



The *Incisor's* Guide to Social Media

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In just twenty short years, we have gone from using landlines, email and letters to using social media and smartphones as our main forms of communication. It is crazy that so much has changed in such a short amount of time. Currently, 3.6 billion people are on social media globally, and that number is projected to grow by at least one billion within the next five years.¹ Just think about that, the global population is just under eight billion! Nearly half of the global population uses social media. Just why is that though? Well, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest and more have found ways to be one-stop shop platforms for news, family and friends updates, games, shopping and business information.

Having a social media presence has become incredibly important to stay in the loop with what is happening in our world. The most used social media platform is Facebook. Since its start on the Harvard campus in 2004 by founder Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook has blown up to be a social media conglomerate with 2.7 billion users. Each day 1.62 billion of those users are active on the platform.² In this case, active means opening the application on one's phone or via desktop browser and scrolling through the page for any amount of time within 24 hours. During this time, users may be just mindlessly scrolling or looking for something specific, but regardless of what their user path is, they are being exposed to hundreds of pieces of information in one place.

Having everything in one place seems overwhelming for most, but Facebook's personal algorithm has everything you want to see in one spot and things that you are not interested in for the most part have been filtered out. For example, let's say that you are a huge football fan, and your favorite team is the Green Bay Packers. You like pages about the Packers, you post about the Packers and your friends also like the Packers, so with the Facebook algorithm, your page will be, no pun intended, but PACKED with Green Bay Packer updates. Chicago Bears and New England Patriots news will be hidden from you unless it has something to do with the Packers. How crazy is that, that

Facebook has learned who you are based on what you like and has figured out what you should see.

So, you are probably thinking, how does this have anything to do with being a pediatric dentist? Well, it actually has a lot to do with it! By having a personal social media profile and/or a business page you are able to cater your page/profile to you and to your business! Just like the Green Bay Packer example, a lot of Facebook users follow parenting pages and have kids. By knowing this, you are able to share a lot about your profession and dental clinic on Facebook to be seen by whomever follows you and those who are interested in what you have to say about pediatrics.

For the most part, Facebook Business Pages are going to be the best place to share information about your business and profession to those in your area and to your followers. This may sound very basic, but just by creating a page, you are humanizing your office and your team. You are no longer just a website or a brick and mortar building, you have instead created a page where news can be shared from a more personal source. You can also include a link to your website, your hours, address, a small description of who you are and also an invite for your followers or those interested in learning about your business to message you. As mentioned before, Facebook is a one-stop shop place for user information.

Some of you already have your Facebook Business Page established and can hopefully attest to the fact that setting the page up was pretty simple. Facebook walks you through each step with the goal of getting as much information about your business on your page prior to even publishing it. Whether you personally are doing this, or someone from your office is managing it, it should be a pretty stress-free project to start. The more difficult part comes when it is time to start posting updates and gaining followers. These two items go pretty hand in hand, but they need to be broken down a little bit more to keep it as simple as possible.

To have a successful business page, you need updates for followers to see and also followers to see your updates. A good place to start is filling your page with posts that help show what you do and what you care about. If your office specializes in special needs oral health care, start sharing articles and photos that you find interesting about special needs patients. It should be noted here though that the pieces you share should be more geared toward the potential client, i.e. a parent versus someone with a medical background. As mentioned before, the more you do this, the more likely your page will show up as a suggested business to follow for those who have their Facebook algorithm set with parenting news.

Another way to get things started is by having friends and family share your posts to help get it off the ground. This will then have your posts showing up in the Facebook feeds for their Facebook friends to see. Contests are also a great way to gain followers and to also have engagement and material on your page! Do something with a brightest smile contest and the winner gets a small gift card or something like that. You can also do a like, comment and tag X friends to

get the contest started! This is an easy way to share your page with a minimal financial investment. All you need is a post that says something along the lines of: "We are having a summer prize giveaway of a gift card! To be entered to win, you must comment your favorite memory of going to the dentist, like our page and tag three friends in the comment section below. Winner will be announced on TBD date!" This gets your name out even more, which then can turn followers into prospective patients, which ultimately is the end goal.

