

A Powerful Marketing Strategy to Build Your Practice

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Facebook is now the second most popular Web site on the Internet, with more than 300 million active users. The increasing popularity of social media is revolutionizing the ways that business owners market to, and connect with, their audience. Because of sites like Facebook, it has never been so easy to get your name in front of hundreds or thousands of targeted people.

Here is how Facebook marketing can greatly benefit your acupuncture practice: You can connect with all kinds of people in your local area for free; and you can position yourself as a trusted leader and expert in your field. Let's talk about how you do this.

Some people will do what's called mass friend-adding, where they will find 30-40 targeted prospects a day on Facebook and add them as friends. In your case, you would find this many people in your local area on Facebook and start adding them as friends. I don't recommend this strategy for acupuncturists. For many businesses, this can work very well. For acupuncturists, this approach tends to be too aggressive. If you want to quickly build relationships with people you don't know in your local area, I recommend you use Twitter instead.

I have found it more effective to use Facebook as a word-of-mouth marketing tool within your practice. The best way to create some buzz about your work on Facebook is to start your own group.

Starting your own Facebook group is very easy to do. First, you need to set up your own Facebook account. Then, on your profile, you will see a link that says "create your own group." Click on that link and follow the simple instructions. Now, why would you want to do this?

Well, when you have your own group, your perceived expertise will definitely go up. People will be impressed by the fact that you lead a wellness group. As the group spreads around Facebook, more people will join it, which means more people will be aware of your practice and potentially call you for treatment.

You want your Facebook group to become as large as possible. It is pretty easy to get 2,000 people into your group, as long as you are consistent in your efforts and you are systematic about marketing it. Let's go through a step-by-step process for doing this:

1. Call your group the name of your city with the words acupuncture and wellness. For instance, if you live in Denver, the name of your group would be Denver Acupuncture and Wellness. The reason you want to name it this is because Google is really ranking Facebook groups high, so there's a chance you can actually get your group ranked on the first page of Google. In this example, when someone types in 'acupuncture Denver' into the Google search box, your group will come up and they will likely join your group and want to call you because they see you are well-established in the community. Your chances of getting ranked on the first page of Google for your group will increase as you get more members into your group and it becomes more dynamic.

2. Make sure to put a live link to your Web site or blog and make your phone number very easy to see.
3. Send an e-mail to all of your current patients to join the group. Make sure you send them the direct link to sign up so it makes it easy on them. Tell them in the e-mail that you'll be sharing a lot of great information on achieving optimal wellness. Also tell your patients to invite two of their friends to join the group by forwarding the link to them. This is a key point. Facebook is such an amazing Web site for marketing because it is so easy to share information and resources. You want your group to go viral on Facebook, meaning that your current patients tell many people, who in turn, tell others.
4. On your patient-intake forms, list the question: "Would you like to join our health and wellness group on Facebook?" If they check "yes," e-mail them the sign-up link right away so they don't forget. As your patient is leaving after the first appointment, tell them you sent them an invitation to join your group and to please spread the word and tell others about it.
5. Start making one to two posts a week to your group wall and encourage your members to interact and get to know one another. Your posts can be inspiring quotes, blog posts, links to articles about acupuncture, YouTube videos, case studies, testimonials, and so on. Share a ton of valuable content. This builds trust.
6. When people you don't know join the group, add them as a friend and tell them you're excited to get to know them.
7. Remind your patients on a regular basis to check out your group and to participate there. If they tell you they know someone who is interested in trying your services but is on the fence, have them e-mail an invitation to that person to join your group.
8. Make a few posts on your Facebook wall that you have started a group and encourage your Facebook friends to join. Do the same on Twitter if you use that service.

If you have a big patient base, you should be able to get a couple hundred people into your group pretty quickly. If you don't, this strategy will take some time, and you just need to be patient and persistent.

If you want to build your group quickly, you can certainly consider doing some pay-per-click advertising on Facebook. When someone on Facebook from your local area mentions a specific keyword like *acupuncture* or *low back pain*, you can have your ad pop up on their page with an invitation to join your group. You can often get very cheap clicks on Facebook compared to Google Adwords. Each click through to your group would cost you between 10 and 20 cents.

Remember the 90/10 rule when you are marketing to your group: 90 percent of your wall posts should be valuable information. Ten percent of your posts can be for a special you are running in your practice, or an invitation to an open house or a public talk you are offering.

Facebook allows you to send private e-mail messages to everyone in your group, which is an amazing feature from a marketing perspective. You can send mass e-mails to your group members, alerting them to something new you have posted to the group wall or to a special you are offering. If you build your group up to 500 people, imagine how powerful it is to be able to e-mail that many people at the push of a button. I recommend that you e-mail your group every seven to 10 days. This will ensure that your group remains a dynamic and growing community on Facebook.

As your group grows, your practice will grow right along with it. You will get more people on Facebook and Google finding your group. Your current patients will tell their friends and family to join the group (with a little gentle prompting from you, of course).

There are many other powerful marketing features that Facebook can offer your practice. Just be sure to commit to each of your marketing strategies in a consistent and methodical way. That is where you will see incredible results. Good luck!

JULY 2010