Social media’s greatest impact on your practice
Rita Zamora looks at how social media gives a voice to customers

Social media has become an integral part of daily communication for many. According to Pew Research Center, the UK has the highest proportion of global users with 52 per cent of adults using social media services such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube (i.e. compared to the US at 50 per cent and Spain at 40 per cent). Social media also plays a large role in marketing, and in media overall. Consider how many television programmes, entertainment shows, news channels or well established publications, now use social media to extend the reach and longevity of their audience interaction. Social media is no longer new media. Whether businesses decide to use social media or not, it will impact them.

Take for example a conversation I recently heard at a dinner party. One of the guests was explaining about a poor review he left on Yelp for a snowboard repair shop. The dinner guest shared that this repair shop had promoted itself as “the best in customer service”. Naturally when the customer had a service issue, he expected the problem to be easily resolved – after all this business was supposed to be the best in customer service… Unfortunately, the problem wasn’t resolved easily. This prompted the customer to express his frustration on Yelp.

Over time, the customer’s issue was in fact resolved. When I asked the dinner guest if he removed the poor review on Yelp, he said, “No. That business has promoted itself for years as the best in customer service. They aren’t the best, and in fact they suck at it”. Wow. The dinner guest went on to say that he wanted the public and the business to know that their “promise” of good customer service wasn’t true. This could “give other customers honest information, and also give the business a chance to rethink their customer service or their tagline all together”.

Is this what we’ve come to? A time when customers can tell businesses what their tagline should be? Absolutely. Whether we like it or not, it’s happening everywhere. Customers want the businesses they support to hear them. Not only do consumers want to be heard, they also want to know that the businesses they support are aligned with their values and what they believe in. Dan Pink, bestselling author of Drive and A Whole New Mind, describes this behaviour as a result of the abundant times we live in. In a recent interview with Oprah Winfrey, Dan and Oprah discussed how: “We no longer just want to have things; we want cool things. We want well-designed things. We want things with meaning.” This abundance mindset, combined with the

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communication capabilities that social media provides, has created the perfect storm for many businesses.

So how can practices protect themselves and even thrive in this potentially turbulent environment? For answers, let's look at those practices that are well aware of their core values. Note if you don't know what core values are, this is a great time to learn. Know what your core values are (it helps if you know your core values personally and you can then often apply similar values to your practice). Next, align your values with your branding. Those businesses that are well aware of their core values and have aligned their branding and everything they do day to day are well positioned to thrive in the future.

Patients will not become quieter over the years - they are becoming more vocal. People will expect more, not less. Your clients want to know who you are as a business, and as a person. If you can show your clients that you have similarly aligned values, then you will attract like-minded, high quality patients. Examples of similarly aligned values may be your belief in philanthropy - be specific, whether it's your support of local schools or your passion for animals and the local humane society. Those patients you attract via similar values will remain loyal, refer, and easily accept treatment from you.

It’s a win-win, if you choose to embrace the fact that people want to spend their dollars with businesses that have meaning. Allow others to learn who you and your team are as people. Analyse your Facebook page and your Twitter account, and determine if they honestly represent you and your practice - in other words, do you like what you see? Social media accelerates and amplifies the truth about us as individuals. Be sure the “truth” being published about you in social media is aligned with your authentic truth and your core values, and you will be well-positioned to succeed in the future.  

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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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