

# Should Specialists Market With Social Media?

BY RITA ZAMORA, BDS  
WITH ERIC BARNES, DDS & EMMANUEL NGOH, DDS

I spoke with a specialist recently who told me social media didn't really matter to him. The specialist said that long term patient relationships "aren't a priority like they are for general dentists who see the same patient year after year". Perplexing, I thought. Who's to say if you do one root canal, remove one pair of wisdom teeth, or provide dental implant care for a patient that their friends, family, neighbors or colleagues won't also need care from you?



In fact the world is becoming a smaller place. Researchers studying connectedness on social media propose the well-known six degrees of separation theory is now 3.9. The theory, *Computers in Human Behavior*, published in January 2014 found that specialized and tight-knit professions like teaching and medicine have even shorter degrees of connectedness averaging 3.2.

Progressive specialists understand the power of connectedness and relationships. They see how

relationships impact online reviews, referrals, and the trust of future patients. Not only is social media important to specialists from a relationship perspective, it can also help with visibility and online reputation.

Let's look at how two of my social media training clients, an endodontist, Dr. Emmanuel Ngoh, of Augusta Endodontic Center, and oral surgeon, Dr. Eric Barnes, of Chico Oral Surgery and Implant Center are leveraging social media to benefit their successful practices.



**Rita:** What is your main motivation for having a social media presence?

**Dr. Ngho:** In addition to providing us with an online identity and presence, social media allows our practice to participate and interact with the community. Our goal is for each of our patients to become patients for life, and they are able to learn about us on social media then share their experience with our office.

**Dr. Barnes:** My main motivation is the promotion my office. My practice is located in a small college town in Northern California. As an oral surgeon, college age adults are a main demographic in my practice. We have had and tried multiple ideas to promote the office, from direct advertising to handing out tooth brushes and fliers on welcome week, but social media has been the best return on investment.

Also, for the specialist, it gives the patient an opportunity to see who you are and what you are all about. My friends who are general dentists see their patients on a regular basis and have a long term relationship with them. As an oral surgeon, I don't get that luxury. Patients are very nervous to come and see me, and what they end up doing is looking at online reviews and social media. This in many cases helps a nervous patient trust us better because they can get the 'vibe' of the office before they even come in for a visit.

**Rita:** Who is primarily responsible for managing your social media?

**Dr. Ngho:** We have a Public Relations Coordinator in our office that has experience with many aspects of marketing, including social media. She has a degree in advertising, so she has a great understanding of what type of posts appeal to people. She ensures that our posts do not sound like a sales pitch and to make sure that they truly reflect the positivity of our office environment. Having someone at the office in charge frees me.

**Dr. Barnes:** I have assigned management and scheduling posts to a member of the team. We will talk and go over ideas for the scheduled posts. We like to have about a months' worth of weekly posts ready. Then when another idea comes up during the week we put that in there also. We like to have 1-2 posts a week, that is a good number for my office.

**Rita:** What systems do you have in place to help monitor what

is being said on your behalf – both in the content you are sharing and in the comments patients, referring doctors and the public may post on your page?

**Dr. Ngho:** In addition to Google Alerts, we use a system called Solutionreach—both of these are resources that send us regular reports anytime our practice name is mentioned in any news article or anywhere on the Internet. This allows us to keep up-to-date with what is being said, and we regularly monitor other review-based websites such as Google, Yahoo,





Yelp, and others to see what reviews are being posted by our patients. We check Facebook regularly and make an effort to interact with other businesses that have posted pictures or updates on their page, through a “like” or comment.

**Dr. Barnes:** I monitor this myself because it’s important for your online reputation. You can pay a firm or group to do it for you, but in most cases it comes out feeling generic, or you pay them and they don’t really do anything for you. I’ve made that mistake! If you look and compare social media pages you can easily pick who is actively doing it themselves and who is not. Luckily, I’m kind of a computer junkie and this is not hard for me and is something that I’m doing all the time.

