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Put the Social Back Into Social Media

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Social media is more than a passing fad, it is definitely here to stay. Social media apps and channels of distribution may evolve, but the concept of social media is now big business and a part of all our lives. It can seem intimidating if you don't quite understand how it works, but using this network to grow your practice requires a successful strategy to develop a winning social media ad campaign. Whether you choose Google AdWords, LinkedIn, Facebook or sponsor tweets on Twitter, online ads are very affordable, can be easily tracked and they can produce great rewards for a fraction of the cost of traditional advertising. Knowing the key components of a successful online ad campaign is the first step to creating a winning and profitable campaign for your massage practice.

The Perfect Ad

The perfect ad is creating the right message and is seen by the right people and at the right time. That sounds simple, right? And yet 90% of all failed online ad campaigns are because most people have the wrong target audience with the wrong message.

Find Your Target

It is all about testing and understanding your target audience. You want to get as specific as you can for the types of people you are looking to do business with. Focus on defining who your ideal market is and what their social habits are. Several of my Facebook fans on my business page have an interest in the most obvious like meditation, Reiki, Yoga and reflexology; however they also like gardening, jewelry, traveling, photography, cooking, coffee, horses and dancing. Why is it important for me to know this? Because the better I know my fans habits and interests, the better job of targeting I can do with the content on my page, and more importantly, the content in my ads.

On Facebook, it is easy to see the data; in the search bar enter "Groups joined by fans of (YOUR BUSINESS PAGE NAME)" and a list of groups appears. Now you can keep replacing the words "groups joined" with other factors you want to know like: "pages liked" or "people followed" or "interests." Look for pages, interests or groups that have some of the largest numbers of your followers and you can use these lists to start targeting your ads. There is a lot of data mining you can do to start to understand your audience.

When planning a national event like a conference or workshop, I will generally use one of two types of approaches. Some social networks like Facebook or LinkedIn allow advertisers to get very specific with their targeting. On Facebook, I start by identifying the key influencers in a customer's niche, seeing if they have a strong Facebook presence, and then target ads toward their fans. Next. I start by testing the fan's response and as the data starts coming in, I add other influencers to increase my reach and scale the efforts.

In other instances. I can do the opposite. Start with a macro approach by targeting several groups of key influencers with strong Facebook followings across the country and then narrow down my geographical targeting as we approach the time of the event.

When working with local clients, you use the same type of approaches just on a smaller scale. Look for key influencers within their city or several surrounding cities of the local customer and target their fans. Or you can take a micro approach; only target groups within your local community of key influencers and keep the radius to a smaller scale.

In some of your major metropolitan areas. you might have to use zip codes for targeting rather than

city wide approach. Consider too, that in these major cities most people would only do business with a location in their comfort zone. For example, I live in the coastal area of San Diego, I'm not driving to East County when I have plenty of choices right in my neighborhood. Even if the service is awesome, it is all about convenience. What can I say, I fall into the time is money category, so for me, I want access and no traffic hassles.

Regardless of the method of targeting, the point is to identify people whose fan bases include your ideal clients or customers. Next you can start to focus on the ad copy.

Online Ad Components

Online ads have a headline, image and sometimes a description, depending on the platform and the type of ad you are running, you may or may not have all the variables. Generally speaking, two of the components that have the most influence on the success are the headline and the image. In order to create a great headline, start with a question and be sure to speak to the needs/wants/desires of the ideal targeted clients. Also, avoid sounding like a brand looking to promote, but instead like a human looking to connect. Remember these are "social" networks and people want to connect with other people. Make the ad copy sound like you're a human who cares and is speaking directly to the person on the other side of that ad (not a group of people). The more personal you are with your ad copy, the better response you should receive.

Why a Question?

It doesn't have to be a question. It is your money after all, if you don't want to use a question you don't have to, but understand why questions have proven to work so well. We are inquisitive creatures. We find it difficult to resist a question mark. Don't believe me? How many have you taken one (or all of the following quizzes on Facebook): Which dessert are you? Which fierce animal are you? Where should you most likely live? What island should you visit on your next vacation? And the list goes on. When we see a question mark, it forces our mind into hyper-curiosity mode where we must know the answer. With any kind of marketing copy, whether on Facebook, Google, Twitter or LinkedIn, response rates can drastically improve if you switch the headline from a statement to a question.

The second part of the ad that has the most influence is the image. Many times, depending on where an ad is located on the screen, it is the image that grabs the attention first and the question in the headline that makes them click to find out more. Some basic marketing practices to know, believe it or not, but attractive smiling women generally test better than men. When building a basic "likes" campaign, trying to attract more followers, use images that provoke a laugh. Humor can be a great marketing tool to draw new followers. Just make sure the image you are using tells a story. We are all familiar with the old saying "a picture is worth a thousand words," and you want those words to tell a story and make a connection with your target audience. The image is something you will always need to be testing so have two to three images to try and see which gives you the best response.

What Next

The last part of successful online ads is what is called the sales funnel. This is where the people who click on the ad go next. Have a solid plan for what you want them do when they arrive. Your content on your landing page, website or app should have the same consistent message as your ad. If you have a video on your landing page, then why not try using a screen cast image from the video in your ad? The targeted audience recognizes the image and knows they are on the right path to the answer to the

question in the headline. A recent change to Facebook ads now allows you to create a video ad which might be worth testing. If you are asking them to register in your ad, make sure when they click on the ad that they are taken to the register page. This sounds like common sense, but you would be surprised the number of times this is done incorrectly. Also, remember that people are still looking to connect with a person and in test after test, the responses were better when the landing page was personally branded as opposed to company-branded.

Test and Test Some More

Lastly, I want to emphasize how important it is to test everything. Testing is going to be your most effective tool for successful campaigns. And because it is digital, you can adapt or change your message quickly, unlike traditional marketing where you spend $1,000 to $3,000 hoping it works and not being able to modify anything on the mailer or ad without investing another bunch of money. Unless you have a mailing listm you will need to buy or rent leads. You have creative costs and print of your marketing piece and then the cost of postage. Lastly, you are gambling that the message you're sending out is going to connect to a percentage of those folks, if they even open and read it. Even if you do have your own mailing list and do it yourself by printing up flyers in your office and adding them to invoices or handing them out at your reception counters, that is still a few hundred dollars of "testing" your message to see if it works.

With digital ads, you have data within hours of launching a campaign and you can be modifying and testing three to five different messages with that couple of hundred dollars. Digital adbertising eliminates the risk for a lot less investment. Once you have a proven message that converts with your targeted audience, this can actually assist you to refine your traditional advertising for better conversions. Test your target audience, your ad copy, the images and the funnel. As you test each element, be sure to test one component at a time so you know what worked and what didn't. Remember, this is a marathon and not a race and not everyone wins the big trophy their first time out. But, if you follow the right guidelines and test to find the right message to the right person at the right time, then even when you are testing you can have success from the start.

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