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THE ENLIGHTENED OFFICE

A good yardstick to gain patients

Social media and their analytical tools can help.

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I decided long ago I would not advertise, in the traditional sense, to grow my business. I couldn't see myself sitting with an advertising exec discussing the fineries of cataract surgery, only to get before-and-after storyboards of 70-year-olds who gained, from one surgery, not only better vision but also whiter teeth and firmer abs.

So I sought out physicians in specific specialties who could refer patients to me. I spoke in front of local diabetes groups, at senior centers and more. And my efforts were successful, to a point: You can only be in one spot, at one time.

But then came the day I could be in one spot while attracting many people to the benefits of our practice, and in the same cyber-breath, ways that we could be in many locations and do the same thing.

The first spot was the Internet: We hopped on that train immediately (as we have written). The second: social media, and its unpredictable, and now nearly indispensable, iterations. But the *pièces de résistance*? Ways to measure our efforts on our website and on Twitter and FaceBook.

SOUND REASONING

Our practice base is refractive cataract surgery, but that doesn't mean we just wanted people over age 55 as patients. Our practice professionals fit contact lenses; perform blepharoplasties; treat retinal diseases; and so on.

So if we wanted patients for life, we needed to learn the language of social media, and to learn how these younger generations behave on these platforms.

What for, you ask? In 2015, the Pew Research Center found that 65% of all adults use social networking sites — FaceBook, Twitter, and so on — and that 90% of all young adults, those under 30, use them. It also found that the more income a household has, the more likely its occupants use social media.

MASSIVE UNDERTAKING

One way to learn a new culture is to study; the quicker way to make it happen is to hire professionals. We did the latter: Dan Rue is our marketing coordinator; Cait Hutton is our marketing supervisor.

The more Dan and Cait learned about how Millennials looked for information — on their phones — the more we realized we had to redesign our existing website. The site's software had to be adapted so the smartphone screen could accommodate the information from each web page. And we had lots, 200 pages' worth.

But what the Millennials, and many other age groups, wanted was simple, Dan and Cait learned in their research: address, phone number, call now. And so not only was the accessibility of the website changed, but so too was the placement of its information: what is considered important by potential new patients has been moved up front, where it is easy to see.

CALCULATED MANEUVERS

For a business with three practices, says Cait, every decision has to be calculated, and a certain amount of data must be gleaned before we go forward.

Once we have that data, says Dan, it's compared to the same time period as the year before. The maneuver to accommodate cell phones has worked, save for the bounce rate, the figure that calculates how long a person stays on one website page.

"I think that's because they are using a mobile platform," says Dan. "They get what they need and leave."

But on the website, "we want to make sure there are no decreases in visitors," Dan says. "We find a way so that [figure] doesn't decrease." **OM**



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