

Social Media Marketing

Unique Clients Need Unique Strategies

Every client is unique, with their own brand identity, reputation and business goals. For my clients in the mental health arena, one particular marketing challenge *must* be spot-on *right* - because the stakes could be very high. Early on, certain flagrant abuses of social media have cost mental health practitioners their licenses.

Of course, no flagrant abuse is even a fleeting thought for any of my clients, with their unwavering commitment to high professional ethics. Nonetheless, my clients must be crystal clear about it, including their employees and clients.

One-size-fits-all just doesn't get the job done in social media marketing. And why would it? It doesn't work in *any* medium. Social media marketing strategy for mental health practitioners provides a great illustration of how each client is unique, with important differences in industry, customer, and marketing dynamics.

Social Media and Mental Health Professionals

Many mental health professionals know that they need to embrace social media. It's the 'new marketing'. Since referral patterns are changing, client turnover is increasing, and the old reliable marketing tactics aren't so reliable anymore, social media offers the promise of increasing their client base.

However, many practitioners have shied away from adopting social media because they fear that any social media activity might violate their professional Code of Ethics – patient privacy and patient confidentiality in particular. However, this is positively avoidable – by knowing exactly *how* to use it.

Social Media and Professional Codes of Ethics

Mental health industry associations have recently assembled professional committees to study social media marketing practices and effective use by its members. These committees spent months researching past transgressions, as well as cases of early adopters who utilized social media in healthy ways. Ultimately, the committees' reports gave guidance specific to the Codes of Ethics.

Social media can be used in a slightly modified way as a powerful marketing tool for attracting qualified new clients, and for growing professionals' private practices. (*Ask me how!*)

When I work with mental health practitioners – in fact, ALL health practitioners, we establish clear social media policies and guidelines to follow, customized to their business and compliant with their Code of Ethics' best practices. We strategically utilize platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+. For inspiration, there are excellent models to follow – many of which are in the same geographic area.

By embracing these professional best practices, social media really can be an enjoyable way for mental health professionals to expand their marketing efforts beyond referrals from "Psychology Today".