



INSTASNOPE

By Wendy Lewis

Social media platforms always seem like they are designed for younger age groups—teens, college kids, and millennials. However, the typical social network starts with that audience as its core demographic. They are the guinea pigs and the early adopters. As each network starts engaging enough and catching on, the audience invariably expands. For example, Facebook started out as a network built exclusively for college students. Today, college students have moved away from Facebook, partially because their parents are all over it so it has lost its hipness. Now even 80-year-old grandmas are using Facebook to share pictures of their grandchildren.

Instagram and Snapchat are at the beginning of the adoption phase known as ‘early majority,’ which is defined as the first sizable segment of a population to adopt an innovative technology in tech speak. They are now the social networks of choice for 13–30 year olds, but they are not the exclusive domain of that segment anymore. 40-something moms and 50-something business owners are getting more active there, so plastic surgeons should be there too, at least in some way.

Newer networks like Instagram and Snapchat, which represent a growing trend in social media, have grown to more than 100 million active daily users. They’re not quite Facebook yet in terms of sheer numbers, but they’re no longer niche social networks that we can afford to ignore. Social media has become increasingly diversified, as content is now more engaging and visual. The key is to find your niche and choose the platforms best suited to your target audience. While many of us who are active on social media have a habit of sticking within our comfort zone, that’s not really recommended anymore. It has become increasingly more difficult to differentiate yourself on platforms with hundreds of millions or billions of users, and an ad strategy is mandatory to get seen.

While having a lot of likes on Facebook is certainly important, actual engagement, human interaction and two-way conversions remain the overriding goals of social media. Sustainable growth requires clever storytelling, authentic branding, user-generated campaigns and quality content. You need to be present where



your target audience is going, and be an early-adopter on those key channels.

It is important to keep in mind is that you should not be using the same content in the same way for every social platform. Consider which platform your post is the best fit for, and then change the way you use it on other platforms. For example, if you are hosting a patient seminar, think about whether it would work better for Periscope or is it Snapchat worthy? Is just posting a group photo on Instagram enough? Or should you put it on Facebook and Twitter to generate the most eyes. Now more than ever, it is imperative to let your audience know where they can find you on other platforms so they don’t miss out on anything you post. Let people know what platforms you are on by announcing it on your website, blog, all social media channels, eblasts, newsletters, and include the icons and username on all consumer-facing practice materials. Whenever possible, use the same username throughout all social media channels for consistency and to make it easier for patients to find you.

Instagram

Instagram, which was picked up by Facebook for a cool billion bucks in 2012, is a photo sharing, and now a video-sharing platform too. It also happens to be among the fastest growing social media platform du jour. On Instagram you can essentially tell your brand’s story in a creative and visually appealing way, using photos, graphics or videos. Instagram now boasts 400 million

active users, 75% of whom are outside the US. Instagram usage has doubled in the past two years.¹

Before you take the plunge into Instagram, consider how this popular platform will fit into your overall brand marketing strategy. Ask yourself why you need to be on Instagram? What is your objective? Are you interested in reaching a new, younger patient segment? Are you looking to raise your profile and increase awareness? Or just to stay on top of digital trends? As always, you need to embrace each platform in the way users do to gain followers.

The next big question is to consider the kind of content you plan to post, where will you get it, who can create the visuals needed, and lastly, who will manage Instagram for you. Getting the whole staff involved is the most effective way to make Instagram work for an aesthetic practice.

Instagram is different from other social networks because it is a mobile platform. You can log in from your laptop or desktop and view your page, but most Instagram activity takes place on the mobile app. Instagrammers are posting, liking and sharing primarily on their smartphones. Another distinction is that you will be posting on Instagram in real time primarily. This is important if you are posting about an event or presentation, you need to post while it is still going on or it loses its impact and relevance.

Your Instagram profile is the first place people will look to find out more about you and your practice. Instagram only gives you a

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maximum of 150 characters to explain your practice, so be concise, clear and strategic in choosing your words. Add your location, brief description, and a link to your website. If the account is in the name of the practice rather than the doctor, it may be best to use your brand's logo or a graphic symbol. If it is in the doctor's name, you can use a headshot. Keep in mind it will be cropped into a thumbnail-sized image and seen on a Smartphone screen.

Instagram is a cool way to show what you have to offer, but it should not be all about you. You can grow your followers by offering them educational content, appealing visuals, and creative product shots or other likeable and shareable posts of interest to your target audience.

