

A Social Media Strategy for

PLUM MIDWIFERY

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Background

Plum Midwifery started in 2008 with two registered midwives and over a period of six years, three additional midwives joined the team. The clinic started as a home based business from Joanne Daviau's home, located at 760 Radford Avenue, in Comox, and continues to operate from this location. Even though this location is somewhat remote, clients don't seem to mind travelling the extra distance, for the warm, welcoming, country atmosphere it provides. It is felt by the Plum team, however, if it were more centrally located, it would attract a greater number of clients.

The Plum team consists of Joanne Daviau, Emma Gledhill, Amy Kelly, Kat de Cent and Annabelle Sproule.

Plum's services include:

- Pre-conceptual care
- Confirming pregnancy
- Individual pre-natal and post-natal care
- Baby deliveries
- Conducting group pregnancy classes
- Lactation consultation

The group pregnancy classes have been successful as they allow pregnant women to socialize, build community and develop relationships with one another.

Objectives

Plum's main objectives regarding social media, are to:

- educate the public regarding the extensive services midwives provide
- increase the number of clients they have

Midwifery is relatively new to Canada, and is recognized as a legal and regulated profession in some provinces and territories while in others it is not yet regulated. It has only been legal in British Columbia since 1998.

The public has many misconceptions regarding midwives and what they do. Many people believe that midwives are only for the purpose of delivering your baby at home. This is not the case at all. Midwives provide care and support for pregnant woman throughout the full term of their pregnancy and up to six weeks, and in some cases, up to three months after the baby is born. They also provide professional lactation consulting.

In addition to travelling to their client's home for pre-natal and post-natal visits, midwives often become a trusted counsellor and confidante for their clients.

Plum would like to see an increase in the number of clients they have. They hope to achieve this through educating the public about midwives and gaining a presence in the social network.

Target Market

Plum's current customer demographic consist of females 14 – 45 years old. Most of these clients are professionals, hippies and air force families. They also cater to a number of clients from Tofino, Port Hardy, Ucluelet, Port McNeill, Campbell River and the islands of Hornby, Denman, Quadra, and Cortez.

Currently, Plum Midwifery's customers mostly hang out on Facebook. Plum also has a closed Facebook group which is for clients who have graduated from pre-natal group. This Facebook group provides a great place for new mothers to connect and build relationships with one another.

Other target markets Plum would like to expand to would be:

- The First Nations community, because they don't have clients from this demographic at this time and are just not sure why. Plum feels that they could provide the cultural sensitivity required and tailor care specifically for this demographic
- The teenage market, because they cannot drive and midwives provide homecare
- The Cumberland market, because they currently don't get many women from this location and there is a significant proportion of the population that are young, growing families

In the future, there will be an Aboriginal Centre of Excellence for Maternity in Campbell River. The Centre of Excellence, will be a competitor for Plum, however there is a possibility that Plum could build a strong repertoire with the Centre to work in conjunction with them in the future.

Existing Digital Properties and Marketing Channels

Currently Plum's customers discover them primarily through word-of-mouth, their website and a little local Cumberland paper called 'Currently Cumberland.' They also have Allison Wurts, a former client, who creates and sends out the 'Plum Bites' newsletter four times a year which highlights information about each baby that was born, baby stories, and general information that may interest their clients. The last edition of this newsletter was Winter 2013.

Word of mouth has been their best advertisement to date. It works well because they are good at what they do, and new mothers are excited to spread the news of their wonderful experience to others.

Each staff member at Plum, have varied interests and are all involved in various activities outside of work. This allows them to interact with the community on a variety of levels and ultimately has led to many of their clients.

Plum has also participated in various other activities, which include:

