As of March 30, 2012 drastic changes were seen on all Facebook business pages. In addition to the visible changes Facebook’s new timeline design brought to page walls, there are also many unseen modifications that are important to note.

One of the most important changes to note is the removal of the prominent “recommend this place” option. I’ve touted this as one of the most powerful ways to actively promote your practice on Facebook. If you never saw this option, it used to be located in the upper right hand corner of your page. It was a place where recommendations (testimonials) lived. If you had lots of recommendations, take comfort in knowing that each of those recommendations likely resulted in dozens or hundreds of pieces of word of mouth being shared on Facebook about your practice.

From here forward Facebook has yet to decide if they will continue to feature recommendations in a separate box or not. Regardless, you will get the same ability to automatically feature testimonials or comments from patients in a box labeled “recent posts by others”, which is essentially similar to the recommendation box, except it’s labeled and positioned differently... It will still provide benefit in messaging that will be published to the poster’s Facebook friends when they post a testimonial or comment on your page wall. Again, the benefits are the same; it's simply an adjustment on the layout and wording.

Remember inviting patients to share their likes, comments, recommendations or thoughts on your business page is still the most powerful way to actively market your practice on Facebook.

A second change, and perhaps the most welcome of enhancements, will be the addition of what Facebook calls
“tiers of administrator” controls. Facebook claims this new option should become available soon. The new option should allow you to designate “ownership” of your page, as well as allow for limited access, or controls, for other administrators. This option is one of the most valuable upgrades as it will finally allow practice owners to protect their pages. This means you will no longer have to worry that a disgruntled employee could steal or delete your page.

Facebook has also introduced a new message option for pages. This means that your patients or followers may now contact you in a private manner, using this message feature. Notifications about any new messages will appear in the right-hand section of your admin panel. The admin panel will appear automatically when administrators land on their Facebook pages... As long as you actively manage and monitor your Facebook page, I recommend you allow this new messaging.

Only time will tell if potential new patients or existing patients will find this a preferred method of communication. We are all aware of the growing popularity of society’s desire to type rather than talk these days. However, if the thought of allowing messages via Facebook is unappealing to you, you have the option to hide this feature from visitors.

To hide the “message” button from your page wall, click on edit page, and then click on “manager permissions” and you will find a box to uncheck the option under “messages”.

A fourth, and not-so-welcoming, change is the fact you can no longer generally set custom applications as landing pages. However, if you place an advert on Facebook, you will still be able to choose exactly where people will land and what they can expect to see when they get there. In the months to come I’m sure many people will begin exploring new solutions to try and regain their beloved landing page opportunities.

Whether you like the new Facebook changes or not, the one thing we can count on is that there will continue to be more change. Facebook claims this recent set of “enhancements” are in effort to further align with their mission, which is: “To give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected”. It is best to keep this mission in mind when setting goals for your practice Facebook marketing.

The world of business, and dental practices, is becoming more and more transparent and connected. One way you and your practice can win in this new world is to commit to being open and connected with your patients and community. Be sincere and authentic in your patient care and in your Facebook communication. In turn your Facebook marketing efforts and the relationships you build via your Facebook community will continue to benefit you.

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.