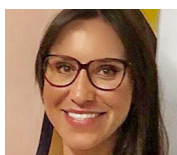




Instagram and me

Our guest editor, **Anna Middleton**, reveals how she maximises social media site Instagram – from cashing in online and promoting the oral health message to the masses to dealing with online trolls



Anna Middleton

Anna is a multi-award-winning dental hygienist. She studied at the Eastman Dental Hospital after working as a dental nurse and graduated in 2015 from the Faculty of Royal College of Surgeons. She is the founder of London Hygienist, which has a mission to change the way oral healthcare is delivered to patients. Anna is a key opinion leader for Philips, a global guided biofilm therapy ambassador for EMS Dental and an ambassador for the BSDHT as well as a member. Anna lectures, and writes regularly for both industry and consumer press. She is currently training to be a dental therapist.

Having a presence on social media has helped gain an increase in new patients who I treat under direct access.

Last year, 50% of my business traffic came from social media.

I have also made new friends and regularly chat to other DCPs online. We regularly collaborate on posts or making videos and often attend various courses or events together.

I have also been fortunate enough to have gained several professional partnerships through my online activity. Last year, I became a global ambassador for EMS guided biofilm therapy after the team saw how I was using the company's products and utilising social media to change the way oral health messages are delivered. The same happened when I became a key opinion leader for Philips.

More knowledge, more power

These days, more people are using the internet – especially social media – for their sources of information. For me, it has been vital in ensuring the correct messages get out there.

The public is becoming wiser and turning to professionals rather than influencers for health advice and evidence-based facts.

There are plenty of products being sold or spoken about online that are misleading and ineffective.

Products such as teeth whitening

toothpastes or gels that don't work are promoted daily. But, by offering the correct information, the public can seek treatments safely and can also get to know the 'safe places' online. It also means people avoid wasting money or potentially damaging their dental health.

Often, people will message me directly and ask me if certain products work or request advice about what is on the market. Positive and professional engagement is key.

I have also started creating more video content, which means patients can then watch the advice back in the comfort of their home.



Fact file: Anna Middleton
Occupation: Dental hygienist
Instagram account: londonhygienist

All work and no play

Life is too short not to be having fun, especially at work where we spend a lot of time.

Look at how fun Dr Milad Shadrooh, The Singing Dentist, makes dentistry with his clever and witty song parodies. He touched the hearts of the nation and really engaged with the public – especially children.

I think the key is to remain creative and unique, but always professional.

