

## SOCIAL MEDIA FOCUS

# Elevating your practice through social media: A guide to posting styles

By Gary Matthews, MD

In today's digital age, social media platforms are a crucial avenue for plastic surgeons to connect with patients, share expertise, promote practice information and grow your practice. Among these platforms, Instagram and TikTok reign supreme, providing visual avenues to showcase transformational surgery and educate the public about various procedures. To effectively harness the power of Instagram and other platforms, plastic surgeons first must understand and utilize different kinds of content that resonate with their audience. Here are seven styles of postings consider incorporating into your online presence.

### 1. Before-and-after

Before-and-after photos (or videos) are — or should be — the cornerstone of any surgeon's Instagram strategy. These powerful visuals provide a compelling transformation narrative and capture the viewer's attention immediately. The principle can be applied to both aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, and videos demonstrating functional improvements apply as well. It's important to uphold ethical standards — always obtain patient consent, maintain anonymity and avoid overexaggeration. In the captions, provide insight into the procedures performed, surgery processes and patient testimonials. By combining stunning visuals with informative captions, you can educate your audience while also building trust in your surgical skills.

### 2. Educational videos

In a world hungry for information, educational videos are a formidable tool for plastic surgeons looking to stand out as experts in the field. These videos can encompass a wide range of topics, explaining specific procedures or even providing viewers a glimpse into a day in the life of a plastic surgeon. Informative videos about postoperative care can be invaluable for prospective patients. Remember that most of the information on the internet is not provided by board-certified plastic surgeons — or even doctors — so your viewers' trust. To maximize engagement, make sure your videos are concise, visually captivating and packed with useful information. Engage with comments by answering questions and providing further insights to solidify your credibility and build rapport with your audience.

### 3. Case study

Case study on Instagram gained popularity as an effective way to break down complex topics into easily digestible chunks. These study slides post take your audience on a structured journey providing detailed insights into various aspects of plastic surgery. You can create content that walks viewers through the entire process of a particular procedure, from the initial consultation to post-op recovery. Make sure the first slide captures the audience's interest — pose a question or make an (appropriately) controversial statement that may surprise your audience. Then answer your question or explain the journey to the subsequent slides. This format not only educates your followers but also encourages them to view and share your content, thereby increasing your reach.

### 4. Shareable content

Shareable content can include infographics, inspirational quotes or patient testimonials. The key is to create content that resonates with your audience to the point that they wish to share it on their own accounts. Encourage interaction by

asking your followers to tag friends who might find your posts helpful or informative.

### 5. A personal touch

Sharing a behind-the-scenes glimpse of your personal life, your practice team or DLE staff humanizes you to followers and fosters a personal connection with your audience. Instagram stories are an excellent format for this type of content, which disappears in 24 hours and has a more informal style. You can share your team

preparing for surgery, introduce your staff or provide a sneak peek into daily routines. Your patients can connect with you based on, not a shared love of fitness or travel on top of your surgical abilities. These stories give followers an intimate look at the inner workings of your practice and help build trust and familiarity.

### 6. Patient testimonials

Highlighting patient testimonials and success stories can be incredibly impactful. These

posts can include screen testimonials, video interviews with satisfied patients or even before-and-after collages with accompanying stories. By sharing authentic accounts of your patients' experiences, you not only showcase your skills but also provide potential patients with relatable stories they can connect with on a personal level.

### 7. Interactive Q&A sessions

Hosting live Q&A sessions or interactive "Ask

Continued on page 24

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## Social Media Focus

Continued from page 13

me anything" sessions on Instagram Live can be an effective way to engage with followers. The live format works best for accounts that already have a following – or you can team up with a colleague and engage both sets of followers during your conversation. These sessions allow you to answer questions in real-time, addressing common concerns or demystifying misconceptions about plastic surgery. They also offer an opportunity to poll your online community and determine what is important to them. Live sessions also create a sense of urgency and excitement, encouraging followers to tune-in and participate actively. They also have the benefit of notifying 100 percent of your followers about your session – whereas a post may only be shown to a portion.

Incorporating these types of content into your Instagram strategy can diversify content and engage with a wider audience. Review your metrics routinely to see which styles have more appeal to your audience and utilize that data to your advantage. Consistency, authenticity and patient privacy should always be top priorities in your content creation efforts. Authenticity truly resonates with the viewer, particularly plastic surgery and aesthetics, an area in the social media realm that is typically full of smoke and mirrors. By offering a well-rounded mix of educational, personal and interactive content, you can elevate your surgery practice's online presence, propagate honest information and positively impact your community – all while establishing yourself as a trusted authority in the field. **PSN**

*Dr. Hamilton is a member of the Social Media Subcommittee and is in private practice in Houston.*