



Social Media as Strong Marketing Tool for Osteopathy Clinics

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Introduction

The social websites have grown quickly last five years, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube, WhatsApp and recently Snapchat, and many others are less popular. Now, the world is connected by the internet for almost everything including business, health care and communication. The people nowadays are strongly connected to their mobiles and tablets for mainly the social media communication. They consider it as a source of information either for seeking health advice or trying to find the best health care service. Many people started to run their business only within the social media and often it is very successful. It means that the social media marketing is the next generation for business engagement according to Johni Fisher, CEO, Looppa, Buenos Aires.

“The new market winners will be the companies that excel at identifying and engaging with their customers’ influencers across the Social Web.” —Paul May, Founder and CEO, BuzzStream, Austin, TX.

Many health care organisations and facilities understand that carefully as any other business companies. They started to use it to provide patient’s education, health advices and as a marketing tool as well. It is the most successful way of advertising and marketing that can reach thousands of people and customers in very short period of time with cost-effective. It become more effective, efficient and attractive than any other traditional marketing tools such as newspaper, TV or flayers. My goal in this thesis to explain:

- The importance of using social media websites as a strong marketing tool for osteopaths and osteopathic physicians.
- How the osteopaths can be a socially online to their clinics and connected to clients/patients, increase their popularity and building their brand by social media services with minimum cost and less time.
- How they can increase their number of patients/clients and their incomes from social media marketing by applicable direct strategies.

Importance of Social Media Marketing for Osteopathy Clinics

The key of successful business is a communication either online or offline which keeps the relationship with the customers. Many osteopaths forget the concept of either traditional marketing or the new way of social media marketing. The social media connection will help the osteopaths to build the brand for their names or for their clinics. One of the important thing in social media marketing is to keeps the name of the clinic in front of mind of audience. Most people now are busy with many things that make them forgetting their physical pain or problems. It is important to remind them the needs to be seen by an osteopath and seek the help to their suffering through the frequent health advices, conversation with a clients or talking about a specific topic. From my small experience with dealing in this way through different social media websites, I found many audience often remember one of their relatives or their friends that has the same problem that I talked about and nobody could help them. So, they start to ask me the possibility to treat and how the osteopathy can fix that complains or at least to reduce it. So, it is open the door for conversation with clients/patients.

Through my communication with my patients, I found many patients they don't know what is osteopathy and what we are doing as osteopaths. They don't know how the osteopathy could help

and treat many of problems, mainly the mechanical dysfunctions that related to musculoskeletal system.

I remember one of my patient was angry of me that, why we don't show ourselves to the population especially in the media. He said, we are providing an excellent health care service that help a lot of patients who are suffering and not responding to allopathic medical care that includes medications and surgery. Other patient told me, if the population knows what is our knowledge and our skills, no space we will find in our clinic, it means hundred of patients will fill the clinic seeking help for their problems. I noticed some of the patients that they do not concern about money if they found the right person who can help them. Another example that shows the importance of social media marketing is one tweet I wrote it about effectiveness of cranial manipulation on treatment of (Tinnitus). Then I received one patient who has same problem and improved about 80% after two session of osteopathic cranial treatment after a year of suffering and unsuccessful medications.

Popularity of Social Media

It is important to build a social presence in the internet and make the business (your clinic) is more popular. Osteopathy should be considered as health business that needs to be popular to the society. The name of osteopath or the clinic will be more popular if the name is more present on different social media. Spending a special time for social media on daily base for social interaction related to health issues will make it more popular and build the name of the business. Social media is considered as a core of communication, it is a channel like emails or phone calls that used with customer interaction. So, the opportunity to publicly demonstrate customer service level and enrich the relationship with customers. For example, receiving the direct complaint from the customer and ability for direct comment and apologising publicly and take direct action to satisfy them.

Cost-effective Tool of Marketing

In business world, marketing has the major impact on sales. Planners of the business usually put a marketing plan to assure the success of the business and increase of sales. They put a special budget for it that could reach 20-30% of the main budget. Internet and social media facilitate this process and decrease the costs that needed for any marketing tool. It made the advertising anywhere, anytime, to everyone with almost with no cost. Some social media websites like Facebook has some special marketing way to share your posts to thousands of people and targeting the groups that are most related to the topic and more within our nearest territory with minimum cost. Other websites depends on the number of followers that you have. As everyone knows that as much as you provide more valuable valid information and you interact with audience, as much as the number of followers increase. In addition, that more sharing will happen either through retweeting in Twitter, sharing in Facebook, mentioning in Instagram, or groups sharing in WhatsApp. Employing a person who can work to do six hours of marketing through social media websites found to be enough to generate increase of traffic (more clients and more costumers). If you can spend one hour a day to develop and share posts, you could see the results of your efforts. Again even paid advertising through Facebook and Twitter is relatively cheap. It helps to start small and you can increase the budget for marketing as your clinic and income grow up.

