

Social Media Makes Sense for Massage Schools

By Abram Herman

Social media may seem daunting from an organizational point of view, but it's actually a fairly simple way to enhance the social interactions your school needs to stay connected.

Social media, at its core, is a way for you to take the things your organization normally does through the traditional avenues you're used to, and deliver those same services and resources in a place that around 400 million people visit on a daily basis. Rather than acting, as most traditional websites do, as a mouthpiece for a particular organization or publication, social media is made up of all of the links, comments, pictures, videos, and other pieces of content that individual users share with their own network of friends and colleagues.

On Their Turf

Utilizing social media lets you reach your audience where they already spend their time, instead of spending valuable resources getting them to access your content from a place that's not part of their daily routine (i.e., your website). As the trend in the massage profession continues toward younger students coming into massage therapy as their first career, it's critical that you meet these students on their own turf. If



you really want to find new prospects from this demographic, it's important to note that 82 percent of 18–29 year olds use some form of social networking. However, it would be naïve to think that social media only applies to the younger generation: in a typical month, 73 percent of the entire US Internet population will visit Facebook at least one time.

Proactive Presence

With the huge volume of traffic and publicity that social networks can produce, it's easy to balk a little at what it could mean for your image if all your organization's interactions are made more public. However, the real question should be, what does it mean to not participate in this online exchange? It means not hearing the feedback you want, not giving your supporters a place to publicly compliment you and give a personal recommendation to their friends and colleagues, and, perhaps most importantly, not

Instructor 101 Webinars

Instructor 101 is a new project from ABMP aimed at supporting massage instructors, as well as school directors, owners, and managers. Instructor 101 is a series of free live webinars to support new teachers as they build a strong foundation in education principles and develop the next generation of massage professionals. NCBTMB-approved continuing education credit is available by passing a short, online quiz. **(See more on page 4).**



hearing about it when someone is publicly airing a grievance with your organization. Many assume that participating in social media allows these grievances to become public, but the reality is that it's going to be posted and publicly shared regardless of your online presence. The key is listening and maintaining enough of a presence yourself that you can directly handle any public complaints, and in the process, show your responsiveness and concern for the quality of your customers' experience.

Getting Started

So how do you get started with this giant social media beast? First things first: you need to know where your audience is. It's great if you have a very active Twitter account that puts out tons of good information and resources, but if you only have five people you're serving that actually use Twitter, it's most likely not time well spent. In general, it's probably a safe assumption, regardless of your audience, that Facebook would be the first place to get started as you enter the world of social media. Facebook is by far the largest and most-used social network, and the most likely place you'll find the kind of audience for which you're looking. Start a Facebook business page (not a personal account with your business name on it), flesh out the profile, add some links to interesting content and resources that you provide, and most importantly, be social.

Whatever social network you decide works best for your organization, the most important thing to remember is that it's called *social* media. That means you can't just promote your own products, your own events, your own everything, and expect to gain a successful following. You need to be a valuable, trusted resource that people want to follow because of your unbearable charm and the amazing content that you curate and produce. Once they're

following what you're doing because you're so charismatic and interesting, that's when you can softly promote your organization's resources as a solution to their needs. Until then, your best bet is to be an active participant in the social community, regularly contributing articles, blog posts, sharing others' success, chatting, responding to inquiries, and just being a general amicable presence—a good rule of thumb is to share five to seven pieces of someone else's highly interesting, useful, and engaging content for every one piece of your own that you want to promote. It's all about establishing relationships and staying top-of-mind so that when your audience needs something, you're the first source they think of.

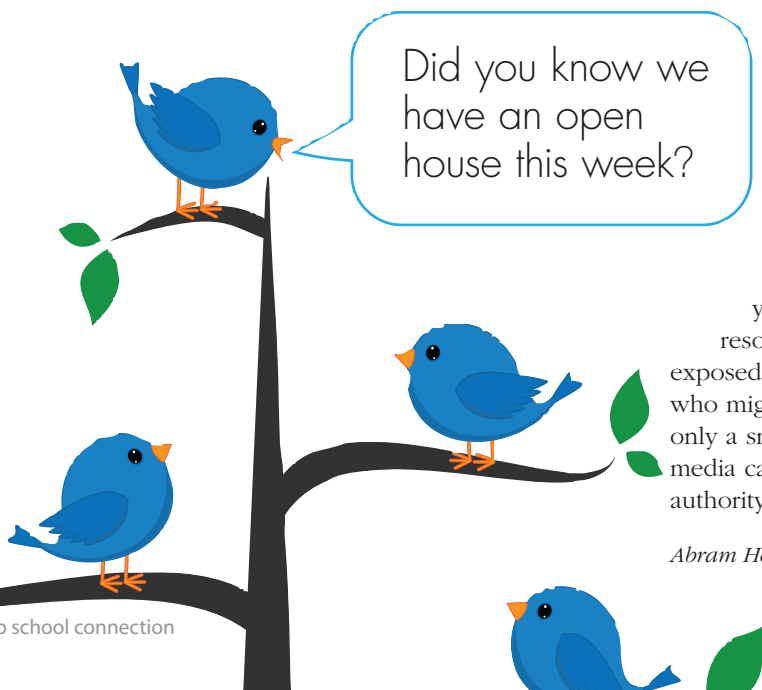
Make it Work for You

Keep in mind that a basic online social presence and engagement strategy can be applied to many more of the issues your organization faces beyond just lead generation. Whether it's retention, community building, providing study resources, offering customer support, or any other aspect of school and organizational administration, think about how the tools of social media could be applied to your particular circumstance. Maybe your in-person networking or social events have been poorly attended. What about an online chat hosted on your Facebook page or Twitter feed to facilitate relationship-building and break the ice, so more people feel comfortable showing up for the live networking? Perhaps you're having trouble getting feedback from students in class. Invite their comments via Twitter, and set up your own hashtag to track the classroom conversation. You could even use a free live Twitter feed service to display the stream of comments from a projector right on the classroom wall as you hold your discussion. If some of these ideas seem hard to implement or you don't

