

Using Social Media to Promote Events

Consider creating a Facebook page for your practice's events.

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

Are you looking to promote an upcoming event on a meager budget? Take advantage of social media to create a buzz for little to no cost. Whether you are an eye care provider promoting a designer trunk show or a group medical practice looking to give your health fair or fundraiser a boost, you can use social media to advertise your event and bring people through your doors.

No. 1. SET UP EVENT PAGES ON FACEBOOK

Once you have settled on the details for and theme of your event, set up a digital home that provides the pertinent information. Your website is typically the best place for this home, but you can also dedicate a page on Facebook to the event. It could be a tab that is associated with your main business page, or if the event is large enough and recurring, it could have its own page.

On Facebook event pages, you can easily keep track of fans who plan to attend. Once you add the event page, you can use Facebook's Promoted Post advertising to promote the event to your fans and friends of fans for a relatively low cost. Post frequently about the event, and (this is important) ask fans to share the post with their friends, especially if your budget is not sufficient for Facebook advertisements.

No. 2. TWEET BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER

When planning any event, do not forget to take advantage of Twitter hashtags. Create a short hashtag that describes your event (#EventName), and include the hashtag in your tweets about the event. This strategy can help promote and track engagement regarding the event. Include your Twitter handle and a location hashtag, too. This will bring visibility to your tweets when people search for events in your area.

Tweeting during the event can help keep your health care practice and its practitioners in users' minds (and atop the Twitter feed) while building excitement about activities taking place at your event. Tweeting afterward can encourage further action (product and service pur-

chases, eye health screenings, future events) to help promote your practice and brand. Do not forget to ask your followers to retweet your tweets so your event and name also get in front of their followers.

No. 3. USE VISUALS

People are more likely to share visual posts than straight text, so include photographs and videos in your event plans when feasible. If you are promoting a certain physician who will be speaking at your event, share a short video interview introducing him or her, or repost an engaging video of the speaker from the past. Take videos during the event that show attendees interacting with the products and services your practice provides, and share them on your social sites.

Share photographs from past events so people see what a great time previous attendees had. If you are promoting interesting products, get people talking about them by sharing photographs on your social sites and asking people to comment on their favorites. As always, be sure to ask people to share, like, and retweet your images to get that extra free visibility. Pinterest is another great social site to use if you have interesting visual content to share.

At the end of the day, social media is all about the conversation, and you want to be the one about whom people are talking online. Make it your goal to engage with your fans and followers on a regular basis so they think of you when a need for your care or services arises. ■

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 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 or via Twitter @The LASIKdoc.