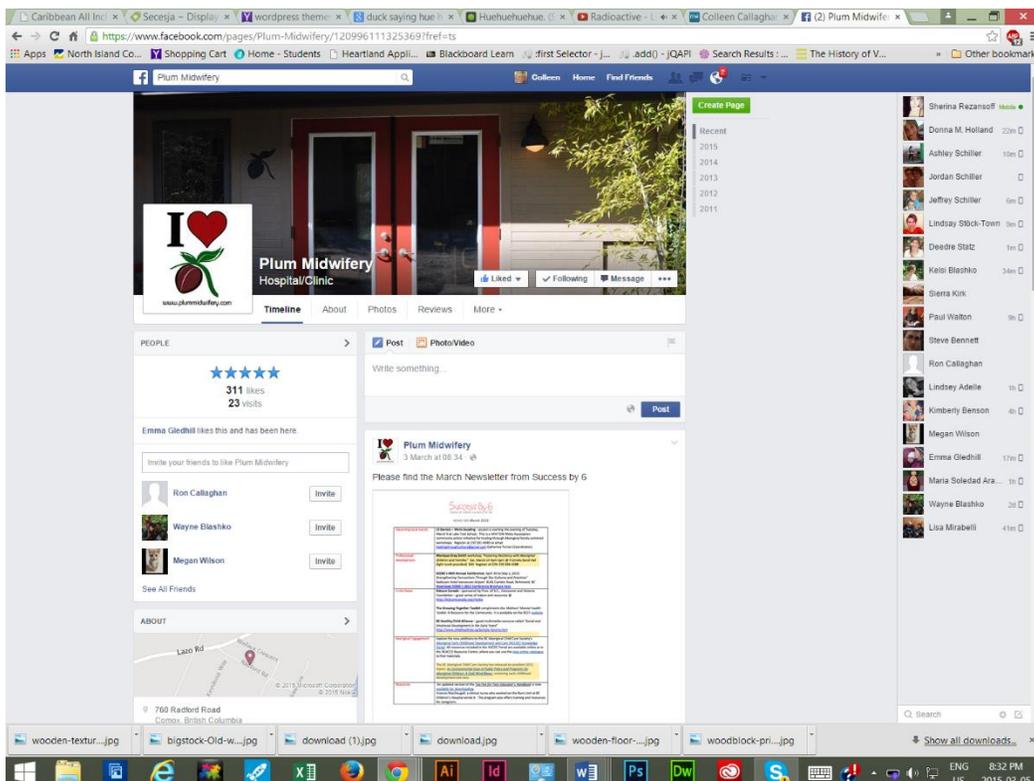
- The local parades, where they give out balloons and leaflets to create public awareness of their business
- Attending the Farmer's Market, on International Day of the Midwife, to engage and interact with their audience, hopeful that their audience will follow them

Social Media Audit

The following is a summary of the social media platforms and strategies Plum Midwifery is currently using:

Social Network	URL	Follower Count	Activity/Feelings About the Network
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/pages/Plum-Midwifery/120996111325369?fref=ts	311	Time waster – Sometimes there are interesting things
Facebook Groups	Closed group – only for clients		Good for our clients – closed group – good for developing relationships
Newsletter 4x Year	Sent out by Allison Wurts		Sent to Facebook group & every client who provides email address
Website	www.plummidwifery.com		Updated resources – Redesigned 2 years ago Not very current

A screen shot of Plum Midwifery's Facebook page on March 5, 2015, shows 311 followers:



Competitor Assessment

The following is a list of Plum Midwifery's competitors:

Competitor Name	Social Media Profiles	Strengths	Weaknesses
General Practitioners – Approximately 10 of them	They are not allowed to publicly advertise	People know about them & feel comfortable going to their own doctor	Visits are too short & quick. Not as knowledgeable in all areas of pre-natal & post-natal care
Obstetricians – Approximately 3 of them	Don't have profiles Not allowed to publicly advertise	They get referrals from the GP's	Obstetricians do not give breastfeeding help. Midwives go to the client's home
Birth Tides Midwifery Clinic	Facebook page only Have 269 page likes	They use Facebook Their location is more central, and easy to get to	Personalities of midwives – They're older – in their 60's & they are burned out. They can't attract young people

The above analysis reveals that Plum Midwifery really has very few competitors with any social presence at all. The general practitioners and obstetricians are unable to use social media to advertise their services and Birth Tides Clinic is currently only utilizing Facebook and have fewer followers than Plum.

Online Brand Personal and Voice

The words that describe the Plum Midwifery brand are:

Current	Desired	Customers would say...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendly • Supportive • Welcoming • Listening • Responsive • Knowledgeable 	We are happy with the impression that our clients currently have of Plum Midwifery and the current list to the left is an accurate description.	Clients would agree with the previous list as these are the words they repeatedly use to describe our business

Plum Midwifery would like to be known for their friendly, supportive, knowledgeable care. They want their clients to feel at home, supported and comfortable knowing they are getting the best care available. Plum is there for them and have the skills and expertise to make their pregnancy and delivery safe, comfortable and pleasant. They can call Plum anytime 24/7 and talk to a real person.

