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How to Promote Your Pharmacy on Social Media

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Ever wonder if your pharmacy has reached its full market potential? Are you reaching as many potential patients and customers as you could?

Pharmacies are essential.

Which means in theory you can just open a pharmacy and neighbourhood patients will come. In fact, many independent pharmacies rely on that neighbourhood traffic. Without ever putting much time into marketing. Other than traditional channels like newspaper ads.

After all, pharmacists are crazy busy. There's not a lot of time for marketing when you're racing around all day with hardly a break.

Communicating with patients. Filling scripts. Answering questions. You know the routine, and it all moves so fast.

And yet, while pharmacies are always in demand, it's harder than ever to generate revenue. Partly because of changes in government regulations over the past several years.

And partly because of the increase in competition in pharmacy. Keep in mind, competition has little to do with location anymore. These days, it's about making yourself accessible. Going where your patients are and making things convenient for them.

Because if you don't, someone else will.

More and more, pharmacies are using innovation and technology to cater to patients. If you're an independent, you've very likely noticed that pharmacy is evolving. From online ordering to seamless delivery service, the industry is embracing technology.

And as for your patients, well...

It's tough to ignore the impact the internet has had on our lives over the past decade or two. Our learning has evolved, as has our access to knowledge. We've now got almost anything we want at our fingertips 24 hours a day. Information, food, shopping...

And with mobile technology, people are able to be online *all the time*.

Seriously. And when we are offline for a while, notifications are a constant thing.

Society has evolved in a very short period of time to depend on the Internet for almost everything we do. So it goes without saying that if your business isn't active online, you're missing out.

Which means digital marketing is more important now than ever before.

Why?

Marketing attracts attention, it helps you connect with patients, both current and potential. Marketing opens a conversation, it helps you understand what patients want, and how to get it to them.

And with a deeper connection to your patients comes a higher chance of increased revenue. As well as the opportunity to grow your brand through new products and services.

Not to mention what it can do for your front shop.

But who can get to marketing when you're run off your feet all day?

You can, if you keep it simple. And what's the easiest way to get started in the world of online marketing?

You got it: hopping on social media.

Why Start with Social Media Marketing

If you're looking for a solid way to get started with online marketing, social media is ideal.

Why?

First of all, if you do it right, it can take very little time to get started. And as we all know, if you spend your days in the pharmacy, it's doubtful that you get much extra time.

So why make time for social media marketing? For independents, and any small business, marketing online has so many advantages:

- Connecting with current patients
- Attracting new patients
- Growing awareness around your services
- Increasing front shop sales
- Generating more revenue
- Differentiating your brand

All of which are important. Yet for many independent pharmacy owners, the term 'online marketing' can be intimidating. Mysterious.

Not to mention time consuming.

Let's see, there's social media, SEO, internet marketing, blogging...

Add that to the fact that there's *so much* information out there on every one of these topics. If you've got limited time to learn it all, things can get overwhelming in a hurry.

After all, how much time can you actually spend on social media a day while you're busy filling scripts?

How are you supposed to write articles for your pharmacy blog while you're busy with patients?

And what exactly *is* SEO anyway?

But the problem is that, while you may not have time to focus on your marketing, other businesses are *making* time. Which means more competition for you, if you can't find a way to keep up.

Because competition means more today than a new pharmacy going in down the block. Your competition could be anywhere. But their online activities can be attracting your patients.

So rather than procrastinating on marketing your pharmacy, try starting small. With social media marketing, you don't need to spend hours a day that you don't have.

All it takes is a little bit of upfront research (just a smidge!) and a bit of time to create a simple marketing plan. One you can even have some fun with, by putting the 'social' in 'social media'. It's easy.

Getting Started with Social Media Marketing

Creating Buyer Personas

To have an effective conversation online, as with anywhere, you need to know who you're talking to. You need to understand what they'd like to talk about, their needs, and most of all, how you can help fill those needs.

That's why its so important to create buyer personas; it gives your message clarity. For a super solid customer engagement strategy, try crafting a few to start.