Money talks with all of this as well. If you don't have the time, energy or resources to maintain a Facebook Business page and are looking for an easy way to gain followers, there is the option to promote your business in general or to boost a specific post. What this means is that you can put money behind something that you post. Facebook has made this fairly easy as well by allowing you to enter your credit card information securely and then to choose how much you want to spend and who you want to target these posts at. By using the analytical capabilities that are built into Facebook, we have at the AAPD learned that most of our demographic are women between

the ages of 24-46, which includes moms and caregivers along with our fastest growing membership age group. By monetarily targeting these groups, we are able to market ourselves by providing information that is digestible for both parents and caregivers along with providing materials for our membership to use within their offices or at home. The price to promote to a targeted group is also not too hefty and can be paused and stopped at anytime. To discover who your main demographic is on Facebook, you can login to your account, click manage page, insights and then scroll down to people.

So, we have talked a lot about Facebook, but that isn't the only social media platform that businesses use. Twitter is popular with individual and some businesses, but less so for clinics. On the other hand, Instagram is extremely popular for pediatric dentists! Instagram is mainly for photos and videos, so this is a great place to humanize your office by sharing photos of your office, employees, patients (with permission of the caregivers) and more. Anything that you can do to let the world know about yourself and your office is a great thing!



There are lots of programs online that can help make your social media presence easy and clean to manage. Canva.com is a wonderful website that can help create images to post on social media, flyers to print out and email templates to send to mailing lists. All you have to do on Canva is pick which template you want, insert your information and download it. The best part is that the basic version is free! Hootsuite is another wonderful and free social media time saver. Hootsuite lets you link up all of your social media profiles and then you can schedule your posts in to go out on certain days. You can schedule items months in advance too, which is a big-time saver and helps keep your pages consistent. Anything that can give you more time with patients and less time on social media is a good thing to look into.

As much as social media can help your business, it can also in very rare times, hurt it. Negative reviews on social media have been a hot topic lately. If you ever receive a negative review on Facebook, Yelp or Google Reviews, it is very impor-

tant to take a deep breath and to hold yourself back from reacting negatively in your comments right away. Potential clients and patients are often deterred by owners who react negatively and rash to negative reviews. In most instances, it is best to respond with something along the lines of: "We are so sorry that you had this experience. Please give us a call, so that we can learn more about what we could do better." AAPD produced a Social Media toolkit in 2018, that offers advice about handling negative reviews.³

A second source of controversy that has become extremely relevant in the past year is when businesses use social media as a platform for personal opinions. Whether it be political, sports or even what fruit is the best fruit, someone is going to disagree with it on social media. With social media acting as the main news source for many, it is important to note that personal opinions in some cases can affect business. Some users have stated that they will boycott a business if its opinions don't align with theirs. To avoid this problem, it may be a good

idea to keep opinions on your personal pages with privacy settings on the profile. By privatizing your personal profiles, only your friends can see what you are posting, not your patients. This helps allow you to share what you want on your personal pages without it affecting your business on your public business page.

AAPD is here to help with anything that we can social media related. We have a Social Media Resource section on our website at <https://www.aapd.org/resources/social-media/> that can help you further your social media knowledge. We also have <http://mouth-monsters.mychildrensteeth.org/> which is a wonderful resource to find kid and parent friendly resources to share on social media. The most important resource is one that we can't provide, but you can... it's your patients! Nothing says come to our office for treatment and care more than a smiling child and parent post check-up on social media. So, with all of this information, which may or may not be new, go on out, post with confidence, and watch your following grow.

¹ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>

² <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/facebook-stats-for-marketers/>

³ <https://www.aapd.org/globalassets/assets/1/7/socialmedia101.web.pdf>

