

SOCIAL STRATEGY

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Going Private with Facebook Groups

It might sound counterintuitive, but one of the biggest social media trends is privacy, specifically private groups. Although most of the current buzz is around Instagram and TikTok, Facebook private groups are a unique opportunity worth investigating.

Why: You can create Facebook groups for patients with similar interests to carry out discussions, share pictures and materials and pass along important information. Whether patients are dealing with chronic eczema, embarrassing acne scars or want to talk about lip fillers, they can connect with others within the group's safety net.

Types: Facebook provides the option to create a private group about almost any topic. Many people say the community feeling turns strangers into close friends.

- **Expert information** – The physician might lead and join the conversation about a topic related to the group's needs (without giving personal medical advice to ensure HIPAA is upheld).
- **Safe haven** – Assuming the group is private, the group can provide a safe environment for people to converse about a topic they may not be

comfortable doing on their public profile. Discussions can be anything from symptom reducer tips to coping skills.

- **Participation** – People are more likely to engage since the group's posts and conversation will stay inside the group. Other group members may be silent observers who are just there to learn. There are options for users to post questions anonymously through the group administrator as well.

Get Started

1. **Secure your network** – The first step is to have a network to invite into the group. Ideally, you already have a consistent following on Facebook (minimum 1,000 likes and preferably over 10,000) to whom you can advertise the group.

Private Facebook groups can be an incredibly powerful tool to help patients stay connected, manage chronic conditions and gain a sense of empowerment. Ultimately, groups can become a marketing tool for your practice.

2. **Strategize** – Should the first group be broad to entice all of your patients; niche to just cosmetic dermatology or just medical dermatology; or topic-



based for specific conditions such as acne scarring or melasma? Maybe just VIP patients or local physician colleagues? Second, who should be the moderator; someone at your practice? Perhaps a tech-savvy patient who is very passionate about the topic can take the lead.

3. Create – Establish if the group should be searchable to the general public and whether non-members should be able to view its content, then arrange the privacy settings accordingly. Add necessary information required by Facebook, and if going the private route, consider writing a few questions potential members must answer in order request to join the group (only admins and moderators can see these answers). Membership questions help you vet a potential group member by learning more about him/her through a maximum of three free-form questions, such as what he/she hopes to get out of or contribute to the

group, whether he/she is a current patient at your practice or even asking him/her to agree to abide by the group rules once in the group. Determine if your group should be part of the “health support group” tool Facebook rolled out in 2019, which allows group members to post questions anonymously by submitting their questions for a group administrator to share on their behalf.

4. Get the conversation started –

Create polls, post new member introductions or ask a question of the day to initiate a discussion. It will require substantial involvement to keep the conversations going, but once the group takes off, it will create a life of its own.

5. Hot tip – Join other local groups and communities to engage in conversation. Oftentimes people turn to their Facebook groups for recommendations on physicians and treatments.



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Ultimately, a private Facebook group can be invaluable for providing visibility, driving new patients and supporting patient retention. Make sure you have a solid foundation of followers to whom you can market the new group and a long term strategy to nurture and grow it for the long run.

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