

Does My Office Really Need a Facebook Page?

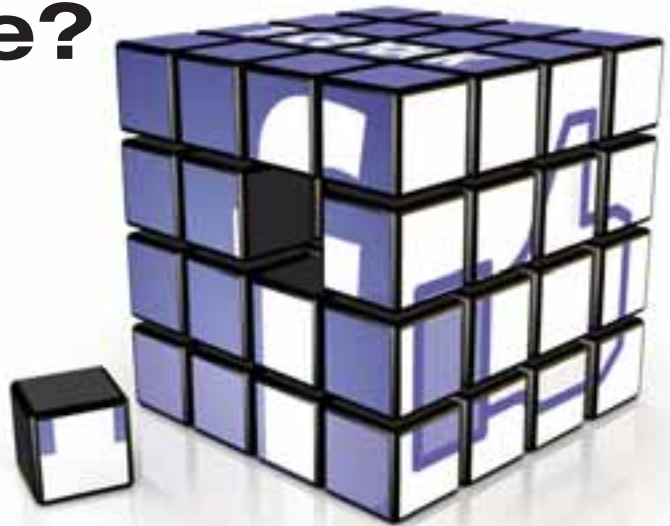
by Edward Zuckerberg, DDS, FAGD

Back in 1979 when I first started my practice, marketing meant having a good-looking sign on the door, a simple listing in the Yellow Pages and a small display ad in the local Pennysaver. Somehow those efforts filled my chairs with new patients. Today, dentists feel like they need a full-time marketing person to manage their directory listings, newspaper ads, Web page and search engine optimizations, radio, TV and general media presence, not to mention e-mail campaigns. The whole thing seems downright overbearing, and draining to devote a significant portion of the practice income, all before that new patient even sets foot in the door.

With all these ways to market, it might seem that the last thing a practitioner needs is to be told about a new way to market their practice. But using Facebook – the ultimate social networking tool – will allow you to do many of the things you are currently doing even more effectively, with much less effort and significantly lower cost. More than 500 million people are using Facebook worldwide. With more than 120 million in the U.S. alone, chances are good that nearly 50 percent of your current patient base is not only using Facebook, but is logging on several times a week. This is a tremendous opportunity to project your message and reinforce relationships with current patients, as well as tap into a market of new patients.

The heart of Facebook's social network is the free page each person or business can set up, which can include photos, interests, personal information, and anything else they wish to include in their online persona. They link to other friends and acquaintances by inviting each other and accepting invitations to be linked online as friends, and to companies and businesses such as your dental practice's page by "liking" your business (formerly "becoming a fan" of it). Your page may include everything a regular Web page has – including articles, biographies of staff members, listing of hours, maps and directions, photos and videos. More importantly, the page is interactive. There is a "wall" on each page where fans can post comments, ask questions, review your practice and start discussion strings. With a little computer know-how you can easily set up the page yourself, or for a more professional look, use an outside company.

The hardest part of developing your Facebook presence is getting existing patients and their acquaintances to "like" your page. According to Dave Kerpen, whose company Likeable Media (Likeable.com), specializes in helping businesses develop and grow their Facebook presence, getting fans for your page



starts by listing your Facebook Web address (mine is www.facebook.com/painlessdrz) on your business cards, stationary, invoices, Web page, newsletter, office signage and just about anywhere that you have office information listed. Also offer incentives for your patients and other contacts to "like" your page. The incentive may be in the form of free merchandise, discounts on services, or special offers. People want to be involved and stay informed.

Make them aware of your Facebook presence and with a little effort they will "like" and link to your page. According to Kerpen, the minimum magic number to shoot for is 350 fans on your practice's page. At that threshold the marketing effectiveness really starts to escalate. You can post simple updates to your page, which can range from introductions to new employees, information for patients about new techniques or equipment just placed into service, or the things you learned at the CE course you just attended. Better yet, use the page to ask engaging questions, and if possible share photos and videos of happy patients. These updates automatically get broadcast onto the news feed of all your fans in real time and free of charge! Unless you employ a company such as Likeable to help set up your page and strategy (I highly recommend it unless you have the time and are



computer savvy), you haven't invested a dime yet, and you've developed a presence which will help you continue to tap into your market of fans with your messages as often as you want. This is a great vehicle to offer discounts and specials for your fans too. Around Valentine's Day, my page offered "free bleaching for your sweetie" when they came in for bleaching and purchased it for themselves. While you don't want to flood your fans' news feed with promotional messages, you do want to get your message in front of them as long as you have something worthwhile to say. Getting at least two messages a week is a good start and shouldn't take more than 10 minutes of your time to add new content to your page. Get your staff involved with ideas for posts, specials or even add an office blog to your page.

Now that you have developed a nucleus of fans on your page, it's time to start attracting new patients to your practice. Facebook lets you target your advertising in ways that no other form of advertising can, and delivers the power of your fans' social networking connections to create the online version of word-of-mouth referrals. In Facebook's ad setup page you can select from a variety of demographics to target your market – including but not limited to: age groups, geo-

graphic locations, gender, academic levels achieved and any interest or job title listed on an individual's profile. Of course, the more specific you are in selecting demographics, the target market will decrease, but you will get more bang for your advertising dollar as you assure that your message is only getting out to those you want. Now here's the biggest kicker: one of the

selectable categories is "friends of fans." For example, John Smith is a fan of your practice. Most people on Facebook have at least 100 friends, some upward of several hundred.

