there are over 29 million people using Facebook in the UK alone. Even Google has confirmed Facebook’s skyrocketing popularity. Google’s current AdPlanner statistics show Facebook as the UK’s most visited site of the Internet. Is your practice properly positioned to be found where millions of people now spend their time?

Whether your practice is actively marketing on Facebook or you are just getting started, there is advice unique to social marketing that will benefit you. First and foremost, have a plan. Most of us wouldn’t hop into a car or on a train without a destination in mind, however many practices create Facebook Business Pages without forethought.

A Facebook marketing plan can help you and your team to be organised, consistent, and most importantly effective. Here are four major plan components to keep in mind.

1. **Who** – Who will be responsible for managing your Facebook efforts? This person will monitor, interact and post on behalf of your practice. Managers of Facebook Business Pages are called “Administrators”. Pages can have multiple administrators, however be advised that administrators have the ability to delete other administrators and can delete the page entirely as well. Be sure to have trust in those who administrate your page. As practices invest more in Facebook and Facebook pages become more valuable, knowing how to keep these social assets safe will become more crucial.

2. **What** - What will your practice post about? In other words, what will you say to your followers? Even if your practice focus is on sedation dentistry, cosmetics, dental implants, six-month smiles or periodontal disease, you will need to consider additional content. Remember, social media is popular with users because it is fun and social.

   - **First and foremost, have a plan. Most of us wouldn’t hop into a car or on a train without a destination in mind, however many practices create Facebook Business Pages without forethought.**
   - **Second, have a Facebook “champion” in charge of your Facebook page. This team member enjoys Facebook, is gregarious, and is a genuine people-person whether on or offline.**
   - Often practices’ success in social marketing is directly linked to the motivation level of your champion. An excellent champion will be excited to talk to patients about Facebook. This conversation can accelerate the growth of testimonials and “likes” which results in amplified word of mouth and greatly benefits your practice.

   [Social marketing on Facebook – what is your plan?]

Rita Zamora discusses social marketing
your followers with dentistry non-stop: you will benefit more from posting a combination of information, including “social” topics.

The “socialness” of Facebook is where many practices have difficulty. Some dentists immediately push back the concept of non-dental posts by saying they wish to remain private or keep their personal interests to themselves.

However, there are definite ways to be social and personable without losing privacy. One of the largest benefits you can reap in social marketing is making human connections—a result of sharing a bit of your authentic self. For example, consider the following non-dental topics practices could post about:

• What hobbies do the doctor or team members participate in?
• What do you do for fun outside of the office?
• Are there organisations you donate to, support, or volunteer for?
• Do you have a patient appreciation day, open house, or practice anniversary event upcoming?

In addition, brainstorm with your team. The best new ideas are often produced at brainstorming sessions. Spend a few minutes at each staff meeting to discuss creative Facebook posts. Remember to document the ideas to easily reference in the future. Documenting the team's ideas will help ensure you'll never run out of fresh content to post.

3 When – When will your practice participate on Facebook? Will you check-in “whenever you have time” or will you schedule specific days of the week to respond to comments, interact, and post? Like many other aspects of managing a successful practice, consistency is key. Plan to dedicate time certain days of the week to your social marketing. While much of this type of marketing may be done spontaneously, often those practices who excel over the long term have pre-scheduled their marketing activities.

4 How – How will you inform your patients about your practice Page? What tactical methods will you employ to promote your Facebook community? Facebook ran a study that proved offline promotion resulted in a 20 per cent or greater increase in their overall connections. Because one of your primary goals should be to connect with as many of your existing patients as possible (as they will be an excellent source of testimonials and word of mouth for you), consider ways in which you can recruit as many of their “likes” as possible.

Methods in which you can promote your Facebook Page offline include:

• Inviting patients to ‘like’ your page whilst in your practice.
• Using email to promote your Facebook presence and invite participation.
• Promoting your page via special Facebook business cards, signage, flyers or posters within your office.

Lastly, keep in mind the purpose of your Facebook marketing. Social media is not the place to push advertising messages or overtly sell. Set intentions to build relationships and create community. Ultimately, the purpose of any Facebook marketing initiative should be to genuinely connect with others.

Schedule a Facebook plan meeting with your team. Create a basic plan as outlined above and determine who will be accountable. This plan will both streamline your efforts and help you to successfully achieve your social marketing objectives.

About the author
Rita Zamora is an international social media marketing consultant and speaker. She and her team actively co-manage dozens of dental practices’ social media programs. Her clients are located across the United States and internationally. She has been published in many professional publications. Rita is also Honorary Vice President to the British Dental Practice Managers Association. Learn more at www.DentalRelationshipMarketing.com or email rita@ritazamora.com.

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