media in Dental Practice 1st Edition

Providing dentists with the opportunity for continuing dental education is an essential part of MetLife's commitment to helping dentists improve the oral health of their patients through education. You can help in this effort by providing feedback regarding the continuing education offering you have just completed.

Please respond to the statements below by checking the appropriate box,							1 = P	00R			5 = Excellent					
using the scale on the right.								1		2	3	4	5			
1.	How well d	id this c	course meet its stated educational objectives?]					
2.	How would	you rate the quality of the content?]					
3.	3. Please rate the effectiveness of the author.]					
4.	4. Please rate the written materials and visual aids used.]					
5.	5. The use of evidence-based dentistry on the topic when applicable.]					N/A
6.	6. How relevant was the course material to your practice?]					
7.	7. The extent to which the course enhanced your current knowledge or skill?]					
8.	8. The level to which your personal objectives were satisfied.															
9.	9. Please rate the administrative arrangements for this course.															
10.	10. How likely are you to recommend MetLife's CE program to a friend or colleague? (please circle one number below:)															
	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0					
	extreme	extremely likely neutral							not likely at all							
	What is the primary reason for your 0-10 recommendation rating?															

11. Please identify future topics that you would like to see:

Thank you for your time and feedback.

To Complete Program Traditionally, Please Mail Your Post Test and Evaluation Forms To:

MetLife Dental Quality Initiatives Program 501 US Highway 22 Bridgewater, NJ 08807