



GLOBAL CLINIC RATING™

Facebook Strategies for Medical Clinics

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Today, most clinics have a Facebook page, but many are unsure as to how much time to dedicate and what results to expect. Is Facebook a channel for patient acquisition, clinic marketing or patient support? At GCR, we monitor the results of the Facebook pages for all certified clinics in the GCR Index. Here are the highlights from what we've learnt so far, featuring ways to make the most of your clinic's Facebook presence.

Is Facebook declining in popularity?

But first, are the rumours true – that patients are abandoning Facebook in droves? A study by digital agency iStrategy found that Facebook users declined by 25.3% in the 13-to-17-year-old age category between 2011 and 2014 and by 7.5% among 18-to-24-year-olds. But the study also found that users grew by 32.6% among 24-to-34-year-olds, by 41.4% among 35-to-54-year-olds, and by 80.4% among those 55+.

Does this mean young patients are fleeing Facebook as parents rush in? And will parents soon flee too? Only time will tell. For now, unless teenagers fill the majority of your medical appointments, Facebook is more relevant than ever for clinics, with 1.28 billion daily users worldwide.

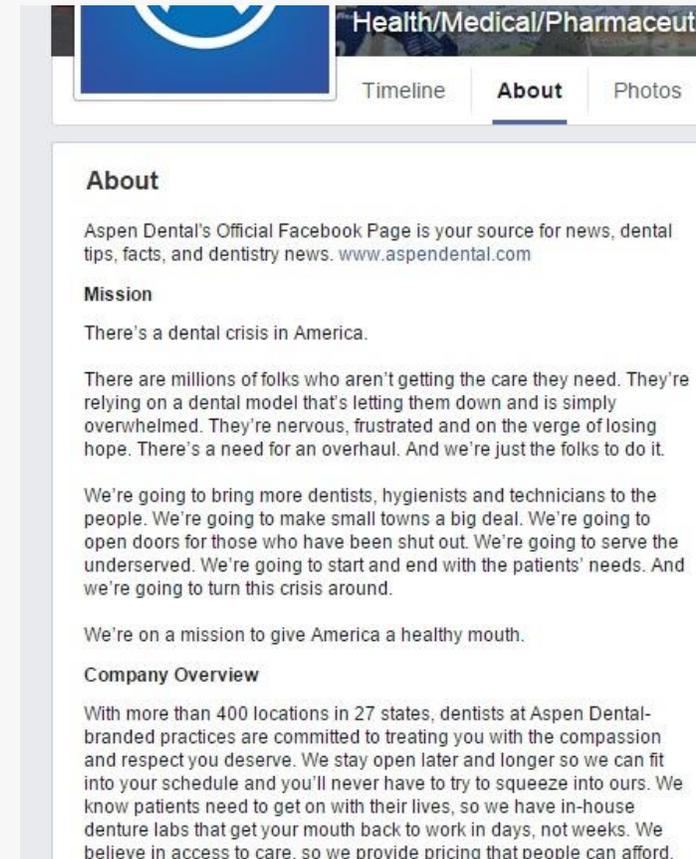


#1 Optimize Your Facebook Presence



It's not enough just to create a Facebook page for your clinic. To ensure that patients can find your page and that the information is accurate, helpful and appealing, you need optimize your Facebook much like you optimize your clinic website for Google search. This means adding categories to identify your business type, a good description, location information and photos.

But the real power in Facebook is what users share about your medical clinic, and that requires encouraging patients to like your page, to interact with you, to check in and to upload and tag photos with your clinic's name.



#2 Build Your Fan Base



Think about doing a three-campaign system on Facebook for your clinic: build an audience engage and convert.

When building an audience, it's quality and not quantity that matters. The highest quality fans are those who have visited you. They know your clinic and they can provide that valuable 'social proof' patients are looking for when deciding where to have treatment done.

The best time to recruit these patients is when they are in-clinic. But it's not enough to display a sign that says "Like our page". What's the return for the patient? Instead, offer incentives for patients to check in or to leave a review such as free Wi-Fi, a special drink, a small gift or a discount.



#3 Engage Your Patients



The real power behind Facebook lies in its sharing features. Patients are more influenced by friend activity and advice than by marketing messages, so there's an incentive to mobilize your patients to help spread the word. The more they like, comment on and share your content, the greater its reach.

But as with patients, not all posts are the same. Out of all the clinics that have active facebook pages, pictures patients before and after treatment get shared the most, photos of local scenery get liked the most and promotional posts receive low engagement rates.