**Rita:** How do you or your team find ideas, and time, to take photos?

**Dr. Ngoh:** Our posts and photos on Facebook are an expression of our office culture. Through our posts, we try to uplift people and provide encouragement. We also try to update our page with what we are doing in the community, such as charity events and visits from dental students or soldiers from Fort Gordon. Just like you would capture a photo memory at home with your family or friends, we do the same in our office and share it on our Facebook page.

**Dr. Barnes:** Most of the ideas come at our morning huddle. One of my staff will say they have an idea to put on the page. All of my staff, myself included, are active in their own personal social media pages, you can see what is popular and what is going around on people’s pages and get ideas from what is popular at the time. For example, the San Francisco Giants just

won the World Series, living in Northern California we had to say something about that!

This can take some time out of the schedule, but it is not very demanding and it needs to be a priority promote the office. My team knows when the office is doing well and profitable, there is more money to go around for the fun stuff like raises and office parties. They have responded to that.

**Rita:** What are your perceived benefits of a social media presence? Any measurable value you’ve seen so far?

**Dr. Ngoh:** What good is it to have a great practice, and nobody knows about it? Social media allows us to promote ourselves and share updates with our community. Root canals are scary—our patients are often anxious and apprehensive about their procedure. Social media allows our patients to read great reviews, see pictures of our office and our staff and see uplifting messages so they are put at ease and reassured that they are making the right choice coming to see us. Patients who come to us via social media implicitly trust us because of the



recommendations from previous patients.

We also have a referring doctor listed in our system, called "Dr. NONE." This is where we store the referrals that don't come to us from our network of general dentists—which means they found us via our website, social media, or word-of-mouth. Since we started using social media in 2012, Dr. NONE has become one of our top referring doctors!

**Dr. Barnes:** I have seen a 3x increase in the number of 'self-referrals' to my office since we have had a more active social media page. We track all referrals regularly at our monthly meetings, so the office knows who our top referrals are and any new referrals. The self-referral has been consistently on our 'Top 5' list since we have had a more active page.



For example, a student at the college calls home and complains to their parents that they are having wisdom tooth pain. Mom or dad starts doing some online research for a local oral surgeon and they can see we are a welcoming and caring office from our page. They will call us because they can see who I am and get a better feel for my office and know that we will take good care of their son or daughter.

**Rita:** Are there any other thoughts you'd like to share?

**Dr. Ngho:** Social media is one of our best forms of advertising, and it's essentially free! The short time it takes to make a quick post to Facebook or just ask our patients to "like" us on Facebook or write a review on Google, has always proved to be well worth

the return on investment. We've become empowered and efficient by soliciting expert's help, training with Rita Zamora, and reading Fred Joyal's book, "Everything is Marketing" which is loaded with nuggets.

**Dr. Barnes:** Social media has been a great tool to promote our office. Everyone has a website, which is putting your best foot forward and just for the technical details of your office: address, telephone, and C.V.. But social media is the way for patients to see who you are and how you do it.



### RITA ZAMORA, BDS

Rita Zamora is an international speaker and published author on social media marketing and online reputation management. She and her team specialize in training clients for independence so they can manage social media themselves. Their healthcare professional and corporate clients are located across the United States and internationally.

Rita's advice on managing your online reputation was recently published in the American Dental Association's Practical Guide to Expert Business Strategies. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Colorado with a bachelor's degree in business and marketing and has over 18 years experience working in the business of dentistry. Learn more at [www.RitaZamora.com](http://www.RitaZamora.com)  
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### ERIC BARNES, DDS

Dr. Eric Barnes is an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon in Northern California. He graduated from University of the Pacific, Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry and completed his Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery Residency at Highland Hospital- Alameda County Medical Center. Dr Barnes practices full scope Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery with special interests in dental implants and orthognathic surgery. He maintains hospital privileges at the local trauma center, Enloe Hospital, and is an active member of the Head and Neck Trauma Team.



### EMMANUEL NGOH, DDS

Dr. Emmanuel (Manny) Ngho is a private practice Endodontist in Augusta, GA. He graduated from Medical College of GA, School of Dentistry in 1994 and practiced general dentistry for four years prior to receiving his Endodontic Specialty Certification in 2000. He is a member of numerous state and national dental organizations. He also serves on mission trips around the world to help those less fortunate to receive needed dental care.