

Speaker 1: You're listening to the Pharmacy Podcast Network.

Speaker 2: If you or your patients struggle with muscle cramps, spasms, soreness, or restless leg syndrome, you're going to want to hear about our non-opioid, Theraworx Relief. Theraworx Relief is a clinically proven and published locally acting topical solution that prevents and relieves muscle cramps, spasms, and soreness in the legs and feet. In a research study including patients diagnosed with restless leg syndrome, Theraworx Relief was shown to reduce symptoms commonly associated with accompanying RLS including muscle cramps and spasms.

Muscle cramps are reported as a side effect of hundreds of prescription medications from intravenous iron sucrose and conjugated estrogens to statins and diuretics. By managing muscle cramps, Theraworx Relief supports adherence, helping patients stay on important and often life saving medications. Theraworx Relief comes in an easy to use, fast absorbing, non-greasy foam that can prevent muscle cramps and spasms with just a few simple applications a day. To learn more about Theraworx Relief, go to theraworxrelief.com, and click on the healthcare professional link.

Speaker 1: Welcome to the Pharmacy Marketing Simplified Podcast, part of the Pharmacy Podcast Network. Pharmacy Marketing Simplified focuses on easy and proven marketing tips from pharmacy owners and industry experts to leverage in your independent pharmacy business. This podcast is all about pharmacy marketing and how to be successful in today's competitive marketplace.

Nicolle McClure: Hi, welcome to the Pharmacy Marketing Simplified Podcast, part of the Pharmacy Podcast Network. I'm your host, Nicolle McClure, president of GRX Marketing, and I'm so excited for today's guest to talk about social media in the pharmacy industry. And with me is Jessica Gardner who I will call a expert in the marketing field as well when it comes to pharmacies. She has over 10 years of experience in helping different buying groups with independent pharmacies, and also technology companies in the industry such as Smart Solutions. Jessica, welcome to the show.

Jessica Gardner: Thank you Nicolle. It's great to be here with you today.

Nicolle McClure: Before we get started, can you tell our listeners just a little bit more about yourself?

Jessica Gardner: Yeah. So, similar to what you said, I have a little over 10 years of working with independent pharmacies and helping not only their business grow, their marketing strategies, but actually the companies I've worked for. I've worked for both buying groups as well as done marketing consulting for technology firms. And currently, I'm with Smart Solutions today who help do outbound calling, IVR, mobile refill applications, and now developing into website creation

as well as helping our customers with their social media aspects in terms of LinkedIn or Facebook or Instagram and whatnot.

Nicolle McClure: So, why do you think that it is so important then for independent pharmacy owners to get involved in social media?

Jessica Gardner: Well, I think interacting with customers on social media is an important marketing strategy for all small businesses and pharmacies. Using social media really helps the pharmacy build their brand awareness, it helps increase their customer base, and it connects them with their current customers. There was a research study I found, and it said that 68% of American adults are Facebook users. And among 18 to 24 year olds, 78 of those use Instagram, and about 45% are on Twitter. So even among the Americans that are 65 and older, 37% are social media users. So that's a pretty good comparison.

And I think the benefits of using social media also cover a wide range, like increasing your exposure to existing and prospective patients. Again, you're building your brand loyalty, you're increasing your web traffic, you're keeping up with your competitors, and it's quick and easy patient support. Plus it's a low cost marketing solution.

Nicolle McClure: Yeah, those are all great reasons to use social media. And I think the stat that really stands out to me is the 37% of 65-plus because when we help pharmacy owners with marketing, we still hear the, well my demographic isn't using Facebook. Well yes they are. Because they're getting on their to keep in contact with their family, see pictures of grandkids, and things like that.

I think you also brought up another good point for social media is it is a way to have that patient interaction. And you can make it as personal as you want. Where if you have employee spotlight or something on your Facebook page, or follow up directly with the customer through Messenger or on LinkedIn or Instagram or something like that, you can definitely use it as a platform, as a way to connect with potential customers and current customers for sure.

