'You *must* believe in what you do'

Vaida Buksnaityle qualified as a dental hygienist in 2003 in Lithuania. She now works full-time in private dental practices in London and visits schools to help children improve their oral health. Vaida is also a keen blogger and the founder and CEO of newly-launched OralHealthNet, a unique online platform created to facilitate networking between dental professionals and patients.

What motivated you to get so involved with social media to help promote better oral health?

Vaida: In general, I think that social media is one of the most affordable and effective ways of promoting what you want to achieve. However, to be successful you need to have good content, be super active and dedicated, so it's time consuming. Also, you must believe in what you do, otherwise it will not pique readers' interest.

What got you started with blogging and how did you manage to build your following?

Vaida: I started blogging in 2009, when it didn't even really exist as a word! I just liked IT, so I set up a simple WordPress website and started sharing my knowledge about oral health.

Patients were asking me where they could look on the internet for good and trustworthy information, and, sadly, I didn't feel confident enough to make any recommendations about what I had seen on the web. So, I decided to fill that gap, to answer questions online and share valuable information. I wrote about the subjects I got the most questions about in my practice, as well as answering questions from individuals who had made direct contact with me via my platform.

That's how I built my following; I now have around 14,000 regular readers a month.

How and why did you come up with the idea for a social networking site for dental professionals, linked in with consumer need?

Vaida: I created the networking site because my followers started to ask questions that were beyond my competence. I wanted other dental professionals to get involved; so many have amazing knowledge that they could share with the public. I think that if we all join forces, we can create a remarkable site, full of consumer-friendly content.

At the same time, as a business owner and direct access dental hygienist, I know that every practice is happy to have potential new patients make contact. The internet and social media have changed the way people make choices and, if we are chatting and we don't know something, we all say, 'Let's Google it'. Internet presence is essential now; if you are not there, you are missing out on a lot of possibilities.

What does OralHealthNet offer the profession and consumers that they can't find elsewhere?

Vaida: It's different because it's a social networking platform dedicated exclusively to dentistry. It's where professionals can bring their marketing channels together in one place and have a professional profile online. It's like booking.com, but for dentistry. Others exist to showcase lots of unrelated

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business use, whilst OralHealthNet will be a professional platform.

How can dentists and their teams use OralHealthNet to best effect?

Vaida: It couldn't be simpler! Become a member, create the best profile ever (we can help with that), share your knowledge by participating on the forum, write articles and use it as an online marketing and booking system for your business. We will do the rest, to make sure you get noticed.

What would you say to any dental team members who are shy of using social media?

Vaida: If you know what you are doing there's no need to be shy and, as I mentioned just now, OralHealthNet can help. Do always be mindful of the General Dental Council's (GDC's) guidance on using social media (www.gdc-uk.org) and combine that with what you want to achieve.

What do you hope for the future with OralHealthNet?

Vaida: That it helps both the dental profession and the public to improve the oral health of the nation. I have created OralHealthNet to help everyone who engages with it and I have some ambitious plans, including member benefits and events etc, which will be announced in the coming months. Some of the UK's top dentists and dental hygienists are already signed up, and I would love every dental professional to join us.

Further information

For further information about OralHealthNet, visit www.oralhealthnet.co.uk or email info@oralhealthnet.co.uk.

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