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## An Excerpt from Unlimited New Patients - Volume 3

### Social media: how to get results without tweeting like a twit

The big 'buzz' these days in dental marketing is social media. Social media websites include MySpace, FaceBook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and so on, plus about a thousand other more obscure sites with weird names like Fark, Reddit, Ning and Plurk.

There are now groups of dentists organizing continuing education events so everyone can get together to discuss how can dentists use social media to promote their practices and find more patients. The three of us find it amazing that you could get a crowd of dentists in the same place in the same time to discuss social media - but heck, why not?

We're delighted that dentists are taking the initiative and staying on top of new developments in the online world, but we'd like to put things in perspective.

Between all the blogging and 'friending' and 'liking' and 'tweeting,' and who knows what-all, it's easy to spend hours each day on social networks. But is it the best use of your resources? In our experience, you aren't going to get a ton of new patients from your social interaction on social media sites. Yes, you can create an account for your practice and gain fans of your practice. You can ask your existing patients to "friend" you or become a fan of your practice. You can also copy your blog to the various social media sites to keep everyone informed and current. That's all good stuff, but hardly a viable opportunity to generate new business when you look at how much time it will take you to set everything up and add new content on a continual basis. You still want to save a bit of time for dentistry, don't you?

With that caveat, there ARE two excellent ways to use social media to improve traffic to your website, and neither of them will suck up hours of your time.

### Highly targeted pay-per-click ads on Facebook.

We know. We just spent the first half of this chapter telling you to use pay-per-click sparingly, if at all. But that's when it's search engine pay-per-click. Facebook offers pay-per-click marketing that you can carefully target to a specific demographic and geographic group, making it a very sophisticated and effective way to connect to your target market.

As with a search engine pay-per-click campaign, you DON'T need to hire someone to run your Facebook ad campaign for you. You can set up a campaign on Facebook in about 10 minutes. As you set up your campaign, you can target Facebook users by geography, age, gender, keywords and by the kinds of things they 'like' or become a 'fan' of. This allows you to choose exactly who you display your ads to, and to craft specific messages that are relevant to those people.

As an example, let's say you want to promote dental implants. You can target adults in your practice area who are over 45 years of age, so that the right people receive information that's of interest to them. By clicking on your ad, they will be taken straight to the page on your website that features your dental implant services.

You can run limitless simultaneous campaigns targeting different groups. For instance, while you're targeting people 45 and up with dental implant ads, you can target mothers in your area with an ad that promotes your kid-friendly practice: "Wii, Xbox, Playstation. Your kids will love going to the dentist." At the same time, you can run an ad targeted to people whose keywords indicate that they are headache sufferers: "Persistent headaches?"

The cost per click of Facebook ads are quite reasonable, and you can set a daily budget limit. You can also view the number of daily impressions (or views) that each ad receives, and see how many viewers clicked on the ad to visit your website. This kind of targeted ad campaign can be very cost-effective and produce great results.

**Better website ranking through social links:** Participating in social media can help you rise higher in the search results. Every time you or someone else in a social network posts about your practice in a blog or on Twitter or writes about it on someone's Facebook wall, it has a positive effect on your search engine ranking. This is because a few of the top search engines have recently agreed to index social media data, which means that this data is now included in relevant search results. When someone searches for a dentist in (let's say) Google, Google will not only retrieve and display a link to the dentist's own website, but any social media activity that includes the search terms the surfer used in their original request.

What this means is that your name and practice information could show up in four or five search results instead of just one. This is a SIGNIFICANT marketing advantage for dental practices in competitive internet markets (particularly larger cities). Take our Manhattan example from earlier in this chapter. How cool would it be to have five out of the first 10 search results for "Manhattan dentist"? You would practically own the entire first page of results!