Content Ideas:

- Behind-the-scenes photos that followers can't get on other platforms
- Staff or team photos
- Event photos or videos
- Photos shared by your followers (with permission)
- A demonstration of your services; spa treatment, consultation, injectable, etc.
- Other photos that convey the culture or identity of your practice: i.e. your brand and image

To engage with other Instagrammers, tag any brands, like skin care products or lasers, included in your photo. This will increase the likelihood that they will share the photo with their followers. Include the location of your photo or video when it helps tell the story of the image. To be HIPAA compliant, DO NOT tag patients or post photos or videos of patients without their express written consent.

Tracking hashtags is one way you can monitor conversations happening about your practice, products or the medical aesthetics and beauty industries. This will give you a chance to find out what people are saying and to jump in and take part in the conversation. Another obvious way to engage with other users is to like and comment on their images, and of course to respond to comments on your own images in a timely manner. You can search by username, or choose a hashtag that may be relevant to your practice. Integrate

your Instagram account with your Facebook business page and Twitter.

Hashtags are an integral part of Instagram, and posts should include several to get found. Keep captions reasonably short and pithy. Use the same hashtags throughout your social platforms for consistency and add to your core list as needed. Check for hashtags that have the most users, which indicates people are searching for them. Use the most important hashtags first, as more hashtags will not get found in searches. For example, at the time of this writing, #plasticsurgery had 312,450 while #plasticsurgeon had 72,442; #liposuction had 72,041 but #fatreduction had only 9,432. The preferred order of posting on Instagram is as follows; text, emojis, and lastly hashtags.

Hashtag Hints

- Product/brand hashtags
- Contest hashtags
- General keyword hashtags (#beautysplurge #bestbodyslapping #skincaretip)
- Practice specific hashtags (#bestplasticsurgeon #LACosmeticsurgeon #drjohnsmith)
- Event hashtags
- Trending hashtags
- Location-based hashtags

The intro to every post is also important. Do not just post a picture without a description or it loses some of its value. Each graphic requires some explanation of what it is, and why Instagrammers should like and share it. Keep it to about three lines on your phone because on Instagram, it's really all about the visual.

Monitor how your content is doing as you go along. Key performance indicators (KPIs) include likes, comments or engagement, and number of followers. Produce images and videos that are well crafted and feel like they were made for Instagram. Instagrammers have very high standards when it comes to visuals. Edit your images with filters and the other tools available in the Instagram app or download one of the many Instagram apps that help make your images more appealing. Post photos and videos of beautiful and interesting happenings that also feel authentic

and immediate; think in the moment. Videos can only be a maximum of 15 seconds, so these are just capturing a snippet of time. The more good content you post, the faster you can attract followers—the operative word being 'good.'

Snapchat

Snapchat has recently surpassed Instagram as the hottest thing around for millennials, the 18–25 set. With over 100 million active users, it is trending as the new platform to hop on, especially if you want to reach people under 30. Actually one of the big appeals of Snapchat to its fans is that their parents don't use it...yet.

Live video streaming has gone mainstream. It has not only gained traction with young Hollywood, but with other demographics as well. Just look at the rising number of Instagram profiles that cite their Snapchat ID. On Twitter, big brands and media outlets have long been using their Snapchat ID as their profile image. Facebook actually tried to buy Snapchat back in 2013, recognizing the potential for a brilliant future of the platform. In the Middle East, Snapchat is huge.

Snapchat is a mobile app that allows you to share pictures on your phone. You can control who gets to see and receive your images and once someone receives your snap, it will be deleted after the timer runs out which is set from 1 to 10 seconds only. Unlike Instagram, Snapchat users tend to be less interested in how pretty your snaps are and care more about the emotions and ideas they represent. The key is to be authentic, personal, and transparent. However, Snapchat does offer handy filters and editing features for the novice to get comfortable with this unique platform.

A recent article on Racked.com summed it up nicely; *The Dr. Miami Effect: How Plastic Surgeons Are Grappling With Snapchat*.² This article featured multiple plastic surgeons who are using Snapchat to promote their expertise and build their practices. Michael Schazauer, MD, FACS, aka 'Therealdrmiami' has become a Snapchat sensation and is proud of it. He has a take no prisoners attitude towards his methods, which some may find distasteful.

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From a quick analysis of his posts, the more graphic, the better. He now offers his own brand of social media training for Snapchat doc wannabes.