Strategies & Tools

After conducting an interview with Emma Gledhill, and analyzing Plum Midwifery's current social media status, I have several suggestions to help them build a strong social presence which will:

- Increase brand awareness
- Gain a loyal following
- Educate the public in the field of midwifery
- Provide information to the public to bring awareness to the Plum brand

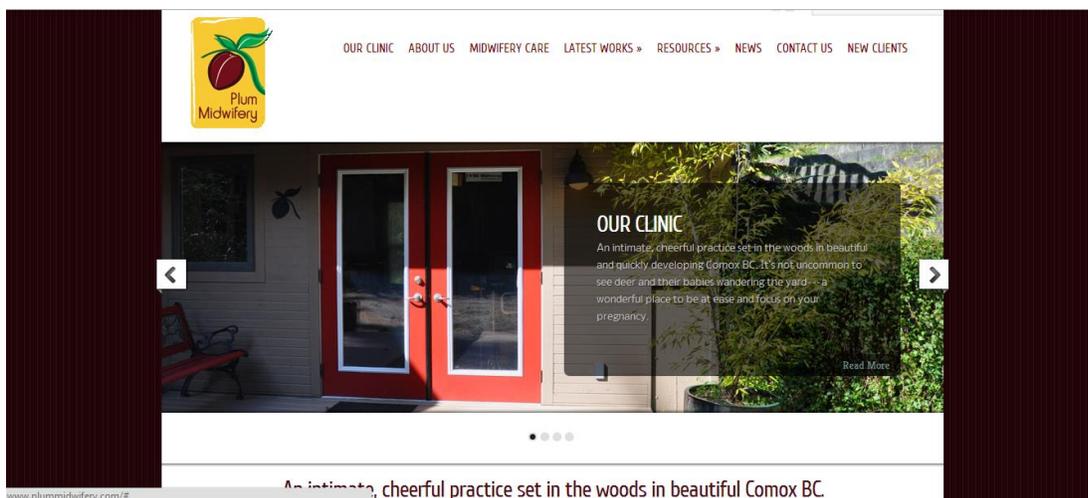
Website Recommendations

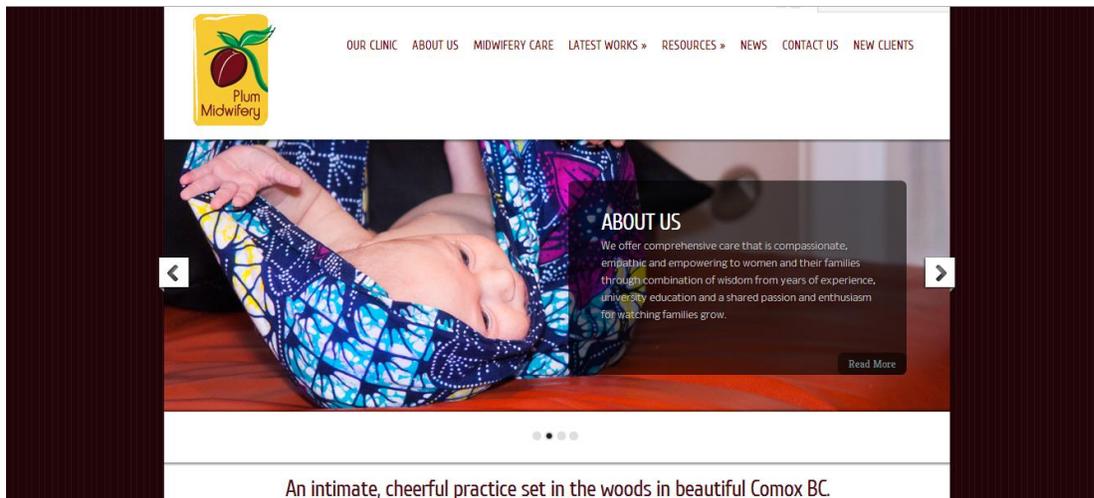
Plum Midwifery has a nice website, however, it is not being utilized to its full potential. On each of their website pages, they only have a Facebook like button and no share button.

Another recommendation would be to add a blog to their website. At present they do have an 'Ask a Midwife' section which offers answers to commonly asked questions, however, the last time it was updated was February 2011. If Plum added a blog, and kept it current, the more often they added to it, more content would get indexed by Google and, therefore, there would be more opportunities for them to appear in search results. In addition, the more blog posts they have, the higher the chance that someone in their target audience would click and share the content on social media, giving Plum an even greater reach.

