



**Angela Weber** is the chief marketing officer for OrthoSynetics, leading a team dedicated to developing and implementing cutting-edge strategies and solutions for clients in the orthodontic and dental industries. Weber has more than 15 years of experience in the advertising industry, with a vast knowledge of current and past trends, philosophies and strategies for marketing within the health-care industry. She holds a bachelor's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University and an MBA from the University of New Orleans.

With social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, there are more ways to get your brand out in the world than ever before. In fact, many practices are considering nontraditional marketing efforts such as social media influencer campaigns and co-marketing partnerships. Both options can reap big rewards, but it's important to think through each option before committing your time and money.

>> by Angela Weber

# Co-Marketing and »» Influencers



## »» How do I choose an influencer?

The process of choosing an influencer doesn't have to be hard, but it does take research. First, take a look at Instagram and search hashtags that are relevant to your target and the type of influencer you want to find. Looking for a mom influencer in New Orleans? Search hashtags like *#neworleansmom* to find possible influencers. Then, check out how many followers she has and scroll through her feed to see the engagement with her followers. You shouldn't pick influencers based on numbers alone; engagement with followers is also important. Are they posting appropriate content? Are they going to be a good brand ambassador? If you're hesitant about partnering with them, then don't do it. You can't control what they put on their feed. It's just like when national advertisers hire a spokesperson. If that celebrity missteps, it reflects poorly on the brand, so proceed with caution.

## »» Is there anything I should be on the lookout for in the process?

Develop a written contract with the influencer, and make sure you have consent from parents if the influencer is a minor. A word of caution: Partnerships with teens can be difficult. They're cooler than all of us and may not want to post your content if they think it's lame (and they will probably think it's lame). Show influencers example posts so they understand your expectations. Your contract should include the number of posts, schedule of posts, type of post (video, photo, story, etc.) and what channels it needs to be posted to. Specify the hashtags you want included and the practices and people that should be tagged in the posts. You can give them guidelines, but keep in mind that they will ultimately put their own spin on the content to keep it authentic to their voice. If you take the time to outline everything, there shouldn't be any surprises for either party.

## »» How do I compensate them?

Everyone wants to get paid—even influencers. The key is to make sure you're familiar with your state's dental board regulations before entering into an agreement with an influencer. Most offices simply arrange a trade agreement, such as free treatment for the influencer or a family member in exchange for a specific number of social posts and content. Some offices even offer free whitening in exchange for one social post. Another option is to treat it like any other ad space and provide monetary compensation.



## »» How is influencer marketing different from co-marketing?

In co-marketing, two companies are collaborating for a shared benefit. With influencer marketing, the influencer has very little to gain other than compensation. Both can get you more buzz and awareness by exposing your brand to another audience.

## »» Is co-marketing a waste of time?

Not if you have your ducks in a row. Once you identify the partner and have confirmed they are interested in a potential co-marketing opportunity, now you must formulate your plan. Your partner needs to know your ideas and expectations. Outline everything from the collateral, messaging, social posts, media spend, expense allocation, goals, etc. and discuss each. Getting on the same page from Day 1 is crucial to success. Make sure the two businesses are a natural fit. For example, if you operate a luxury orthodontic office, an ideal partner for co-marketing events and promotions would be like-minded businesses such as high-end clothing boutiques or elegant salons/spas. These partnerships are likely to be successful because the target audience will have disposable income and place a high value on appearances, two factors that make orthodontic care an appealing and obtainable option for them.

## »» Will co-marketing dilute my brand?

It should enhance rather than dilute the brand if it's a good fit. Think about the brand you are partnering with—is their messaging going to distract from what you are trying to convey? Will it confuse consumers? Or, will it expose your brand to a new audience and increase your brand awareness? Each situation is different. A successful co-marketing effort is a clear win-win for both parties and can make each brand stand out from the competition.

## »» Will cross-branding grow my practice?

Yes, with the right partner it can grow your practice. But, if you and your partner haven't outlined a strong call to action to generate leads and mechanisms to track your efforts, you won't know the true ROI of your partnership. ■