Once you get going, you can rotate them, targeting a different persona every time you post. So what exactly is a buyer persona? It's a detailed account of your ideal patient.

Buyer personas should include information on:

- Patient issues and goals
- Buying behaviours
- Motivations
- Demographics

Once you have these details sketched out, you've got a pretty good idea of who you're sending your message to. Buyer personas are useful for keeping the conversation on track, and they can be a lot of fun to make.

Why?

One of the best ways to be authentic in your message is to be yourself. With a great buyer persona, you can actually picture having a conversation with a real person.

Someone who is representative of your ideal patient or customer.

You can see the way you would speak to that patient as though they were standing right in front of you. It's a great way to feel less stilted in your communication, to speak as though you're speaking to a real person.

Which you are; but on social media, the conversation is a bit different. It can take some getting used to. Buyer personas can help you hone your message to address patient needs and find your voice.

How to Create a Buyer Persona

You can create a buyer persona in four simple steps:

Look at any existing customer/patient data you may have.

Your current patient base offers a wealth of information on factors such as:

- Age
- Language
- Income
- Interests
- Buying habits
- Stage of life

Are they brand new parents? Empty nesters? Getting ready to retire?

You're going to be having very different conversations depending on who you're addressing. Which means covering different topics in your marketing. Having different conversations.

And if your personas are true to your patient demographics, you'll have something for everyone.

As your engagement increases, you'll get feedback from each segment on what they need. And how you can help them.

Analyzing your current patients can give you great insight into who you're marketing to.

And if you want some real fun?

Get your staff involved; buyer personas are a great team-building exercise.

And your staff may very well have some insights you hadn't thought of when it comes to your patients.

Determine patient/customer pain points.

While creating your personas, determine pain points in the lives of your patients. Some useful questions to ask yourself are:

- What issues are they trying to solve?
- What are some of the barriers they face?
- What are they asking for information about?
- What words are they using when expressing their issues?

The more accurate you are, the more you can identify your patients' issues. And the more detailed and realistic your personas will be.

Which means more targeted and useful messages.

As a pharmacy, your primary objective is adding value in the lives of the patients you care for. Which means crafting each message with a meaningful purpose.

Addressing specific needs. Showing patients you know and understand them. By understanding their pain points, you get a better idea of how to help solve them.

Identify how you can help.

Now you've got a deep understanding of the pain points and barriers your patients face.

Great!

It's time to start thinking about how you can help. But before you start, there's a distinction you should make to connect to your audience.

In short, forget about features when recommending products and solutions.

Why?

Because to be honest, most patients don't care about features. At least not in the short term.

What they care about is the *benefits* they're going to get from using the products you recommend.

For example, let's say you're counseling a patient in the throes of a painful arthritic flare up. You show her a great OTC product that won't hurt her sensitive stomach, which has been a concern for her in the past.

During your conversation, are you focusing on the dosage of the medication? The long, unblemished history of the manufacturer? The low price?

No.

These are all great features; after all, it's a great product.

But start talking to your patient about them right now, and her eyes will glaze over. Because she's only interested in pain relief right now.

Later on, she may appreciate how this product is better for her overall health than another she took in the past. Or how it didn't cost much.

But right now, that makes no difference because she just wants to ditch the pain.

Instead, you tell her about how she'll start to feel relief within half an hour. That she may even be shipshape for her tennis match on Saturday (no promises!).

And of course you mention that the product will be easy on her stomach. So she won't be swapping out arthritis pain for stomach pain.

By focusing on benefits rather than features, you paint a picture for her. Of how you're making her life better. How this product will solve her problems fast.

Without creating more.

And she's sold, because when you talk benefits, you're speaking her language. So as you identify how you can help, keep your focus benefits-driven.

Put it All Together: Tell a Story

Now that you've finished your buyer sketches, you have a pretty good idea of who you're talking to. And as we talked about, that means well-crafted messages.

So what now?

Put them all together in a story format. Talk about who your patients are, their issues, and what they're looking for. Imagine that they visit your pharmacy, looking for solutions.

