

SOCIAL MEDIA CASE STUDY: CLEVELAND EYE CLINIC



Follow these tips to help engage with your audience and grow your practice.

BY MICHELLE NELSON AND WILLIAM F. WILEY, MD

The Cleveland Eye Clinic in Ohio has a large digital footprint. With seven private practice locations, two LASIK centers, one ambulatory surgery center, and 16 doctors, there are many elements to consider in representing the brand online. The practice has 10 Facebook pages, three Instagram accounts, four Twitter handles, 26 Google My Business pages, and two YouTube channels. We suspect that we will continue to add channels and shift our focus as the digital landscape changes. In this article, we outline 14 suggestions that may help you plan and execute your practice's social media strategy.

1 INVOLVE YOUR TEAM. Whether you are a single practitioner working in a single location or part of a multiple-location practice with several doctors, you may benefit by involving staff members in the digital marketing process. If you are lucky enough to have someone on the team with a passion for social media, you should capitalize on that good fortune.

The Cleveland Eye Clinic has one social media manager, but we assign at least one team member per office to contribute to posting on our channels. Our office coordinators and some of our optometrists also have posting privileges. Remember, your social media page is as much an employee recruitment tool as a patient recruitment tool. You can be sure that most prospective employees are going to search for you.

2 WORK SMART. If you have multiple social media platforms for multiple practice locations, you will benefit from a single dashboard tool to help with planning and scheduling content to share. At Cleveland Eye Clinic, we use software from Hootsuite Media. With this dashboard, we can allow several team members to instantly share content across all of our platforms. Other social media management platforms similar to Hootsuite include Zoho, Buffer, Sprout Social, and Agorapulse. These and other platforms also allow social media management from a smartphone or tablet.

3 MAKE IT FUN. Most of the posts on your social media channels should not be about your agenda. By your agenda, we mean posts that say things such as, "We are your place for cataracts. We are great at LASIK. Our doctors win awards," and so on. Try to show your audience that you are just like them. One of Cleveland Eye Clinic's most popular posts was about Costco selling 25-lb buckets of macaroni and cheese with a 20-year shelf life. Apparently our audience likes macaroni and cheese as much as we do!

4 DON'T BE AFRAID TO GO LIVE. Broadcast your refractive surgery procedures. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram all

offer the option to stream live video. In fact, Facebook says that one-fifth of the videos posted to its platform now come via Facebook Live, and that users spend three times longer watching video when it is live compared to prerecorded or saved video.¹

Authenticity is a concept that is important to the millennial generation, and live-streaming gives the viewer unedited and unfiltered content. Live video gives your audience the opportunity to see real behind-the-scenes action and to ask questions in real time. You can even delete after posting—the risk is small.

5 FOLLOW YOUR TRIBE. Trends show that millennials are spending more time on Instagram and less on Facebook. The 55-and-older crowd is the fastest growing segment on Facebook.² If your key services are LASIK and cataract surgery, Facebook and Instagram are where you should focus. Additionally, Google is such a key part of your digital landmark that creating a Google My Business page should be a given for every practice.

6 SHOWCASE YOUR PATIENTS. Your social media activity doesn't have to be only about your doctors and staff. Remember the era before selfies? Turn your camera toward your patients—but make sure you get their signed consent before posting.

7 **SHOWCASE YOUR REVIEWS.**

If you use a reputation management tool such as BirdEye or Reputation.com, you may have the ability to automatically post your 4- and 5-star reviews on your social media platforms. We would caution you, however, to keep an eye on even these positive reviews. Some patients will say both positive and negative things in one sentence, such as, “I loved the doctor, but the billing department ruined my life.” There is no reason for you to further broadcast this type of sentiment.

8 **USE A DOCTOR'S HEADSHOT AS A PROFILE PICTURE.**

People don't want to talk to a logo. They want to speak with a human. Cleveland Eye Clinic has 10 locations, each with its own social media presence. Each location's profile picture features the doctor who works the most hours at that location.

9 **MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR GOOGLE MY BUSINESS PAGE.**

Some of this service's most recent new features provide yet more ways for our patients and prospective patients to communicate with us via their mobile devices.

- **Messaging.** You can opt to turn on messaging from your Google My Business page. You will be asked to designate a mobile phone number to take incoming texts, but that number will not show up online. Because Cleveland Eye Clinic has several locations, we have programmed messaging inquiries to be sent to the office coordinator at each location.
- **Community Q & A.** Users can ask questions and provide answers about a brand on Google, and brands can also interact. You could post answers to some of the most common questions and misunderstood terms in ophthalmology, such as, “What is

astigmatism?” or “How long will my LASIK last?” The challenge in using this feature is that you don't get mobile notifications about community questions.

10 **USE HASHTAGS.**

Hashtags are especially important on Twitter and Instagram. A hashtag will help your audience find content about particular topics of interest. If you are posting to tell your audience that you have a new blog post about cataract surgery, for example, using #CataractSurgery will help potential patients find your content.

Additionally, hashtags can help you to find prospective patients. You can use hashtags such as #foodie, #yoga, #triathlete, #motherhood, and #financialplanning, to target audiences that might see your practice or procedures.

11 **BE RESPONSIVE.**

Facebook and Google let their user communities know whether you usually respond in minutes, hours, or days. If you give the community the opportunity to communicate with you on these platforms, you should be there to answer in a prompt manner.

12 **SHOW OTHERS LOVE.**

Follow your patients who have been good to you. Like, love, comment, and retweet good content. Follow local sports teams and beloved members of your community who won't polarize your audience. Thank the people who mention you in a positive light, whether with a phone call, handwritten note, or flowers. We noted that, during the storm of negative press and media that we all faced this past year, many members of our patient base gave testimonials on social media about how great their LASIK has been for them.

Be careful not to follow only your peers. If social media algorithms see

that your brand is primarily liking only posts from other ophthalmology practices, that is what those platforms are going to show you. Give your friends a high five in person or from your personal social media profile, and keep your brand's page pure. Keep in mind that your followers can see what your brand likes and says in comments.

13 **CHECK YOUR LINKS, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING.**

After you post something, make sure the link takes the reader where you had planned. Cleveland Eye Clinic uses tools such as Wistia to house videos, Bitly to shorten links, and Grammarly to check spelling and grammar.

14 **KEEP UP WITH THE TIMES.**

There are many sources for information on new features and channels and changing trends. Podcasts and seminars about social media are plentiful. Find one or two that speak to you. Two of the most useful podcasts we've found are Social Media Marketing, with Michael Stelzner, and Goal Digger, with Jenna Kutcher. Both of these hosts also offer live seminars and online training. ■

1. Hatton G. 8 Reasons Why brands should be using Facebook live. *Social Media Today*. August 22, 2017. <https://www.socialmediatoday.com/social-business/8-reasons-why-brands-should-be-using-facebook-live>. Accessed July 17, 2019.

2. Sweney M. Is Facebook for old people? Over 55s flock in as the young leave. *The Guardian*. February 12, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/feb/12/is-facebook-for-old-people-over-55s-flock-in-as-the-young-leave>. Accessed July 17, 2019.

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