

FIVE UNEXPECTED WAYS SNAPCHAT TRANSFORMED MY PRACTICE

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We began experimenting with Snapchat in September of 2016. While I wasn't sure if it was a passing fad or not, I teamed up with social media star Dr. Miami (aka Michael Salzhauer, MD) as an "influencer" within the plastic surgery space. His plastic surgery practice in the Bal Harbour area of Miami accounts for one to two percent of all Snapchat traffic!

Snapchat was originally a messaging app. One person could message a selfie, photo, or video to a friend and after 10 seconds, that message would disappear. It caught on because your shenanigans weren't kept online in perpetuity as they are with Facebook. Those 10-second disappearing clips evolved into folks piecing together multiple clips into a story. Snapchat stories, a compilation of as many 10-second clips as you want, expire and therefore delete after a period of 24 hours.

These videos are different from YouTube because they're posted right after you "film" the video, not days later. It's not technically live video, but it's definitely more real-time than YouTube. You record the video and then choose whether to post that clip, edit it, or re-record it. Once posted, you can still delete it but otherwise, it's there for 24 hours along with the rest of your story.

Your followers and viewers can watch your story and even message you questions based on specific clips within the story. This allows for interaction with the story, not just passive viewership. You can manipulate the video by making it go faster, slower, posting emojis on it, and even include filters that highlight the time, temperature, where you are, or even place humorous "lenses" or masks over your face.

Snapchat may eventually be replaced with Instagram Stories or some other technology, but the combination of "real-time" video and social media is transformative.

Here are 5 ways that Snapchat is transforming my practice for the better.

1. PATIENT RAPPORT

Many of our patients have already watched us on Snapchat before they come in for a consultation. By seeing us in our "natural habitat," the prospective patients feel like they know us. We seem more approachable. By the time they show up, there's more rapport between us compared with patients unengaged with us on social media. They've already seen our office staff interact in humorous situations. They know we don't take ourselves too seriously. But at the same time, they see our professionalism when watching video of surgery.

2. PATIENT EDUCATION AND TRANSPARENCY

We record 10-second clips of our surgical procedures and create a "surgery story." We explain what tumescent solution is, how we perform liposuction and our technique for breast augmentation. We answer questions via the app during the operation. By showing the operation, they know we have nothing to hide. Even more fascinating than the ability to provide education to viewers, we're educating the patient and the patient's family! Let me explain: Normally the family leaves after we take their loved one back to surgery. Several hours later, we call them to return when the procedure is complete. Because the family is able to watch the operation in real time on Snapchat, they're fully informed by the time the patient returns to postop.

In the past, I would go out and speak to the family and explain everything. Now, they're ecstatic, telling me which part of the operation was their favorite and complimenting the team on the work we've done. Since we show intraoperative before- and-after photos, they see the early results of the procedure before the dressings and garments are placed. And when I call the patient that evening to check on them, they've watched the operation themselves! This level of transparency and patient education was unheard of, until now.



Golden Gate Bridge) when geographically located within San Francisco. (Hence the term geofilter.) Similarly, a business can design their own geofilter so that consumers can include the filter on their Snapchat when in that business' vicinity. As seen in this photo, my practice designed this geofilter so that when someone is near the office, they can use our filter. They don't even need to be a patient. If they simply like our graphic, our filter is available to them. Ultimately, all of their friends and followers see where they were and see our filter. One day, a woman saw me on the street and told me that she goes to a clinic in my building. Because she noticed our filter, she included it in her story last time she went to see her doctor. Subsequently, a friend saw her story, noticed our filter, and came in for a consult! So while word-of-mouth referrals are a known entity, self-referral after seeing a Snapchat geofilter is something altogether new.

I'm not trying to convince anyone to use social media in the operating room, or out. But for me and my practice, this level of communication, information sharing, and improved rapport with the patient is unattainable otherwise and has transformed my practice in an undoubtedly positive way. ■

3. GENERATING LEADS

One of the most common questions we get through Snapchat while the viewer is watching the operation, is how much does that particular operation cost. We could reply with a figure but then we've lost an opportunity to generate a lead. Because Snapchat, like Instagram, only shows the patient's handle—the screen name they've chosen—the viewer's contact information is not readily accessible. We direct them to that specific procedure-of-interest on our website's Price Estimator. Once there, they add that procedure to a virtual wishlist and submit their wishlist along with their name, email address, phone number, and ZIP code. Immediately and automatically, they receive a cost estimate for at procedure in their inbox and we receive their contact info for follow up, i.e a bonfide lead.

4. "PAY-IT-FORWARD" MENTALITY

One of the first questions I get from other doctors is, do patients balk at having their surgery filmed? While someone out there that may not be comfortable, they're the exception, not the rule. A majority of patients have watched videos of surgical and non-surgical procedures before the consult and certainly before their own procedure. Just as they learned from someone else's willingness to showcase their procedure for the purposes of education, many of these patients are willing to do the same. For that reason, they sign a photography/video consent to pay it forward for others watching at home or work.

5. REFERRALS

Snapchat has geofilters. These are images, words, or even ads that are accessible to showcase where the user is located. For example, you can only use the "San Francisco" filter (which has an image of the



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