How do you help them? What impact does it have on their lives? Don't forget to talk about any barriers or objections they may have. And how your products or

services overcome them.

Want more information about buyer personas? The folks at [Hubspot](#) know a thing or two about this, and you can find their templates [here](#).

Once you've got a great story hammered out for each persona, it's time to start your platform research.

Because you need to know where they hang out!

What Social Media Platform Should You Use?

Before you start posting, it's good to put some research in, to make sure you're in the right place. After all, there are a lot of social media platforms out there. And they tend to be popular with different demographics.

So if you work a lot with male patients who are over 50, you need to know the social media platforms they're using. If most of your patients are 20-40 year old females, do a bit of research to figure out where they're active.

Doing this research needn't take long. A quick Google search on social media demographics will get you loads of information.

Think your patients aren't on social media? Think again! As of 2020, around [half the world's population](#) is on one platform or another.

Which means your patients are too.

And while all this emphasis on 'social' may make it feel like a bit of a time suck (after all, we are talking business here, right?) people love brands on social media.

So much so, that a recent [MarketingSherpa](#) survey found that [95% of adults between 18 and 34](#) will follow a brand on social media.

Don't think that's your target demographic? Perhaps not.

But consider this: as of 2019, all [adult generations were using social media](#) almost equally. On Facebook, 80% of Millennials were active, 83% of GenX and 79% of baby boomers.

Youtube is frequented by 72% of Millennials, 67% of GenX and 50% of baby boomers. And the numbers are growing for Canadians over 50 years old.

How about Instagram? On Instagram, we're looking at 59% of Millennials, 36% of GenX and 23% of baby boomers.

Good gosh, so many statistics! But they all point to one thing. Your customers are on social media and ready to engage with you, so get ready to have some fun!

Which platforms should you check out? Each platform is different, and some may be more appropriate for pharmacy than others.

Here's a list of the top five:

Facebook:

Facebook is an amazing place to connect with patients. You can create a business page and post news, links to your blog or website. You can post articles and any other information your patients may like.

People can follow your page, share and comment on your content. They can even contact you through marketing chat bots! With [over 2.45 billion active users](#) per month, you're bound to run into some people you know.

Twitter:

There are some great discussions happening on Twitter. Both brands and individuals have a great time here. As a business, you'll find lots of great personalities to engage with.

About [42% of Twitter users](#) are on daily, with 38% between the ages of 18 and 29 and 26% between 30-49. Around 56% of Twitter users earn more than \$50 000 per year.

LinkedIn:

Geared toward business, LinkedIn is a good place to connect with other professionals. From pharmacy jobs and recruiting to online networking, it keeps your finger on the pulse of your industry.

It's also an ideal place to air your ideas as a thought leader and get helpful feedback. As of 2020, LinkedIn has [over 660 million active users](#).

Instagram:

Instagram can be a lot of fun, particularly if you're picture-oriented. You can post photos of your staff as they go about daily life in pharmacy. Or products you recommend for certain conditions.

You can run entire education-based health campaigns on topics like diabetes. Instagram has [1 billion users](#), so chances that some of your patients are there.

Pinterest:

With over [367 million users](#), Pinterest is great for business. And as a picture-based platform, they make it easy to showcase your pharmacy and your products. You can inspire your patients with sound, health-based advice.

And show off your dedicated, knowledgeable staff. Pinterest is a fantastic way to connect with your patients and customers.

Youtube:

This Google-owned video sharing platform is a great place for businesses to be. Many companies create informative content and show off their expertise. With [2 billion users](#) worldwide, it can be well worth it.

If you're brand new to social media though, this may not be the place to start. That is, unless you're very, very good at creating top-quality, professional videos.

Once you've chosen your platform(s) and created your account(s), it's time to get posting! One thing I would recommend though is to start out slow and explore a little if you have time. Each platform does have a distinctly different feel. Understanding the dynamics can help you find success.

And one other recommendation, since I promised this wouldn't take much time out of your day. If you're planning to be active on more than one social media site, there are tools out there that make it easy.

