

Thriving online - making the most of social media and online marketing

We interviewed Zoë Clark, an osteopath working in Norfolk who is using her online presence to market her business and promote the benefits of osteopathy. By producing high-quality social media content and managing an excellent blog and website, Zoë is increasing her customer base as well as making an excellent contribution to the online conversation around osteopathy.

Why do you use social media?

I started using it when I first graduated, I worked as an associate in a clinic and found it was nice to have an online presence. In my first years as an osteopath, it helped me feel more included in the profession and find local colleagues, such as other osteopaths, massage therapists and physios. It's a great way to share knowledge, share CPD events, get advice and build your confidence.

It's a really effective and free way to advertise. Not only are you attracting new customers, your social media content can remind patients you have treated previously to book an appointment. Also, once you've got to grips with it, it doesn't even take much time.

It can be a bit unnerving at first, and it would be great if there was more training during your studies, because even if you've been using social media in a personal capacity for years, it can feel like a bit of a leap to start doing it professionally.

But it has proved really rewarding. I'm very passionate about preventative healthcare, so using Facebook, Twitter and blog posts to give information about preventing injuries and illnesses is important. I think this also raises the profile of osteopaths in the medical profession.

The more we use this as a profession, the more we can help each other. I've had people contact me in response to my social media posts, but they live in a different part of the country, so I direct them to how to find their local osteopath. So it doesn't always directly benefit me, but if more osteopaths were on social media and promoting the benefits of osteopathy, then we would all gain from this.

What are your tips for social media?

You need to find the balance between being professional and showing your personality. When I first started, I was very cautious about showing too much personality because I was worried about how it would come across, but then you risk being too generic. But through experience I feel I have worked out what works well. A recent photo of a cat that found its way into the clinic proved popular! You don't want to go too far the other way and come across as unprofessional, so gradually introduce your personality into the mix and see how it goes.

I primarily use Twitter and Facebook. I find that Facebook is good for interaction with patients, and more people will refer their friends that way. With Twitter you get more direct conversation, but that is generally with other professionals.



I sometimes use Facebook advertising, not even spending much, just a £1 a day. But it helps you to reach a wider audience. You can keep it local, and it allows you to engage with the wider friendship group of those people following your page. When I write posts about conditions that, for example, affect more men than women, I will choose to target my advertising by gender.

What do you include in your posts?

I find that images are important, so I use a website called Canva and images from Pixabay, so you don't have to worry about copyright. Both of these are free, and it makes it really easy to make your social media posts look professional and engaging.

Patient testimonials are really positive, and I try to use quotes and present them as images. I'll always ask permission to do this, but everyone seems fine with that. If I haven't had a testimonial in a while I will then I'll directly ask patients, either to email me or leave a comment on my Facebook page.





Using videos on Facebook has also worked really well. I was reluctant to do it, because I'm a bit shy, but people really respond to seeing you talk and get to know you. When you come across confidently then people react well to that, and I've had people book appointments as a result. And because osteopathy is quite hands-on and involves more interaction than a visit to the GP, it's good for patients to get to know you.



I share advice to help people to keep healthy, as more and more people are taking an active interest in their own health, so I think people are looking for sources of good information for preventative health. The more we share this sort of information, the more people will view our profession positively, including GPs and those working in healthcare, building their trust in us.

I also use #OsteopathyWorks, it gets the message across and fits in well with the content of a lot of the posts. At the moment I think it is mostly osteopaths using it, but the more we use it, the more that our patients will make use of it too.

Do you find a blog helps?

Absolutely. It makes sure that I am regularly updating the website, which is important for how my website is ranked in search engines, so I don't get lost in Google. But it also means that when I promote the blog on Facebook or Twitter, I am directing people to my website.

How do you do it without losing too much time?

It doesn't take much time when you manage it well. I keep a list of topics that I'd like to cover, and keep in mind the sort of patient I want that post to attract. I also consider any local or national events or awareness day. Then, if a patient cancels at last minute or I find I have spare time, I can put together the images or write a short blog post and schedule it.

To schedule posts I use Hootsuite, which is free. I schedule for certain times, and Facebook analytics can show you when your page is most active. This is usually earlier in the morning or later in the evening, with a peak around lunch-time too. But I will also find the time to post interesting things through the day, when time allows.

As you start out it may feel like nobody is paying attention to your posts, but then you'll get a positive interaction that will lead to a new patient or a professional connect, so if you keep with it then you will see the benefit.

Zoë Clark



Zoë graduated from the British College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2013 with a Masters in Osteopathy and Diploma in Naturopathy. She works at Howe Osteopaths, near Norwich, and Diss Osteopathy and Natural Health Clinic.

Subscribe to Zoë's Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/zoelarkosteopathy and follow on Twitter @ZoeClarkOsteo

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