

# Paging Dr. Blogger: Tips for a Successful Health Care Blog

An engaging, informative health care blog can help physicians connect with patients and establish themselves as leaders in their profession.

**BY CARY M. SILVERMAN, MD, MBA, AND SHAMA KABANI**

**Y**ou have decided to start a health care blog. That's great! Publishing a blog can be one of the most effective ways to build an online community. How do you get started?

## No. 1. DEFINE YOUR GOALS

Before you start a blog, define what you expect to gain from the endeavor. Maybe you want to land new patients, reconnect with existing patients, or increase their awareness of your presence in the medical community. Whatever your goal, do not start a blog because you think you need to have one. A blog should have a definite purpose from the beginning. What would you like to have gained in 3 months? Six months? A year?

## No. 2. WRITE FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

A blog targeted to patients will read much differently than a blog targeted to other doctors. Your patients are not only looking for easily accessible, quality information; they are looking to fully understand that information. It is safe to assume that the majority of your patients have not been to medical school and therefore do not speak "Doctoresse." Explain yourself in layman's terms, especially if the medical concepts you are discussing are complex or full of Latin words. Be warm and friendly, and do not be afraid to craft a unique voice for yourself.

## No. 3. POST REGULARLY

Updating your blog regularly with fresh, engaging content is key to keeping readers interested. Post new entries once a week at the absolute minimum. Readers

expect blogs to be full of timely, relevant content. A blog that has not been updated in months reflects more poorly on you than not having a blog at all, because it looks like you gave up or forgot about it altogether. If

*(Continued on page 78)*



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*(Continued from page 76)*

you do not think you are up to the commitment, consider outsourcing your practice’s marketing duties or hiring a blogger.

**No. 4. AVOID DIRECT PUBLIC RELATIONS/ MARKETING TACTICS**

The primary purpose of your blog should be to educate and inform. Yes, your blog should display your knowledge of and expertise on the subject matter you are discussing. If you try to overtly “sell” yourself, people are going to tune you out. Your readers are already bombarded by advertisements online, in movies, and on TV, billboards, buses, and the radio. If your blog contains valuable, high-quality content, you are selling yourself better than any advertisement or public relations pitch ever could.

**No. 5. ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**

Your blog should not exist as one-way communication: allow comments on your blogs and then provide responses. To encourage feedback, ask open-ended questions in your posts. Engaging your readers shows that you appreciate them and care about their opinions. This will keep them coming back, ensuring a lasting doctor-patient relationship. ■

*To read Dr. Silverman’s blog, go to [Eyetube.net](http://Eyetube.net) and click on the Practice Development channel.*

*Shama Kabani is a best-selling author, speaker, and president of The Marketing Zen Group in Dallas. Ms. Kabani may be reached at [shama@marketingzen.com](mailto:shama@marketingzen.com) or via Twitter @Shama.*



*Cary M. Silverman, MD, MBA, a LASIK and refractive cataract eye surgeon, is the medical director of EyeCare 20/20 in East Hanover, New Jersey. Dr. Silverman may be reached at [csilverman@eyecare2020.com](mailto:csilverman@eyecare2020.com) or via Twitter @The LASIKdoc.*