The data also indicated that different post actions have different values in Facebook's algorithm. From least valuable to most valuable it is: likes, comments, shares, check-ins and reviews. For example: A comment is worth seven times more than a like, and a share is worth 13 more times than a like.

Current patients are the most likely to engage with you on Facebook. Therefore holding in-clinic contests such as asking patients to post a selfie or a photo of the reception area or to vote for the most helpful clinic team member.



#4 Consider Paid Advertising Options



Recent changes to Facebook's algorithm have made it increasingly difficult for clinics to get their posts seen by potential patients. This helps to keep news feeds from being cluttered with non-relevant messages, but it has the dual purpose for Facebook of obliging clinics to pay for advertising if they want a guarantee that their posts will appear.

Facebook offers a variety of paid options to help boost engagement and build your patient base. Options includes features that find your patients on Facebook using emails from your clinic database and that retarget visitors to your website with Facebook ads.

But is advertising on Facebook worth it? Your could consider experimenting with paid options and keeping a close eye on results to determine ROI. Post content that resonates with your patients, and amplify it with a dollar or two per day so that patients see your messages.

Paid features that target friends of patients and users with profiles similar to your patients appear to be the most effective.

You can use Google Analytics' attribution model to understand the role Facebook plays in the patient decision journey. How ever when certified clinics are asked if they spend money on Facebook advertising, most clinics operate on a very lean budget and prefer to spend money on technology improvements and innovation rather than advertising.



#5 Use Facebook for Patient Support

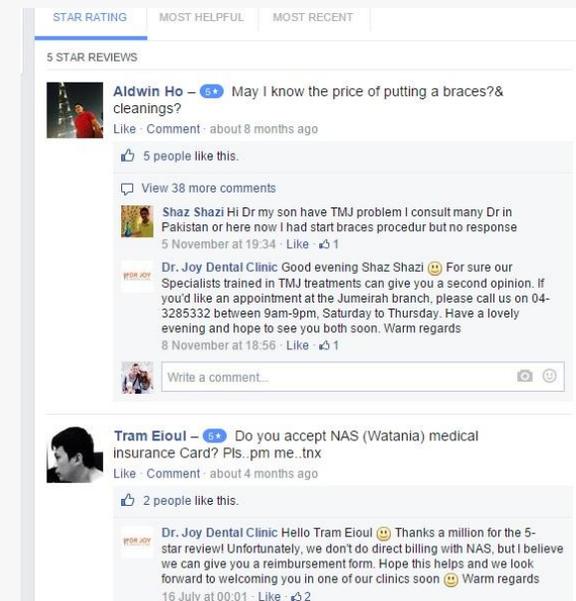


For clinics, probably the most compelling reason to maintain an active Facebook presence is its increasing popularity as a patient support channel.

More patients are using Facebook to share feedback and make inquiries directly with clinics. Given its public nature and the ease of sharing, this calls for extra vigilance. Facebook has become an extension of patient management for many clinics; a channel for helping patients to plan their appointment, for connecting with them during their treatment and for keeping in touch after treatment - all of which is truly meaningful engagement.

Listening, responding promptly and providing solutions are all part of enhancing patient satisfaction and reaching a higher GCR Feedback Score. Learn from your patients. They are the best teachers.

The GCR Feedback Score incorporates facebook reviews and likes into it's score and most importantly helps clinic owners monitor track their number and quality of reviews and compare performance against other clinics.



#6 Contain Your Revenue Expectations



Remember the rush to build Facebook treatment enquiry widgets a few years ago? Patient enquiries via Facebook have been so low that some clinics have dismantled their widgets.

Facebook is not a "book a medical appointment" channel. Of course there's no harm in having a booking widget, but it's not likely to help your patient enquiries much.

That isn't to say that clinics can't generate patient bookings via Facebook.

Top clinics often generate patient bookings through special offers and promotions and monitors conversion rates with tracking codes and Google Analytics.

Another idea is also to build loyalty by rewarding former patients with exclusive offers. Make them feel special, and they are more likely to come again.



