

REOPENING YOUR DENTAL PRACTICE: A COVID-19 SOCIAL MEDIA PLAN

By Eric Wheeler, MS

May 22, 2020

As a social media manager, I can't stress enough the importance of maintaining a strong online presence. Building out a robust social media strategy and consistently sharing relevant, informative and authentic content is a cornerstone of a larger marketing plan for most any business.

As dentists start to reopen their practices after having been limited to only emergency care, it is important to revisit any current social media plans and adjust to the current realities and expectations of patients. With many people staying home to help flatten the curve, oral hygiene may not be top-of-mind for your patients. Good oral hygiene or not, many dental patients may have had to reschedule or even cancel their regular checkups.

Knowing these realities, now is the time to educate and reinforce good oral hygiene habits and reassure your patients that you're doing all you can to keep your staff and patients safe. With more people turning to social media to fill their free time, this could be a great opportunity to communicate these messages with your patients, building trust and loyalty in the process.

Setting goals and creating content

So how can you use social media to reach your patients? To start, you'll want to establish goals. Getting patients to schedule appointments is the main goal but think of how you'll achieve this specific outcome. Like a larger marketing plan, social media should be thought of as a long-term strategy; other goals could be to build awareness of your practice or to engage one-on-one with patients. Upon choosing which social media platforms are best suited for your practice, you'll want to fully build out your profile(s) and then set a [content strategy](#) for building your audience.

Curbing dental anxiety

This is where it's important to consider the current realities and expectations of your patients. Besides the possibility of letting at-home oral hygiene slip and having to cancel or postpone routine cleanings, coronavirus fears are likely creating additional anxiety toward visiting the dentist. COVID-19 aside, some estimates suggest close to [60% of people have anxiety about going to the dentist, and about 5-10% of people have specific phobia](#). The key to alleviating some of this anxiety is connecting with patients to earn their trust.

Providing oral health education is a simple and effective way to build trust with your patients. Consider sharing oral hygiene tips to help patients until they can get back into a regular routine. This will also remind patients how important oral hygiene is to their overall health. Dental Trade Alliance (DTA) and Lanmark360 have developed [a website](#) that includes a series of oral health videos that you can download and share.

Social media content ideas for dental practices amid COVID-19

Beyond at-home oral hygiene education (which should be a part of your social media strategy year-round), now is the time to show patients what steps you're taking to reduce coronavirus infection risks:

- Share videos showing the additional steps your team is making regarding the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Post lists outlining protocol for patients entering the office or changes to your office intended to reduce infection risk such as the discontinued use of ultrasonic instruments, the addition of a negative pressure room or even the availability of something simple like hand sanitizer.
- Show photos of your team sanitizing operatories in between patients and explain the process.
- Inform patients of any new safety equipment you've added to the office such as the installation of high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filters or Plexiglas at the reception desk.

As patients begin coming in for routine care again, ask if they'd be willing to share their experience:

- Did they feel safe while in your office?
- Did they notice any of the changes to the office, staff or procedures?
- Does your practice offer curbside COVID-19 screening? What did they think of the experience?
- Did the patient use teledentistry prior to their appointment?

If you're one of the many dental practices that has adopted teledentistry to stay connected with patients during the COVID-19 pandemic, be sure to share the news on social media:

- Explain how it works and the value it brings to patients.
- Share a how-to video or a step-by-step guide to using teledentistry.

Keep your patients informed of the latest news and updates related to your office:

- Show people what you are doing to prepare your office as you resume routine care.
- Post updates about when your staff is back in the office.
- Let patients know when they can expect to reschedule missed appointments.
- Use videos and photos to reintroduce staff to your patients.
- Share a more general video showcasing all the updates and extra precautions your practice is undertaking, like [this video from Murray Hill Dental](#).

As your dental practice eases back into a regular routine, it's important to keep the realities of the 'new normal' in mind. By keeping your patients well informed and sharing new protocols or technology your office is using, your patients should feel comfortable visiting your office.

For additional information, guides and videos from the most credible sources to support you on your practice reopening journey, visit the [Patterson Dental COVID-19 Resource Center](#). And be sure to download the free [Patterson Reopen Restore Playbook](#) for a more comprehensive guide.

- - -

About the author

Eric Wheeler is the Social Media Content Lead for Patterson Dental, including management of Off the Cusp. With more than 10 years of experience working in social media, Eric comes to us from the Massachusetts Medical Society where he was the Content Engagement Manager for the New England Journal of Medicine.

Eric earned his master's degree in mass communications from St. Cloud State University and his bachelor's degree in the same area of study from Northwestern Oklahoma State University.

From Patterson Dental's blog, Off the Cusp. View the original blog post:

<https://www.offthecusp.com/reopening-your-dental-practice-a-covid-19-social-media-plan/>