



MARKETING / OFFICE / STAFF

## Building Community: A New Way to Socialize Your Practice

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Social Media can seem like a slippery slope when, in fact, it is fairly easy to understand. With social media platforms, you can connect with current and potential new clients, build strong customer loyalty and increase brand awareness. Perhaps one of the best social media benefits are those new leads that can be generated for your practice. You can increase your mailing list, gather referrals and send more traffic to your website. But, when everything seems so complicated, how do you even begin?

### How It Works

I want to touch on something I've referenced in previous articles - social media management services - because there are several ways to reach a goal and companies do things differently and different isn't necessarily wrong. Like SEO services and website creation, people have preconceived definitions and expectations about what social media management is. Without communicating those levels of expectations and understanding the questions to ask, there could be levels of disappointment or frustration on both sides of the equation.

What can be scary for any business owner is that according to a Nielsen survey, people trust social media sites more than a company's website. The fact is, when visitors arrive on your website, they expect you to be biased and say nothing but great things about your products and services, as well you should. What has really been increasing since 2012, is how much people are using social media sites to search for information about your practice. As matter of fact, this survey cited that 46% of online users count on social media when making a purchase decision. If that isn't the case, then perhaps a review of your social pages may explain why.



You need active followers on those sites who actively participate by liking, tweeting, pinning, commenting and basically interacting with your page on a regular basis. However, the social sites have made various adjustments to the algorithm that manage what is seen in the news feeds. They have done this because business owners (mainly the big brands) have been overly promotional with their sharing on all social sites. Therefore, unless your tribe of followers are extremely engaged with the content you are sharing, or if you are sharing three to seven updates daily, most likely your updates will not be seen, much less have an opportunity for your tribe to take action unless you "pay to play" and purchase social media ads.

So, is it possible to organically build a tribe of followers and get leads? It is still possible, but that means you will have put in some additional effort and planning to make it happen. The good news is once you have invested in the planning and implemented a structure, the system works automatically with less time on your part. If you can see yourself investing four to eight hours a month in the process, it could be a lead generating system for your practice. That is less than 15 minutes of your

day on social media, so no more excuses of how social media is a time waster or something that "takes hours" because it doesn't have to be.

## Social Sales Funnel

One of the first things we have to realize is that social media platforms are rented or leased spaces. As business owners, we have very little control over who sees our message, when they see it and how it reaches users. A person can increase the odds with social media ads which have major benefits for all your marketing, not only your social media. However, the goal of every practitioner using social media should be to use social media as a lead generator. Get those members of your tribe to connect with your practice on something that you own and have complete control of like your newsletter, blog, or other offer that you control. One of the most efficient ways of doing this is to use a social sales funnel.

The idea of a social sales funnel is to continue the relationship building process beyond making the connection on social media by engaging with them with relevant and valuable content. This helps you convert more of those "tire-kickers" into happy, repeat customers with massive lifetime customer value. This process really stems from the classic marketing concept called AIDA: Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. These four elements describe how you build customer relationships and this same structure can be used for any of your offline offers.

What do you need to do to make this happen? Just a specific page of your website or landing page, an offer that is all about a topic of great interest to your customers and some type of auto-responder system like MailChimp, AWeber, or Constant Contact to name a few.

So, how do you get them from social media to this list? We need to take a step back and talk about content sharing to explain this part, so bear with me. What you will need to do is make the offer available on social media. Generally, I find pages are either too much promotion or no promotion at all. Social sites are like having one-on-one conversations. How long would you keep trying to talk to someone if all they did was talk about how wonderful their business is and why everyone needed to do business with them and kept listing all the their services all the time and never asked any questions, or shared anything else or tried to engage with you at all? You would be bored to tears and looking for a polite way to excuse yourself and run away, right? And yet, that is what some of the practice pages are like.

Also, consider this, I know there are multiple types of "mass" services out there that will post to your social media sites ranging from \$0 to \$200 and they vary with the number of times they will update for your practice somewhere between once a week to once a day. What you need to know about this type of strategy is that this can't be the "be all end all" to your social marketing strategy. Easing any guilt by posting one to three times a week a pretty photo or inspirational quote shouldn't be all there is to your social media. You are not utilizing it to the fullest potential and most likely not getting any new patients from it either. According to a 2015 study by Global Webindex, people have increased the amount of time they are spending on the Internet and one of the biggest reasons they attribute this increase is the total daily average spent on social media, from 1.61 hours in 2012 to 1.72 hours in 2014.

Although it may seem like some of your patients are on social media all the time, the fact is they are only spending 10 to 20 minutes multiple times a day on social media. You don't know which 20 minutes they are going to use it. Consider how far down the news feed you scroll when you use social media. If you post at 8 a.m., but your fans don't log in until their break at 10 a.m. or right before lunch or after

they put the kids to bed, how likely is it they will actually see your 8 a.m. post? Now, how do you think that works if you are trying to make a connection by only sharing content one or three times a week?

Do mass social services work? Sure they do. It is better to have something on your page consistently than nothing. It is even better if the content the social media companies are sharing can be related to your product or service. Most of the content is well written and artistically created so to best get engagement. Don't limit these services to be the only social media content you are sharing.

Use the special programs that allow you to schedule your content, programs like [www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com), [www.socialoomph.com](http://www.socialoomph.com) or [www.Amplified.com](http://www.Amplified.com) that allow you to schedule posts multiple times a day, and weeks or months in advance if you like. What I have found for my clients is to post three times a day 7-days a week and new data is showing on Twitter that five to eight times a day actually gets more engagement. To be the most efficient, it only makes sense to use a scheduling tool or contract with someone who will do that for you.

Now, going back to the question, how do I get them from social media to my list? It means you will need to have some balance. Basically, these offer posts are promotional. So, no more than 20% of your content should be promotional. That means whether you are using the social media mass services or on your own, diligently evaluate what is being shared weekly. Using the 20% rule if you are posting 21 times a week, which means four posts a week can be promotional opportunities.

What kind of content should I be using? Post a frequently asked question and your answer. Look for article links and videos that support the benefits of your product or service that is part of your offer. When you are laser-focused with a subject or theme, it makes searching so much easier and you spend less time. So, use the social media mass services, use the scheduling tools and create a social sales funnel so you can connect, engage and convert more of your social media tribe. This is how can start socializing your practice in a whole new way.

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