Jessica Gardner: Exactly.

Nicolle McClure: So how long have you been using social media in your marketing experience?

Jessica Gardner: Well, on a personal basis, I've used it for over 10 years once the existence of Myspace was created, when that first launched in the mid-

Nicolle McClure: Oh, Myspace.

Jessica Gardner: ... early 2000's. Right. And, it wasn't until college when the world of Facebook exploded and you could only access the network with a college email ending in edu. So I was one of the first originals to access the world of Facebook and see how much it's developed and changed over these past 12, 13 years. But on the

business side of social media, I'd say I've been using it for about six to eight years to help the companies I work with. And generally, Facebook and LinkedIn as well.

Nicolle McClure: And in those last years that you've been using it for business, how have you seen it evolved and changed?

Jessica Gardner: That's a really good question. So, I've seen it evolve and change where it's more become a marketing basis for stores. And how it's become successful for them is there's really three social media engagement tactics that really small businesses should learn from. And the first is to include images with your posts. Engagement levels are much higher for posts with images than they are for just posts that have texts.

The second is also craft a social post in the form of a question. For example, you can ask what's your favorite soup when you have a cold? I think asking a question invites a response from the user instead of posts that are in the form of just a statement, they don't really see that much engagement. And I think another thing is to post on a regular schedule and at a predictable frequency. So pharmacies should develop some kind of weekly or monthly posting calendar that teases out content by frequency and depending on what social media channel they're using. And I think pharmacy customers are more likely to engage with the content when they know what to expect and when to expect it.

So I guess what I'm trying to say is know when your audience is online. So for example with Facebook, early morning and lunch are great prime hours. You can also look at the reach of your posts and take advantage of those times. So test out the times of day where you get the most likes, or you get the most comments, and find out when you have your largest audience.

Nicolle McClure: Yeah, and I think that's something maybe some people don't realize with Facebook is they really do provide some great insights to where they'll show you the number of reach and likes and things like that. But then you can go beyond that and break it down by demographics, or the time of day, things like that. So you can really start to craft, yeah, when is the best time my patients are seeing my message. And that's going to vary where pharmacy A may be early morning people. But yeah, pharmacy B is more afternoon type thing. So paying attention to those numbers is important as well.

Jessica Gardner: Okay. And that's what will help them be successful with their posts.

Nicolle McClure: So talking with pharmacy owners, I'm sure you've heard it as well, of they just have no interest in jumping on the social media bandwagon, which really isn't a bandwagon anymore. It's just kind of the way it is. But what is your advice for them when they tell you that they don't really want to do it?

Jessica Gardner: Well, I think there can be different kinds of challenges when you're first developing social media and your marketing strategy. And I think most of the time pharmacists just don't know what to post, or when to post, or they simply feel like they don't have time to post. And a lot of pharmacies and companies in general take a hard sell approach. They're inundating their followers with a discount, or a new product announcement, or customer reviews. And that only brings in modest traffic gains.

And so they assume, oh, well social media isn't a good fit because I'm not getting the feedback that I'm looking for. But your customers, they don't want to be pitched. They want authentic engagement. So, when you stopped seeing social media as a way to pitch your customers and start seeing it as a way to connect with them, it can really transform your brand. And pharmacists should help customers by answering their questions. They should entertain and inform them with relevant content and they can even bond over shared interests, or Q and A's. And I think over time they'll learn that their brand... you become more than your brand and you'll actually be part of the local community.

Nicolle McClure: Yeah, great advice. The rule of thumb that we kind of follow here with helping clients post to their pages is for every five posts, four should be general health information, educational, informational, and one should be "selling." Because yeah, we see that too where it's just all about selling. And I think those pages tend to see the likes fall off because, yeah, they're really coming to you as the pharmacy expert in their local community. So, if they're just being sold to the whole time, then interest is going to go away quickly.