Efficient Tool in Marketing System

Social media is globally accepted, opportunity to learn faster and share faster. Easy for Sharing. make an open environment for advertising. It is very effective way to increase number of patients to the osteopathy clinics and could be objectively measurable. The osteopath can do a daily, weekly, monthly and annually statistics on how many patients come to the clinic from social media marketing. It could be measured financially by how accounting income from only the patients who been referred or received from social media. Comparison could be applicable if we see the changes from one month online with daily social media interaction and other month with offline.

Utilising Health Education in Marketing System (Win, Win)

As osteopath, we have to be professional in our social media to reflect a positive impact on the audience and followers. We are what we post, if we post in different topics in economic, social, politics...etc., we will reflect non-professional impression. But if we as health care provider, focus on the topics that related to health, medicine, prevention that can benefit the followers and they can trust it as a valuable information from a specialist in this field. People always respect talking from a professional background, from knowledge and from experience. Focus on the providing advices related to health education will stimulate more interactions and more connections. I received many patients in my clinic from the social media, because they trust me from my writing and from my professional health-related posts.

Connection to Customers

Social media make us connected to our friends, family and others all the time. As an osteopath we can be connected to our patients as well through social media, by continues interaction and conversation through answering the questions related to as specific health problems and how the osteopathy can help. No other option better than social media to be connected directly to the customers and stakeholders. Connection is not limited to specific area or one country, it is a connection to the customers around the globe. It gives more opportunities to convert. Every post on the platform of social media is an opportunity for customers to convert. Every blog post, image, or comment that are shared is a chance for more reaction, and every reaction could lead to the website visit and continues conversation. Marketing through this social media results higher conversation rates in a few distinct ways.

Creating a Brand

Continues posting on different social media leads to building a brand for the name of the osteopathy practitioner or for his/her clinic. With the time, the followers will familiar with the clinic's name and familiar with the logo of the clinic. So the visibility will increase and will be more valuable. The social media networks are a new channels for your brand's voice and content. This is will make it more easier and more accessible for new customers. According to a report published by Texas Tech University, it concluded " Companies should take advantage of the tools social media gives them when it comes to connecting with their audience. A strategic and open social media plan could prove influential in morphing consumers into being brand loyal". According to a study

published by Convince&Convert found that 53% of Americans who follow brands in social are loyal to those brands.

Strategies For Social Media Marketing

Any osteopathic practitioner should put a plan and write their objectives and goals clearly. For online social media marketing use these suggested strategies:

1. Establish a website for your clinic. Include the definition about osteopathy, osteopathic history, how it can help different problems and treat the sequences of different diseases. Most of the population has back pain, neck pain, peripheral joints problems, sport injuries, sleeping disorders, functional impairments, headache and colonal/visceral issues. So, the osteopath should give attention to these problems that can fixed by osteopathy skills. Services that the clinic is provided can be added including core services (like Osteopathic techniques; Craniosacral therapy, Visceral Manipulation, Muscle Energy Technique...etc) and the additional services (if it is LAZER therapy, spinal traction, orthosis...etc). Staff who are working in the clinic should be mentioned with explaining their diplomas, certificates, specialties and their experience in certain field. The address and contact numbers all should be added clearly. Last important thing, to write frequent articles about certain problem that can be helped by osteopathy and that will be shared in other social media as we will discuss in this thesis. Make sure that the website is well designed by IT specialists and accessible by smart phones and tablets.

2. To open professional accounts for the clinics in different social media services, an example of the most important are:

1. Twitter.
2. Facebook.
3. Instagram.
4. WhatsApp (business cards, contact number, sharing videos or health advice links of the osteopath's clinic name).
5. Youtube channel.

It is recommended to go through tutorials of every social media accounts and to understand the intended uses of each. Consultation of a programmer or IT specialists for any inquires or advance sittings is suggested as well.

3. Fix one hour for daily posts through tweeting, putting pictures with comments in Facebook, Instagram and Youtube. Answer any inquires and provide health advices, because its crucial issue to be connected to the followers and building them gradually. Any personal discussion or political-economical issues is not professional to be posted in the accounts of the clinics. For more professional regular social media posting and monitoring, employing a person to work 4-6 hours per day for this service.

4. Follow all related groups, associations or forums that related to Osteopathy or any related interested topics. This will help you to share any valuable information to the audience.

Conclusion

It is win, win situation where the patients/clients can benefit to find the help, advice and direct conversation from appropriate professionals, and Osteopaths can win to increase the flow of the patients/clients to their clinics and raise the reputation and brand of the clinic.

Definitely the social media marketing will be the next generation for business marketing and it will be the most efficient and strong tool to reach to large number of population in short period of time.

It is highly advised for any Osteopaths or any other health care providers to utilise such a great effective way of attracting more clients. It has a many advantages with less costs. I think this will be future of marketing system for all business

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