

Social Media

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Whether you like social media like Facebook or Twitter or you despise them, they are here to stay and much of your patient base communicates their every move to their “friends” list. Social media has significantly changed the way a growing segment of our society communicates. This offers many opportunities for reaching large groups of people quickly when needed.






If you know how social media works already – you may want to skip this paragraph and go straight to the next one. For those that have not been educated on the process, this is a very simplified explanation. Those who sign up for their free Facebook or Twitter accounts are able to request other Facebook or Twitter users to accept them as “friends.” If accepted, they are able to post comments on their home profile page and those comments are then received on the friends’ pages instantaneously. For all those users that have the new smart phones like iPhones, Droids and Blackberry, many of them receive these posts directly to their phones. The impact is that everyone knows what is going on in the lives of the people they accept as friends. In this process, many people build a “friend” network of 500 – 2000 people. With that kind of a connection list, information (good or bad, right or wrong) gets out quickly.

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With the ability to communicate your life experiences so quickly with so many people, many businesses are having to step up their efforts to insure positive customer and or patient experiences. Consider the following scenario:

Within a fifteen minute period – over 500 people were able to read the following post from someone in their community.

[Facebook posting: “HELP! Went to the dentist today – need 2 fillings and a crown but I’m DEFINITELY NOT going back to Dr. Anybody’s office to have this done. Staff was soooooooooooooo rude! Can anybody recommend a good dentist in Anywhere, Tennessee.”]

How much effort would it take to overcome the damage of this sort of posting. Granted, not everyone will take this comment to heart. But anyone on this list that is currently looking for a dentist is probably placing Dr. Anybody at the bottom of their list. In addition, this person’s Facebook list may contain several other patients that go to Dr. Anybody. If any of these patients had a similar or even a mildly similar experience at the dentist, the group mentality can foster a group exodus from Dr. Anybody’s practice; to the great pleasure of the dentist lucky enough to get the most recommendations within the friends group.



Positive Patient Experience

So how do you apply this knowledge to the management of your practice. It starts with the Disney Principle. When a Disney employee arrives at work, they are actors in a play. Their role is to make people smile. They put on the costume and don't take it off until they are off the premises. You and your staff must put on the "costume" when you enter the office and NEVER take it off until you are away from your patients. Essentially, once any staff member

enters the practice they must be in patient care mode. The patient should receive royal treatment and a pleasant experience. This doesn't necessarily mean hot wax hand mitts and warm facial towels. Most patients respond extremely well to those that show them kindness, respect and a genuine friendly attitude. Even when they receive bad news about their oral health and the expense it will take to cure it, empathy, kindness and respect trump most negative feelings.

It is critical that you and your dental team understand this concept. When you are dealing with humans, you may never be able to prevent an occasional negative post about yourself. For those that are generally unreasonable, their friends know it. But make it a point to treat patients in a way that any reasonable patient has only good things to post. In today's social environment and immediate shared experiences, you want your practice reflecting the best experiences on the web. Positive posts about you go a long way. Negative posts go even farther.





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