

Should your practice have a Facebook page?

You may have heard that over three million businesses now have a presence on Facebook. But how could being on Facebook benefit your practice, your staff and your clients?

By **Ted Janusz**

I recently presented a session on demystifying social media to a group of professional insurance agents. During the session, one of the agents explained how he successfully uses social media. After a recent series of catastrophic weather events, he posted on his Facebook page a series of questions and answers that got his fans involved. He asked and answered questions like: 'If the wind knocks over my tree into my neighbour's garden and damages something, am I responsible?'

As a result of his care and concern for his fans, and getting them involved in the conversation, he was able to write a number of new insurance policies. Notice that he did not use his Facebook page to shout out: 'Call me today for a free insurance quote'.

In determining whether your practice should be on Facebook, there are seven questions that may be crossing your mind.

1. Why even spend time and effort creating a Facebook page?

Facebook is the world's largest online social network, now with over 750 million users. In fact, 40% of residents in the UK have a Facebook profile, and you can participate and create a presence there for your practice – free of charge.

With a Facebook page, you can include everything that relates to your practice in one place, including but not limited to:

- An overview of your practice



- Website and contact info
- Press releases
- Videos
- Practice news and status
- And last – but most important – client interaction.

2. Our practice already has a website – why isn't that enough of an online presence?

If you were a shopkeeper, where would you rather locate your brick-and-mortar store? On a dusty, lonely, rural country road or in the vibrant, buzzing business and commerce hub of your town? People are spending six billion minutes a day on Facebook – which works out to an hour per user per day – engaging with their friends and the businesses of which they are fans. Shouldn't your practice be there? In

comparison, how much time is the average user spending on that website of yours each day?

One of the major benefits of a page on Facebook over (or in addition to) a web page is that it is so simple to update. With a website, if you're not technically inclined, you will need to contact your web developer. With Facebook, updates are as easy as logging in and typing or uploading. And the fresher your content, the more you will engage people.

3. What about the good, old-fashioned marketing like print advertising and Yellow Pages?

As Malcolm Faulds wrote in a recent issue of *Advertising Age*: 'Why spend millions of dollars on advertising, promotions and product placement when the most effective marketing



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can come from consumers themselves – through word of mouth?

When it comes to choosing a provider of implant dentistry, people will first turn to those whom they know and trust to get advice. Your best source of advertising, bar none, has always been your satisfied clients. Proper use of social media now makes word-of-mouth marketing even easier.

4. What is the difference between a Facebook profile and a Facebook page?

People have profiles on Facebook while businesses have pages, which were known as ‘fan’ pages until April of 2010. In fact, some people still refer to them as fan pages. Once you create a personal profile on Facebook, you are then able to establish a page for your business.

With your Facebook page, you want an ‘open’ network to connect with as many fans as possible. People become your fans by clicking the ‘like’ button on your practice’s Facebook page.

For your personal profile on Facebook, you decide who will be your ‘friends’ and with whom you will interact. Unlike with, say, Twitter, on which anyone can decide to ‘follow’ you, on Facebook you confirm your friends. Also, unlike email where up to 90% of the messages you receive can be spam, you decide with whom you are going to communicate. Your Facebook profile gives you a ‘closed’ network.

5. What kind of content should we post on our Facebook page?

On your Facebook page, you could have:

- Photos of you and your staff
- Your interests and those of your staff (in other words, make them seem like real people)
- A video tour of the office
- Articles of interest, written from a client’s perspective
- Videos that show and explain standard dental implant procedures
- Questions from clients and your answers.

Forty per cent of residents in the UK have a Facebook profile, and you can participate and create a presence there for your practice – free of charge.

When a client or potential client is considering your services, you can direct him or her to your Facebook page. The goal is to get prospective patients comfortable with your staff and your offerings long before they step into the reception area; increasing comfort levels certainly improves your chances of attracting new clients.

6. How do we set up a Facebook page?

If you aren’t yet one of the 750 million people who have set up a personal profile, be sure to do so at www.facebook.com. You must have an operational profile before you can establish a Facebook page for your practice.

The next step is to go to www.facebook.com/pages and to click the ‘Create page’ button in the upper right corner of the screen.

7. Once we set up our Facebook page, what’s next?

Develop a strategy

The reason why most of the more than three million Facebook pages fail is because creating one was a reactive, rather than a proactive, event. Many businesses create Facebook pages simply because it seems like everyone else is.

As an example of an effective strategy for a Facebook page, search for ‘Freed, Maxick & Battaglia’, an accountancy firm in Buffalo, New York. They determined they wanted to ‘humanise employees, showcase community involvement and position the company as a thought leader’.

Create great content

Based upon what you want to achieve, create great content. Develop fabulous exclusive content for your fans that will make it easy

for them to ‘like’ your page and to keep them coming back for more. As you develop your page, always be thinking: ‘What’s in it for them?’

The main reason people unsubscribe from blogs is because the blog holder doesn’t update the blog often enough with quality, consistent posts. Make sure the content on your Facebook page is always fresh.

Promote your page

With a Facebook page, it is more than ‘build it and they will come’. Include the link to your Facebook page on your employees’ business cards, on their email addresses, in your brochures, on your patient receipts, and in your newsletters and e-newsletters. Post a ‘like us on Facebook’ sign in your reception area. To get started, become a fan of your own page and have all of your staff become fans of the page, too.

‘Old school’ versus ‘new school’ promotion

The effective use of social media in general, and Facebook in particular, requires us to shift our thinking. Using traditional marketing, in the past you would simply ‘shout out’ to your clients. With these tools you now have the ability to engage with your fans and have two-way communication with them.

You can find out how your clients really feel about your services, allowing you to deliver what they truly need and want. And once you do, you will be surprised by how much your clients will help you – spreading the word about your practice to their friends both offline and through Facebook. In the end, you’ll be able to deliver better results for your practice, your staff, your clients and yourself. **1**