

# Smart Strategizing for Web 3.0

“As your followers grow, help them be your advocates to their fans and followers.”



*Your patients have the mic...*

by Karen A. Meek

We've all heard about the explosion of the use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, wikis—the list is long. There are more than 250 social networking resources on the web. Collectively, social media is known as “Web 3.0” and is widely seen as a significant online evolution. Most all of the region's hospitals and large multi-specialty clinics are trying to use these tools to promote specialty services or providers' triumphs. So are many smaller clinics. Yet many health care providers are still in a state of confusion, or a wait-and-see mindset, about participating in the social media stratosphere. Many are unsure of the measurable benefits or how to make it work for them.

The following is a Q&A with Blaine Millet, co-founder of the company WOM<sup>10</sup> (“Word of Mouth on Steroids”) who explains how social media and word-of-mouth marketing will have an impact on health care providers, whether they choose to engage in it or not.

## **Q: How is Web 3.0 different from Web 2.0?**

**Millet:** Amazon.com is one of the originators of authentic conversation on the web, as opposed to using the web only as a marketing vehicle. By publishing consumers' product reviews on their website, Amazon allows customers to influence a shopper's decision-making process. The goal is transparency and authenticity. Web 2.0 channels move users from a traditional website into using social media tools, but still in a “push” format. Most of it is one-way conversation, which feels a lot more like advertising. Savvy, strategic-minded business people understand this and are trying to move to a Web 3.0 approach, which focuses on a “pull” process of building trusted relationships that leads to loyalty and advocacy. This is where the gold is at the end of the rainbow for social media.

## **Q: How do health care providers and administrators embark on such a venture?**

**Millet:** First and foremost, they need a strategy and a plan. This answers the questions of how

## *have you turned up the volume to hear what they're saying?*

and why they're going to use social media to support their overall business strategy. Consider: Do you want to increase your patient base? Do you want to increase referrals? An effective social media program builds trust, advocacy and loyalty. Some people race into blogging, Facebook, Twitter, and others join in just because everyone else is doing it. That approach will only waste a lot of your time and energy, yielding negligible results. To avoid these false starts, begin with a strategic plan after you've gained some insight as to how different social media platforms work. Choose which tools will achieve your goals, and then fully engage with those tools.

### **Q: Once we've evaluated the various social networking tools, what next?**

**Millet:** First I advise you to listen. See what patients are saying about other providers or clinics on the web. Have you Googled your own name? What comes up? You might want to set up a Google Alert, or sign up for TweetDeck or HootSuite, that gives you real-time conversations about what is being said about you or your industry. Also, pay attention to the online physician rating sites, such as Vitals.com, HealthGrades.com, DrScore.com, and DoctorScore-Card.com. Know that there are techniques for turning negative comments into opportunities to heighten your trust quotient. You can start to influence the conversation when you're engaged in the channels.

### **Q: What's important for a practice to consider as they set up their Web 3.0 presence?**

**Millet:** Regardless of the tools you use, your conversation must be authentic. Would-be followers are very sophisticated. If the commentary is supposed to come from an OB/GYN, but appears to be coming from the administrative or marketing staff, readers will call you out on it in a heartbeat. Avoid overly-technical terminology that a general reader, such as a patient or prospective one, won't connect with. Make your posts first person, with your voice, your authority and your sincerity. Being genuine with authenticity will build tremendous online credibility. (The Seattle Mama Doc blog is a good example <http://seattlemamadoc.seattlechildrens.org/>.)

### **Q: New media venues seem rather daunting, constantly changing and possibly overwhelming for physicians who are extremely busy, almost 24/7. How can they manage Tweets, blog entries or updating Facebook pages?**

**Millet:** Again, pick the few that will have the most impact for your practice and minimize your time investment. Don't try to be everything to everybody. The web is very niche-oriented. We tell our clients, "The way to get big is to get small." For example, say I want to search for the best cardiologist within 10 miles of my neighborhood, who's also an expert in interventional cardiology for 50+ year-old men. Focus your message and stories on your expertise in your area. Instead of talking technical jargon, talk about your experiences and stories relating to insights to diseases or conditions you've recently learned at a conference, or provide links to family support resources. As your followers grow, help them be your advocates to their fans and followers. You're building relationships, and by doing so, you're building your personal brand and reputation.

### **Q: How do you generate advocates from patients who are satisfied with their experience at your practice?**

**Millet:** By my definition, those two patients are quite distinct from one another. A satisfied patient has good experiences, but is always looking out for better ones with other doctors. If you're not providing a great experience, or cause them inconveniences along the way, they will defect. We call this the "Hassle Factor." Satisfied patients strive to reduce their Hassle Factor to zero. A loyal patient, on the other hand, will be with you from crib to coffin so to speak, despite any Hassle Factors, because of the outstanding care, the experience, trust and authenticity you provide. A loyal patient can become your advocate online and in personal conversations when armed with great content. Some of your best advocates may not be patients at all. Advocacy is the holy grail for leveraging social media and building your practice—focus on it and strive for it in every situation. ■

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