Plastic surgeon Matthew Schulman in New York City is another rising social media star and has amassed a proactive fanbase of admirers who are coming to see him after following his procedural pics and videos on Snapchat and Instagram. His bold tactics seem to be working to build brand awareness and grow his practice's reach.

Clearly, facelift and bleph patients are not too keen to be videotaped for Snapchat. However, body contouring, Brazilian Butt Lifts (BBL), breast enhancements, plus fillers, lasers, and hair restoration are all fair game.

Periscope

If Snapchat is like having your own reality show, it has been said that Periscope is like having your own talk show. Periscope allows you to leave comments and questions during a live streaming video, while Snapchat allows you to broadcast in a span of 24-hours. Periscope wants you to experience live events as they are happening. In contrast, Snapchat stories are not necessarily occurring exactly at that moment. Lots of tech companies, beauty brands, and bloggers have heavily invested in live streaming video Periscope offers as a means to highlight new product features and stimulating customer comments and feedback. Snapchat on the other hand gives you time to curate your content. You can create, write, record and edit your content before it goes to the viewers, thus giving you more control which is a big benefit for practitioners who need to be more conservative and careful generally about what they put out there.

Periscope, which is owned by Twitter, is also trending but it's far from being the new Snapchat. Periscope is a free live streaming app that allows the user to broadcast a moment in time to their followers who can then comment or share it. The stream is only live for 24 hours. While it is unclear how many active users Periscope has amassed since its launch in March 2015, Twitter has claimed that its users have created more than 200 million broadcasts.³ It has also basically knocked rival Meerkat out of the game. For

those of us who have been unsure of Twitter's longterm relevance, Donald Trump and the 2016 Presidential Race have certainly breathed new life into this microblogging and news-rich platform. Yes, you still need to be on Twitter.

The challenge of live streaming video is how to determine what is really of interest to stream to your followers for an aesthetic practice? And who are you going to be able to convert followers who view your quick video stream into qualified patients who are seeking your services? This remains uncertain as the category is still in its infancy.

Brands, people and practices looking to share their expertise or capitalize on a unique live event like a panel or presentation can certainly benefit from Periscope. You can use Periscope to enhance audience engagement in several ways; by hosting Periscopes on specific topics and responding to questions from viewers. Periscope also provides viewer analytics, including retention rates so you can track how well you are doing.

Some plastic surgeons have already jumped on the Periscope bandwagon, but full-blown adoption is still in the early stages. Dr. Stephen Mulholland in Toronto performed a live UltraShape® (Syneron-Candela) procedure on Periscope.⁴ Dr. Sheila Nazarian in Beverly Hills performed a non-invasive facelift live via Periscope on blogger Heidi Nazarudin of TheAmbionista.com who has 682,000 followers.

If you are not quite ready or sure about taking the plunge into Periscope, consider alternative live streaming platforms. For example, Facebook launched its own variation of live video that makes it easy to share video content right on your business page and take questions from your already loyal fans.⁵ Facebook Live could be the next frontier, especially since they have figured out a way to let users turn off those annoying notifications that keep popping up whenever someone you follow is active; i.e. 'Brand X is Live now...'

Conclusion

Social media platforms have enabled physicians to be more visible to patients in many new and exciting ways. I ascribe to the philosophy that less is more; you do not have to feel pressure to post multiple times/day or

even every day unless, you have something good to share. If you flood your followers' feeds with useless, unappealing, or purely self-serving content, you risk losing them forever. Think quality over quantity.

These important platforms provide an ideal venue for humor and other forms of creative content. If you create quality content, your viewers will be sure to come back for more, which helps to strengthen brand awareness and messaging. The new flurry of live-streaming applications can work to bring a brand to life and to bridge the digital divide between your practice and consumers. The challenge for busy plastic surgeons is that Snapchat and Periscope require a very personal touch and are not so easily outsourced or they may lose the authenticity that the users demand.

Video marketing is definitely something to keep on your radar, but plastic surgeons may have to get creative on how best to approach this emerging category. Both Snapchat and Periscope offer less filtered, more immediate glimpses into both daily life as well as scripted events. And just as with real life, the videos are short lived, lasting from 10 seconds to 24 hours, which encourages people to participate in real time. These new social media platforms are changing the landscape of behind-the-scenes (BTS in marketing speak) access, offering unfiltered views of everything from megawatt award shows to a glimpse of what goes on in your office. It's a brave new world.

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