



VETERINARY VOICE: Tips of the Trade

Social Media Marketing and Your Veterinary Practice

Why Social Media?

Do you market and exchange information with your current and future clients via social media? If not, here are just a few of the reasons why you should. Social media has been around since January 2004 with the launch of MySpace and it isn't going away anytime soon. Other social media sites quickly followed such as; Facebook in February of 2004, Twitter in 2006, LinkedIn in 2003 and You Tube in 2005. When social media caught on it became the new, international way to communicate with just about anyone, for just about anything. If you are not communicating with your current or future clients about your practice and its services, you are missing one of the most effective, low cost, (often free) way to advertise your veterinary services today.

Who Uses Social Media?

According to statistics, Facebook has over 800 million users worldwide and has grown over 82% from 2010 to 2011. 75% of consumer purchases come from Facebook advertising! More than 350 million active users currently access Facebook through their mobile devices. 62% of Facebook users are women. Twitter boasts of 95 million registered users in the United States with 55% being female. This information is very important because statistics show that women tend to make the majority of veterinary healthcare decisions for their pets.

How Will Social Media Help Me and My Practice?

Do you have a webpage, social media home page or a blog? Do you actively communicate with your clients through these social media sources? The Internet has become the consumers' number one choice for researching information and finding products and services for over 90% of the people in the United States. Social media is one of the most important ways your practice can be found on the web. Veterinarians who are not using social media as part of their marketing strategy may soon find themselves left behind with patient visit numbers dwindling. Not convinced yet? Here are just a few more reasons to adopt social media for your practice's future growth and sustainability.

- Consumers like social media because it gives them a voice. Social media provides consumers real time news and social media is not going away!
- It used to be very expensive to gain the consumers attention. For example, advertising through a third party company such as the Yellow Pages, or becoming a member of the Better Business Bureau. Third party advertising meant that you gave your hard earned money to a company that employed people you didn't know; with the hope they would drive business to your practice. Thank goodness that type of expensive, impersonal marketing is a thing of the past, because social media allows people to do business directly with people they know and like. And you want to know the very best thing about social media? It's you, not a third party marketing firm! You are directly involved with your current and future clients and its basically free! According to statistics, social media will increase you and your practice's visibility and credibility in record time.
- Social Media allows you to create and monitor your hospital's brand, create and improve brand awareness, respond to peoples comments and immediately see what clinical services your consumers' desire.
- Social media, especially Twitter, is highly indexed by Google, as well as other search engines. Every time you post on a social media site, or a consumer references you or your practice, it propels your practice's website or social media home page with "Google Juice" and increases your search engine rankings.

Statistics continue to tell us that your current and future clients are using social media every day! Are you? Your next Veterinary Voice will show you how to harness the power of social media to rapidly grow your practice.

Questions? Hospital Administrator:

Jan Woods

Jan Woods' health care career has spanned over thirty years in both human and veterinary medicine. She was previously the Vice President of Operations and Development for Care Net Health Systems based in Nashville, TN and Communicare/NBC HealthCare, based in Fort Lauderdale, FL. Jan is currently the Hospital Administrator, and one of six co-owners of Veterinary Specialty Center of Tucson. Jan is President of the Veterinary Specialty Practice Alliance, an organization that is comprised of veterinary specialty hospitals, nationwide. She is one of the cofounders and the current facilitator of The Southern Arizona Veterinary Managers Group and writes the monthly Southern Arizona Veterinary Managers Group Newsletter.