quite understand the mechanism behind them (or what a hashtag is), know that there are thousands and thousands of free online resources for social media strategies, promotions, advertising, and anything else you can think of as it relates to the field.

Don't be timid about throwing your hat in the ring—the biggest risk in social media is not participating. If you're doing it right, you'll not only decrease the amount you spend on programs by shifting your resources to online activities, you'll also be exposed to a whole new audience of prospects who might otherwise not know about you, all with only a small amount of investment required. Social media can be summed up quite simply: be the authority, be friendly, be social, and be you! ❖

Abram Herman is the social media coordinator at ABMP.



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ABMP Partners with the Massage Therapy Foundation to Teach Research Literacy

At Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals (ABMP), we count it as a privilege to have worked with more than 2,000 massage instructors across the country at our complimentary Instructors on the Front Lines workshops from 2009–2011. In 2012, ABMP is hosting four special events to support the Massage Therapy Foundation's efforts to teach research literacy.

The Massage Therapy Foundation is an organization that advances the knowledge and practice of massage therapy by supporting scientific research, education, and community service. "Teaching Research Literacy" is a six-hour NCBTMB-approved workshop for massage educators that details how to incorporate basic principles of research literacy into a school's existing curriculum. ABMP is sponsoring this workshop so massage program teachers, school owners, and massage school administrators can experience it at no charge.

Why Is This Workshop So Important?

In order to effectively communicate the benefits of massage to their clients, massage therapists need to know how to read and evaluate research that is relevant to our field. We recognize, however, that most massage therapists haven't yet acquired these skills. Teachers can help graduates, and move the profession forward, by learning to incorporate fundamental principles of research literacy into their core massage therapy curriculum.

What You Will Be Able To Do

Through the "Teaching Research Literacy" workshop, attendees will be able to:

- Become proficient in the language of research.
- Easily incorporate research literacy tools into current curriculum.
- Guide students in independent case report writing.
- Promote students' case reports for publication in peer-reviewed, scientific journals.
- Connect research results to experience, in and out of the classroom.
- Learn new ways to inspire and empower students.
- Mentor graduates to establish more evidence-informed practices.

Massage schools can find out more about ABMP's Instructors on the Front Lines workshops and the Massage Therapy Foundation's "Teaching Research Literacy" classes at www.abmp.com in the Resources for Massage Schools and Instructors section. ✕



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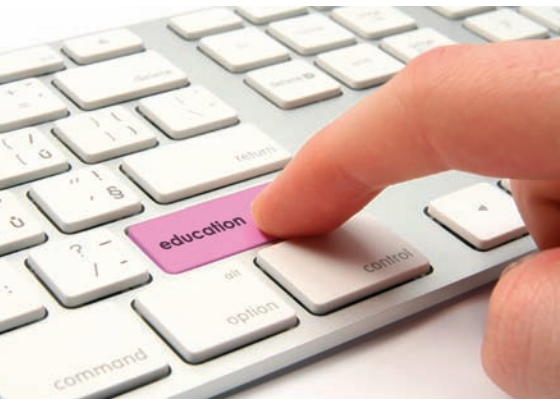
March 2, 2012
Seattle, WA

July 27, 2012
Worcester, MA

September 28, 2012
Chicago, IL

December 7, 2012
Orlando, FL





Free Instructor 101 Webinars from ABMP

Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals is excited to introduce Instructor 101, a free, new webinar series designed for massage instructors. These live webinars—accompanied by work sheets, resources, and activities—will support new teachers as they build a strong foundation in education principles and develop the next generation of massage professionals.

Good massage teachers are not always easy to find and resources to provide instructor training might be tight. In the Instructor 101 program, ABMP starts with the basics to guide massage professionals as they make the leap from massage practices to massage classrooms.

All teachers are invited to participate in the Instructor 101 program. If your instructors are ABMP members with current email addresses on file, they

will receive a webinar invitation two weeks in advance of the live date. ABMP members can update their email addresses by logging in to the Member page at ABMP.com and clicking on “Your ABMP Account.” If a teacher is not an ABMP member, he or she can still receive email invitations to our webinars by clicking “Upcoming ABMP Webinars” on the ABMP.com home page, or “liking” ABMP on Facebook. Replays of the webinars, and additional continuing education (CE) opportunities, are available for on-demand viewing by ABMP professionals and school members in ABMP’s Online Education Center at ABMP.com. If you want CE credit, take the quiz for each webinar (\$12 for ABMP members, \$35 for nonmembers).🔗

Instructor 101 Webinar Series # 1 “Understanding Learning Objectives for Effective Instructional Design”

February 1, 2012, at 2:00 p.m.
Eastern Standard Time.

PO Box 1869
evergreen, colorado 80437