Because it is an extensive amount of work, a reasonable goal would be to start blogging weekly and then slowly increase to two or three times a week, once they are confident they have a considerable amount of blog posts to publish in the future.

The following is a screenshot of Plum Midwifery website's home page with a large image slider:





Facebook Recommendations

I recommend that the Facebook image is changed from a door, to a more relevant image like a baby or something baby related. It would also be prudent to use this area as a place to include their phone number or their website address.

When I conducted an interview with Emma Gledhill in February, Plum was posting content about once or twice a week on Facebook. Since that time, I have noticed that Plum has increased the frequency of their posts and are now posting content almost daily.

LinkedIn Recommendations

Currently, none of the Plum team has a LinkedIn profile. Each member of the Plum team is a professional in their field, and would definitely benefit from having their own LinkedIn profile. These days, one of the first places people go to look at credentials is LinkedIn.

When completing their profiles, it would be helpful for each team member to use similar keywords in their summary or background in order to optimize search engine results.

Twitter Recommendations

Twitter is the second most popular social media platform used by business and has become an essential part of any marketing plan. It is an extremely public platform, and while it can take a considerable amount of time, it is worthwhile to invest some time in learning because it is essentially free PR for your company.

It is possible to start slowly, with only a tweet per day, and then eventually work up to six tweets a day.

Pinterest Recommendations

According to statistics, 80% of Pinterest users are women. This makes it a great social media platform for Plum. It has a high number of active users, and the average time spent on it, is very high in comparison with other social media platforms.

Pinterest is a great avenue for driving traffic to your website. Plum could pin an image to their board, and when other Pinterest users click on a pin that they see added from Plum's website, Pinterest will direct them to their website.

The best practice for using Pinterest would be to pin only original Plum Midwifery images, or images that Plum's clients have provided and consented for Plum to use.

Instagram Recommendations

Instagram is a visual platform primarily used from a smartphone or an iPad and is growing very quickly in popularity. It is the first major social platform based on mobile.

According to Emma, a high percentage of Plum's clients are mobile phone users, this makes it worth investigating further as a strategic platform for Plum to use.

Instagram can help Plum to effectively build brand awareness and connect with their audience who are using mobile devices.

Keyword Recommendations

In each of the above social media platforms it is important, when filling out the summaries and biographies on the various profiles, that specific keywords are used in order for Plum to show up in searches. A few keyword suggestions I recommend are:

- Midwife
- Doula
- Pregnancy
- Pregnant
- Midwifery clinic
- Baby delivery
- Baby

Brand Ambassador Recommendation

Asking someone to be Plum Midwifery's brand ambassador would be a great idea. A brand ambassador is someone who is active on social media, has had a wonderful experience with Plum's service, and would be thrilled to spread the word and the value of the Plum brand.

Campaign Ideas

There are several campaign ideas that could be conducted through the use of social media. Just a few ideas might include:

- Surveys, polls and quizzes, which can effectively engage your audience

- Crowd-sourcing photos, videos and content
- Product give-aways

Emma mentioned that they have salespeople come in on a regular basis and leave products with them in hopes that these products will be promoted or endorsed by Plum. Plum could take these items, create a basket of baby related gifts, and hold a contest each month and the winner could win the basket. The contest could be writing a funny baby story and they could have their audience vote for the winner.

Plum could have a true or false quiz just to see how well-informed people really are in regards to midwives. In some of the social media platforms, when it is difficult to come up with content, there could be a 'Did you know...' snippet that includes interesting, not commonly known, information about midwives or babies in general.

Another campaign could include requesting clients to share their baby photos on Plum's Pinterest board or on Instagram.

These are just a few campaign ideas that would provide the opportunity for Plum to effectively engage with their audience.

Timing and Key Dates

There are definitely certain holidays and events that Plum Midwifery could tie in with their social media marketing. Currently the only two dates they have acknowledged are International Day of the Midwife which is on May 5th and the Women's Memorial March on February 14th. The following are other holidays that they may tie in with their social media marketing:

- Mother's Day – second Sunday in May
- Labour Day – first Monday in September
- Father's Day – third Sunday in June
- Family Day – second Monday in February

Social Media Roles and Responsibilities

Courtney Bardonner, Plum Midwifery's office administrator, currently updates their Facebook page. With a limited, to non-existent social media budget, it is expected that Courtney will manage and update the various social media platforms as part of her regular office routine. It is anticipated that she can devote two to three hours per week for this.

