

## Use Facebook to Get New Patient Referrals

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It seems that more and more, healthcare providers are utilizing Facebook as a tool to provide a level of engagement with patients that previously did not exist. With more than 500 million active users logging into this popular social channel every day, the opportunities to connect and engage with new patients are ever growing.

Word-of-mouth has always been the most trusted, effective form of referral marketing for chiropractors. People will always rely on the opinions of other patients for recommendations concerning their health, and Facebook amplifies this 1 to 1 phenomenon, offering chiropractors the ability to instantly get their practice in front of hundreds, if not thousands of new patients.

Facebook "Like": It's Viral



The popular thumbs up Like symbol is commonly found on websites, flyers and blogs, just to name a few. A seemingly simple concept, the Facebook Like button is an important tool that can be used to grow your Facebook following and referral network.

From the moment a patient Likes your Facebook Page to become a Fan, every piece of content you share on your Page will be published onto the patient's (Fan's) newsfeed. Not only is the Fan seeing what you posted, but also potentially hundreds of other people are exposed that otherwise wouldn't have been. The average Facebook user has about 130 friends, some many more. If you get

just 20 patients to Like your new Facebook Page, all of a sudden there are 2,600 people who could potentially be getting to know your practice better!

When a patient Likes your Page, you also have the opportunity to make repeated impressions on him or her. The patient will be notified of new updates, special promotions, photos, or whatever type of content your practice deems relevant to contribute to the Page. More so, every single interaction the patient makes with your Page—from liking a post or making a comment—will be visible to all of the patient's Facebook contacts. The simple act of clicking Like opens an invaluable window of marketing opportunity for your practice, not only between the chiropractor and the patient - but also between the practice and more than 100 other of the patient's contacts.

Getting started with an effective Facebook Page for your practice can be challenging. Where do you start, and how can you nurture an engaging social presence? Here are a few tips for maximizing the impact of your Facebook strategy.

### Establish Your Network

After you've created your Page, the first step to a successful social media presence is getting people to Like your Page. A quick and easy way to start growing your Fan base is to leverage your existing patients and staff. Those already using Facebook, which a majority of your patients and staff are, will be happy to Like your Page—just ask!

Let patients know about your Facebook presence by placing a sign at the front desk in your office. Alert staff to remind patients about your Page and the benefits of following your practice on Facebook for important news updates, patient education and exclusive promotions. Similarly, you should communicate your Facebook presence by including social sharing buttons on the homepage of your website which link directly to your Facebook Page. Your Facebook URL should also be included on any other marketing materials such as brochures, newsletters or emails.

### Have a Strategy

Social media requires you to be just that—social. Without a carefully, thought-out plan it's easy to be overwhelmed by Facebook and fall off course. If you aren't contributing consistent, quality content to your Page, your Fans will not be engaged, and you will not be growing your network.

Appoint one member of your office to administer all Facebook activity. Whether it's you or a staff member, one person should be the gatekeeper for any and all posts, comments or other interactions that occur on your page to ensure all of your messaging being distributed is consistent, accurate and in line with your marketing goals.

[pb]It can also help to create a content schedule for the next two or three months so that you always have relevant and useful content on hand to post to your Page. One of the best ways to create a steady flow of content is through blogging. A blog gives you the freedom to express the humanistic side of your practice while demonstrating your expertise in chiropractic. Write brief, informational articles that will capture the attention of your patients. Your blog can be integrated with your website and social media sites so that every post to your blog is automatically published to your Facebook Page. For chiropractors that simply don't have enough time in the day to craft a quality blog post, find an online marketing provider for healthcare practices who can create and manage the distribution of your blog materials for you.

### Connect with Your Fans

To be effective, you should regularly create and share interesting content on your Facebook Page.

The goal of your posts should be to inform and spark a conversation with and amongst your Fans. The more interaction you have with your Fans, the greater exposure you will create for your practice.



Fans often visit your Page looking for something in return. It could be a discount on a service, exclusive information or educational resources. There are a number of ways to engage your visitors on Facebook. You can host promotional campaigns and contests on your Page and even offer incentives for engaging. Building your Facebook community will allow you to have repeated interaction with those people who like what you have to offer. With time, you will find that you can develop a loyal community on Facebook while exposing your practice exponentially to the friends of your Fans.

Make each post to Facebook count. Offering a special promotion on massage therapy? Share it on your Facebook Page. Introducing a new procedure? Post about it. Celebrating your 30th year in practice? Let your Fans know. The more engaging and interactive your content, the more likely your Fans will be to respond.

## Go Mobile

Still don't have a mobile website? You'll need to get one if you want to reach your on-the-move patients who use smartphones and tablets to access the Web. In fact, a recent study by GoMo, the Google initiative designed to teach people how to make their website more mobile-friendly, predicts that by 2013 more people will use mobile devices than PCs to access the Internet.

But your patients aren't just browsing the Internet from their mobile devices; they are getting on Facebook, and comScore estimates that more than 38 million Americans are accessing social networking sites via their smartphones every day. Social media via mobile makes sharing easier and allows for instantaneous connections with existing and future patients.

Online and offline, your patients will always seek the recommendations of friends and family before making important decisions concerning their health. Social media augments word of mouth, giving your practice the ability to make an invaluable impression on an increasing number of future patients who are connected to your existing patients via social media. Using a few simple techniques, you can easily ramp up the effectiveness of your social campaign and start reaping the benefits of Facebook. Start by launching your Facebook Page, or find an expert with experience in creating, managing and maintaining social media for chiropractors.