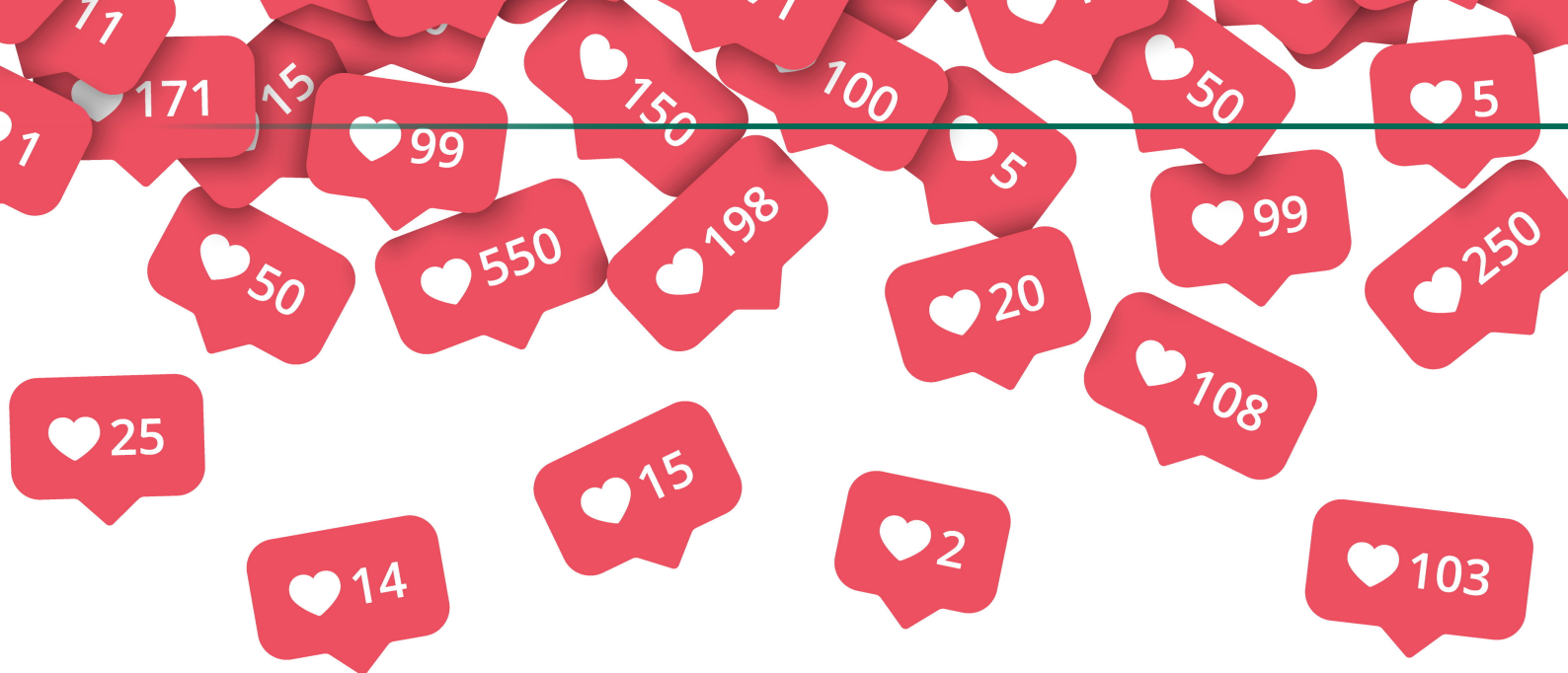
Just be mindful to keep work and personal space separate when it comes to social media. Regularly review your privacy settings to ensure unintended audiences do not access information. That said, even the strictest privacy settings do not guarantee your information will be kept secure and any information you post could be viewed by anyone, including your patients, colleagues or an employer.

Shining a light

Dentistry has evolved so much and social media has served as a platform to showcase that.

Patients who may have thought they couldn't have certain dental procedures can now see other patient journeys and experiences. They can then make direct enquiries without even having to step foot into a practice.

The focus on prevention and good oral hygiene has seen a rise in younger patients visiting, as they can see the



value in investing in their dental care for the long term.

We are not all butchers

I have had many patients come to see me because they have seen the results of my work online or heard of me through word of mouth. Many still fear a visit to the dentist or have had a bad experience in the past.

Seeing other patients have treatment, or hearing what they had to say about their appointment, has definitely increased the number of patients now coming in for treatment and it is helping to change perceptions.

Standing out

I like to share a mix of content on Instagram – everything from facts, before and after images, press stories, personal achievements and other fellow DCPs' work. I often chronicle my day-to-day work or invite followers to join me on my various projects and adventures.

If you are just starting out, look at similar accounts for inspiration – but always find

your own flair. While imitation is said to be the highest form of flattery, find your niche and always be authentic and engaging.

The fans

It's amazing the result that can be achieved just from a visit to the hygienist, and patients love to see before and after pictures. Patients are always very supportive of my achievements, too. They love reading my articles and blogs as well as following my journey as the business grows.

Be interactive! I often do Q&A sessions on my Instagram story or host polls and quizzes. This will help boost your engagement.

Always reply to comments on your posts too, but prioritise quality over quantity when it comes to posting.

Secret recipe

Apply the KISS principle – 'keep it simple, stupid!'

The whole idea is that most systems work best if they are kept simple rather than made complicated. It is easy to overcomplicate

various procedures or information with dental jargon, so I like to use analogies and even blend in humour – I am a fan of a pun!

Find a flow for your posts and stick to it so your feed is clear and showcases your personality perfectly.

Later, haters!

The use of social media in dentistry has come under scrutiny, but times have changed.

It is estimated, in 2020, that 80% of content online will be video. Almost all content is now viewed on mobile devices and on the go.

I have encountered a few instances of criticism surrounding my online presence. I think it is because some people are stubborn and have a 'we have always done it this way' mentality.

Usually, the resistance is because there is a lack of understanding about social media and the rapid change in online trends. But, some people find it really hard to see others doing well – and you take that with a pinch of salt. [OH](#)