Courtney will have a free reign for implementing the social media program for Plum. Currently, Emma provides Courtney with content for their Facebook page, and if Courtney wants to post something, she generally has the other midwives review it before she posts it.

The only part of social media Emma would enjoy doing would be to post photos to Pinterest or Instagram.

Emma's only real concern regarding social media is the confidentiality issues that may arise using the various platforms.

With limited knowledge of the various social media platforms, other than Facebook, the Plum Midwifery staff would require significant training, help and support to use it effectively to promote their brand.

Social Media Policy

Having a written social media policy outlining the appropriate use by employees is an important part of any social media strategy. According to Plum Midwifery, the important things in terms of appropriate use by employees would be to:

- Be mindful that they are not endorsing anything flaky or inappropriate
- Keep confidentiality a top priority

While the above are definitely important to keep in mind, the following is a sample of other good social media policy practices for Plum Midwifery:

Plum Midwifery Social Media Policy

Always keep in mind:

- There really is no such thing as ‘delete’ on the internet, it can virtually stay there forever, so be sure of the content, before you post anything.
- Be careful when discussing things that people are passionate about. People can become very emotional particularly when discussing religion and politics. Always respect other’s opinions.
- Everything you say can be seen by people all over the world. Something said in one country could be considered offensive and inappropriate in another.
- Be mindful of copyright laws. Just because it’s on line, doesn’t mean you can copy it.
- Don’t let social media affect your job performance.
- That social media is not about the *direct* selling of products or services.
- Never say anything negative about your competitors

The best policy is to:

- Always be respectful and considerate
- Be genuine, be yourself
- If you make a big mistake, correct it immediately and let the team know
- Add value by making sure the posts really add to the conversation. If it supports Plum’s goals and values, supports our customers, improves our brand or helps us do our jobs better, then it is added value.

It’s important to never:

- Talk about financial information, legal issues, or other confidential issues
 - Give out personal information about customers or employees
 - Respond to an offensive or negative post by a customer – it just makes us look bad.
-

Critical Response Plan

Social media can be great for listening and responding to customer concerns. By proactively building a community of goodwill with social media followers, a company’s brand will, overtime, become more

trusted and more brand advocates will be created. This will help mitigate the potential negative effects of any crisis that may arise.

Vigilant about getting feedback regarding their service, Plum Midwifery spends a great deal of time listening to, and responding to client concerns or issues. Plum routinely asks their clients to fill out an evaluation form at the end of their term with them.

Because of their exceptional care, Plum rarely receives complaints regarding their services, however, if there was an issue, it would be that the client's care wasn't managed very well. In regards to an issue, Plum may not even hear the complaint, the client would simply leave their care.

A potentially serious problem for Plum Midwifery would be a client posting about a terrible birth experience. The worst case scenario would be a bad post regarding a death. In this worst case scenario, Plum would want to respond immediately, offer a genuine, heartfelt apology explaining that it's an unfortunate incident and they are truly sorry. It is a fact that approximately 85% of births, should be normal and healthy, however, there is the 15% chance something may go wrong. Plum would also want their audience to know that they remain committed to providing the best professional care available to their clients.

Measurement and Reporting

Thinking about where they are at with their current social media plan, Plum Midwifery would like to set the following milestones for their future social media plan:

Three Months

- Start implementing some of the suggested social media platforms into their branding strategy
- Increase the volume of content in order to provide brand awareness, gain loyalty and build deeper relationships with their clients
- Complete their LinkedIn, Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter profiles
- See a 10% increase, (311 to 342) in social media followers in the first three months of implementation of this strategy
- Start gaining interest from people they wouldn't even expect
- Drive more traffic to their website by consistently sharing meaningful content across their social media channels
- Utilize social media to alleviate any misconceptions the public may have regarding midwives
- Help the public become more knowledgeable in regard to midwives and their various roles

Six Months

- Observe an audience increase of 350 to 525 (25%) followers on Facebook in six months
- Find that people are engaged, responding and interacting with Plum on a regular basis

Twelve months

- Increase their number of followers from 525 to 800+ (50% increase)
- See that they now have a waiting list of clients
- Plum's reputation with doctors, nurses, and the public is one of respect and confidence
- Have a new, centrally located clinic with an on-site birthing unit

Summary

In summary, I believe that with the implementation of a few clever social media strategies, Plum Midwifery could successfully increase their following and build greater public awareness of their brand.

References

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