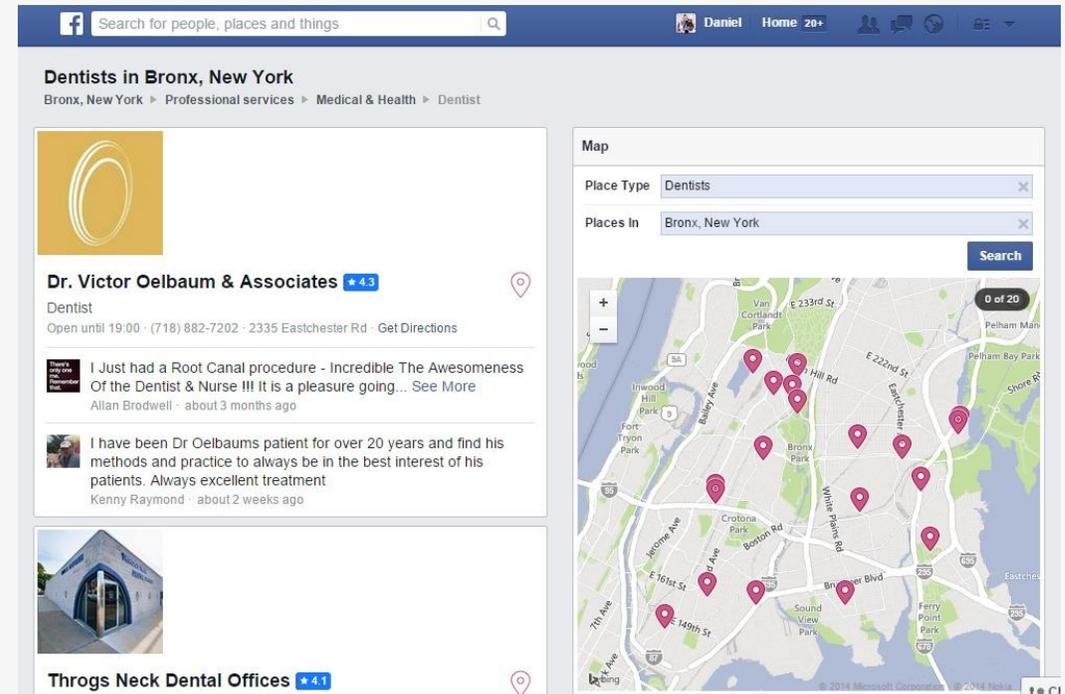
#7 Use Facebook as a Marketing Channel



Probably the greatest impediment to Facebook becoming a clinic communication channel is intent: patients go to Facebook to socialize, not to look for clinics or book an appointment.

That said, the path to purchase is increasingly social, and more potential patients are checking out clinic Facebook pages and inquiring with friends before making treatment decisions.

And it appears that Facebook is working hard to change this mindset. Features like Graph Search, Nearby Places and Reviews make Facebook more viable as a marketing channel by borrowing elements from Google search and business pages...



#8 Measure Performance

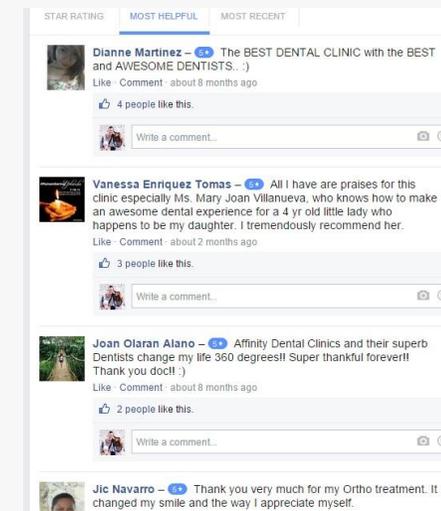


Three key metrics to indicate how well you're doing on Facebook can be found right on your landing page. Likes tell you how many fans you have. "Talking about this" is the number of people who have liked, commented on, shared or clicked on your posts in the past week. And "Visitors" tells you how many patients virtually checked in to your clinic on Facebook.

Recently, Facebook added a fourth important metric: your star rating out of five. Now any visitor to your page can rate and review your clinic, and both your rating and a review box is placed prominently on your main page. Because of this, Facebook has been entered along with Google+ into the GCR Feedback Score.

In Summary

A well-managed presence on Facebook can have modest benefits for clinics. The key is to stay disciplined, to make patient satisfaction the priority, and to carefully weigh ROI against tried-and-true marketing channels like your website, search engine marketing and other review sites.



About Us



The Global Clinic Rating enables medical clinics to increase patient satisfaction and profits by proactively monitoring and improving their GCR Score.

The GCR's Accredited clinic option provides clinics with the analysis, worldwide intelligence, competitive benchmarking and reporting needed to help medical clinics reach even higher standards.

The GCR certified and allocates rating scores to thousands of medical clinics in 110+ countries.

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