Using demographic limitations, assume that 25 of John's friends fit into your limits. When your ad appears before John's friends on their Facebook page, there will also be a thumbs up graphic along with "John Smith likes 'your practice'!" This is the online equivalent of a word-of-mouth referral. Can you imagine if your direct mail could include references to the recipient's friends liking your practice? If that person is looking for a new dentist and they value John's recommendation, you have successfully harnessed a referral without having to ask John to be a missionary for you.

Facebook also allows you to specify your advertising budget and gives you incredible tools to evaluate the effectiveness of



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Is Your Website Kicking Butt?

OR... Did you pay a lot of money but aren't getting results?


Great News!

The Website Owner's Manual for Dentists was one of the 'Five Resources You Must Own' in the Dentaltown August issue of Howard Speaks.

What Are Our Readers Saying?

'Before Mike's Website Owner's Manual, I got 3-4 patients per YEAR from the Web; now I see 3-4 patients every WEEK!! My ROI from the Manual is over 40:1 in just 5 months, and in July alone we produced \$8500 from website referrals!' - Dr. Chip Payet

Author, Mike Barr, DDS



Do You Want To Know Why?

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- How did I get 6 out of 10 positions on the 1st page of Google for a popular keyword? **See proof on Page 183!**
- How do you choose a great domain name? **That starts on page 10!**
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your marketing program by giving you such information as number of impressions and number of clicks achieved. An impression is simply the viewing of your ad or its appearance on a page, with no guarantee they will see it or actually click on your ad. It would be the equivalent of a direct mail piece arriving in your prospective clients' mailbox. A click means they are interested or want more information, the mail equivalent of them actually opening the envelope. If you have done your demographic selection well, the click per impression rate will be much higher than any other form of advertising and accordingly, much more cost effective and efficient in generating new patients. I've done direct mail pieces that cost \$500 or more, were mass mailed to 10,000 homes and generated four to five new patients on average. With Facebook advertising, an investment of \$50 got me 120 impressions, 42 clicks and six new patients in one week.

Your patients will be impressed by your Facebook presence as much as they are by that new CAD/CAM machine in which you just invested thousands. With Facebook you show you care enough to provide patients with a new means of communicating and staying in touch with them. As Facebook continues its exponential growth and your fans' network get larger, you are piggy-backing onto the best value in promoting your practice both internally and externally, reinforcing existing relationships and attracting new patients to your practice. Likeable's Kerpen calls Facebook "word-of-mouth marketing on steroids" – the sooner your patients "like" your practice, the sooner you can get those steroids working for you. ■

Author's Bio

Dr. Edward Zuckerberg graduated from NYU College of Dentistry in 1978 and received his FAGD in 1984. He has been in private practice for 31 years, the last 29 in Dobbs Ferry, New York. An early technology adopter, Dr. Zuckerberg's office has been computerized since 1984, employed digital radiography since 1997, and has been paperless since 2005. He and his wife, Karen, have four children, and their son Mark Zuckerberg is the founder and CEO of Facebook, Inc. Dr. Zuckerberg can be contacted at painless.drz@verizon.net or on his Facebook page at www.facebook.com/painlessdrz



YouTube: You're on the Air by Rita Zamora

Online video viewership is skyrocketing. This year, YouTube reached an all-time high of 14.6 billion videos viewed. If you think it's just teenagers watching videos, think again. Recent data released by Nielsen reveals the number of seniors, age 65 and older, are increasing their visits to YouTube – making YouTube their fourth most-visited online destination (Facebook was third, led by Windows Media Player, and Google, respectively).

If you haven't already begun marketing with YouTube, now is the time. So where do you begin? Before you start to shoot video and set up a YouTube account, it's wise to spend some time considering what results you want. Here are several initial planning steps:

1. Who will star in your videos? Will you be featured in your videos or will it be someone from your team? You may also want to consider testimonials directly from patients, or hire professional talent to interview you. The best way to discover how you feel about being on camera is to practice.

The first time you see yourself on video, it is certain you will find several things you'd like to improve. Even if you plan to have a professional video made, seek advice from a professional and practice in advance; you'll make better use of the investment.

2. What will you say? Spend time determining your video topics and script. Remember online viewers are sophisticated and want to watch WIIFT (What's in it for them?). Television commercials, sales pitches or lengthy doctor biographies tend to turn people off. Instead, focus on common patient questions. For example:

- How long will I need braces?
- Will my gum surgery hurt?
- What can I expect at my child's first pediatric dentist visit?

3. Where will you say it? Picture yourself on the set of a professional television studio or sitting at your desk. Either scenario can be successful, however only you can decide which type of impression you want to make. There is something to be said for professional lighting, audio, and even make-up. On the other hand, being authentic and genuine in your own beautiful office can work just as well.

If you feel overwhelmed with these initial planning questions, you may want to consider a professional's help. A professional videographer can help you work through your camera jitters, develop an effective script and recommend the best location. Perhaps you've already made your video, but you're stuck in the editing, tagging or uploading process. Remember help is available at every stage of the process.

Keep in mind – although YouTube is free to use – you can reap valuable benefits from investing in professional editing; it will make your videos look polished. Overall a professional's help will save you time, effort and energy.

Conversely, if you have already decided you want to go it alone, you can download a free 18-page, step-by-step, video marketing e-book at www.hubspot.com. Once on HubSpot.com, enter the following terms into the upper-right search box: "How to use online video for marketing guide." Learn which camera to buy, how to record, edit and publish your video to YouTube.

Whether you decide to go it alone or hire a professional, remember practice, practice, practice. If you've already made a video, don't stop there. Commit to making multiple video presentations and create a YouTube library. One of the biggest benefits video has to offer is the fact that it can be syndicated, shared and viewed 24/7 on the Web. Get started today, and let video marketing start working for you. ■