Jessica Gardner: Exactly. So if they're hesitant about posting on their page, I think it can really pay off if they think long-term and they put in the time that it takes to make social media work. Like you said, share stats and data, post quotes about health and wellbeing, give health tips, profile employees like your techs, your pharmacists, post your pharmacy news or specials, celebrate holidays and national days. I mean the list is endless of the things that a pharmacy can post on their social media sites to engage with their customers.

Nicolle McClure: Yeah, I think it takes a little planning up front to kind of think about what can I post beyond, hey come in and get your flu shot. But once you do that, the content I think tends to flow pretty easily. So, is there one thing that you see pharmacy owners not doing on social media that you think they need to start?

Jessica Gardner: Well I think an independent pharmacy, for example, is a vital part of its local community as a small business. And, that hometown connection is a competitive advantage over the regional and national pharmacy chains that have little or no ties to the community other than their physical location, where they are. And I think independent pharmacies can use that to their advantage to get better results of their social media efforts. For example, a pharmacy can promote community events, they can spotlight festivals or parades, street fairs

or other local businesses, highlight those sales and events and more over on its own social media channels.

Nicolle McClure: Yeah. Anytime our clients go to a health fair or participate in a parade or something like that, we always tell them to take a photo to put on their Facebook page because people love that kind of stuff. Seeing them out and about in the community.

Jessica Gardner: Exactly. Or even spotlighting local charity runs. I've seen owners do 5K's, or the Relay for Lives, and things like that. There's all types of ways for a store to be involved. Even the local health fairs where patients can come out and get free health screening tips, meet with nutritional people who work at the pharmacy. So I think there's lots of ways that a small local pharmacy can have a big advantage over their competitors in the field that are chains.

Nicolle McClure: Yeah, definitely. And it's no cost. It just takes some time and effort to put it together, which is the great thing about it. So, in the last five years or so, we've definitely seen social media evolve, especially I think from a business standpoint. Do you have any insights or thoughts on where you see it going in the next five to ten years?

Jessica Gardner: Well, it's definitely impossible to know what the future of social media holds, but we know that it's going to continue. There's already billions of Facebook users out there and those numbers are just going to grow as more third world nations gain access to the internet. And because of that, advertising and boosting posts probably will get a little bit more expensive. Right now they're very affordable for businesses to promote.

And I think humans are social animals, and social media has forever changed the way we work with society, whether it's sharing an idea or the communications of news or the availability of a product. So I think over the next 10 years, social media will definitely surpass television as the dominant advertising platforms. And, with new and exciting technologies just around the corner, I think it'll be very interesting to see where social media goes and will be a lot of fun to watch.

Nicolle McClure: I agree. Yeah. And definitely be a part of it. So before we wrap up, you gave our listeners some great advice today on reasons of why they should be on social media. So, anybody out there that's not currently on, now is your chance to get started with all the great advice that we received. Anything else to tell our listeners before we sign off?

Jessica Gardner: No, I think if you're not doing it today, go ahead. Get out there. Start with something simple. Show pictures of your pharmacy, start engaging questions with your customers, and just create a calendar of something that you can post on a daily basis. And remember, morning, lunchtime are the best hours, and just kind of go from there and see what kind of feedback you get. And I think, no

matter what, you're going to be successful with whatever venue of social media you choose.

Nicolle McClure: Perfect. Well thank you again for joining me today. I really appreciate it.

Jessica Gardner: Thank you so much, Nicolle. Had a great time speaking with you.

Nicolle McClure: Thank you for listening to another episode of the Pharmacy Marketing Simplified Podcast. Be sure to reach out to our pharmacy marketing experts ready to help grow your business at pharmacymarketing.com.

Speaker 1: You were listening to the Pharmacy Podcast Networks leading marketing podcast, Pharmacy Marketing Simplified, sponsored by the proven leader in pharmacy business development and support, GRX Marketing. For more proven strategies and ideas on marketing your pharmacy business, checkout grxmarketing.com.