How? By allowing you to auto-schedule your posts to go out at certain times.

What's the benefit?

It allows you to take an hour or two each week to create and schedule your content to go out across more than one platform. After all, if you're posting to multiple platforms manually at different times of the day, you're going to be on social media a lot.

Here are some great tools you may want to check out:

- [Hootsuite](#)
- [Social Sprout](#)
- [CoSchedule](#)
- [Loomly](#)
- [Agorapulse](#)

These tools tend to be user-friendly and efficient. So they'll save lots of time if you're posting to more than one social media account.

Representing Your Brand on Social Media

When you're just starting out, you need to give some thought to the tone of your brand messages. Tone can be particularly important if your staff is also posting.

Keeping things consistent is key.

So what should your tone be? Professional, for sure. But how does professionalism translate to your social media messages?

It will most likely be very natural for you, so be yourself. Since you're professional with patients every day, your professionalism will come through. Along with your naturally sparkling personality.

After all, there's no shame in being a bit playful. And remember the secret to authentic posting!

When creating your posts, imagine having a conversation with one of your patients. Need inspiration? Don't forget to use your buyer personas!

What attitude would you adopt when advising this person? Professional and helpful, no doubt. What tone would you use? What words would you choose to explain things?

Once you get into that head space, creating posts that leverage your personality *and* your expertise is a snap.

But in the beginning, it can be intimidating, so let's be clear on one thing.

Letting your personality shine through is good, but it's not make-or-break. Don't overthink it because even if you feel a bit awkward at first, it'll come with time.

And once it does, there'll be no stopping you.

What to Post (And How Often)

While reaching out via social media marketing, it's good to know how often to post. Post too little, and you won't get noticed; post too often and you may get annoying.

But don't worry.

You'll get a feel for what works as you go along. And the truth is, everyone has different opinions anyway. You can do some simple research online if you'd like to

dig deeper.

To start, here are some (very general) guidelines:

- **Facebook:** [Once daily](#) if you have less than 10 000 followers.
- **Twitter:** Try [3-5 tweets per day](#) for maximum engagement.
- **LinkedIn:** At least [twice per week](#) but no more than five times.
- **Pinterest:** Around [5-10 times per day](#) is recommended.
- **Instagram:** Most experts recommend between [1 and 3 times per day](#).

Seem like a lot? If you're doing it on the fly, I predict some issues. But don't forget about those social media tools we talked about in the last section! A great tool will make it easy to pre-schedule everything so you're not having to worry about it during the work day.

So what should you be talking about? There's so much, I hardly know where to start!

Here's an initial list, just to get you started. But I'm betting that as you go, you'll find lots more. So what can you post about?

- Information on health and wellness
- Specific conditions such as diabetes
- Supplements and nutrition
- OTC drugs
- Information about prescriptions
- What you do, because it's about more than just filling scripts
- What your staff does; how they go above and beyond to support patients
- Services you offer; Medschecks, for one
- Special occasions like staff birthdays, anniversaries and more
- Holiday greetings
- Special events in the pharmacy
- Polls and contests
- Answers to patient questions

There's a wealth of information you can cover, and your patients will love it. Just remember to give it time to build up a following, be consistent and be patient. You should also remember to mind patient privacy, as you would in any situation (as if we had to tell you!) and respond to anyone who reaches out to you.

Measuring Engagement at the Start

Want to know how your social media strategy is working out? As you grow, you can get more sophisticated, but in the beginning it's fine to keep things simple.

By keeping an eye on the number of likes, shares, retweets and comments you're getting (depending on what platform you're on), you'll begin to see when your audience begins to engage.

You can also see metrics such as clicks per post and mentions as you grow your engagement. As you get used to marketing on social media, you can get more into understanding your reach and engagement.

But if you're just starting out, simplicity is key, especially if you're crazy busy. By doing some initial research and setting aside an hour or two per week, you can drive your marketing forward.

And I'm betting once you get into it, you'll have fun with it! Remember, when you love something it never feels like a chore, so have a great time connecting with your patients!