

Dr Amelia Judson

Meet the dentist and social media influencer who's changing the way the industry markets itself

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To really make your online presence work, maybe you need the skills of an influencer—as Dr Amelia Judson reveals.

By Kerryn Ramsey

A GOOD INFLUENCE

As a newly graduated dentist at a busy CBD surgery, Dr Amelia Judson has managed to expand her skill set by taking on another role—as a social media influencer. While this isn't a common position at most dental surgeries, a practice owner may want to rethink this after discovering the value of Dr Judson's contributions.

So what's an influencer? "It's somebody who lets others into their life via an online platform," she says. The influencer, who's usually a millennial or gen Yer, needs to have established credibility in a specific industry—like Dr Judson. At present, the 23-year-old is working at Melbourne's Smile Solutions, as well as managing her personal Velvet Smile channels. Here, she's up to date on posts and what message she wants to get out, and investigates rising trends within social media.

"Viewers tend to trust what an influencer is saying because they've shared personal details freely. It might be a picture of their dog or photos of their boyfriend or a post

about their skin-care routine. Advertisers happily pay influencers to promote products as it's seen as being more 'real'. And it's very effective. In the same manner, I'm attempting to promote dental health."

She runs an Instagram page and a Facebook business page called Velvet Smile that covers lifestyle, dentistry, health and fashion. Generally, once an Instagram page has over 10,000 followers, the owner of the page is considered an influencer. Velvet Smile is closing in on 20,000 followers.

Learning her skill set

You wouldn't necessarily know from her well-polished persona that Dr Judson grew up on a farm in the small NSW village of Bogan Gate, which has a population of just over 300. While studying dentistry at Charles Sturt University in Orange, she soon discovered her passion for DJing around the campuses. As her popularity—and skills—expanded, she told *Orange City Life* magazine that she would like to get out and play in front of an audience. A local publican sent

her a message on Facebook inviting her to play and it grew from there.

She started getting more gigs, bought more equipment, and was soon playing in Parkes, Dubbo, Cowra and Forbes. Eventually she broke into the Sydney scene and on her 20th birthday, she played to a huge crowd at the Future Music Festival. She followed that up by being flown to Queensland's Magnetic Island to DJ a huge New Year's Eve party.

"I was teaching myself how to run a business and I was heavily involved in marketing," says Dr Judson. "I was using social media to advertise my gigs and that's where I gained the basic skill set required to be an influencer."

A combination of Sydney's lockout laws and her final year of dentistry saw Dr Judson step back from DJing and take a break from social media. Once she qualified as a dentist, she moved to Melbourne while waiting for her AHPRA registration to come through. "I had worked hard to cultivate a relationship with my followers and even though it

PHOTOGRAPHY: KARON PHOTOGRAPHY



The face behind Velvet Smile says her goal is to "refresh dentistry, make it cool and make it edible".



was related to DJing, I felt I should be able to find something else interesting for them," she says. "So I revived my social media platforms, and before long, I turned this into my Velvet Smile brand."

Social media presence

It was at this time that Dr Judson received an email from Dr Kia Pajouhesh, the principal dentist and managing director of Smile Solutions, the largest one-location dental practice in Australia. He had come across the dentist in a newspaper article published in Dubbo and was familiar with her social media sites.

"Dr Pajouhesh liked what I was doing with my accounts and wanted to bring me on board to Smile Solutions," recalls Dr Judson. "He felt that my social media presence could be an asset to the business and the resources they could supply would complement and grow that presence. As a new grad, I was excited about the prospect of a job and the opportunity to manage a social media platform that would educate people about dentistry."

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Dr Amelia Judson, dentist and influencer

"A big issue at present is sore gums after tooth whitening," she explains. "Many people who follow me use home whitening kits or the services of people who come to your house and whiten your teeth."

"Unfortunately, these individuals are not dental-trained professionals. There's little information about the products they are using or the protocols they follow. Often the barriers are not ideal and invariably



This image and opposite page: Dr Judson on the job. Right: A few of the influencer's favourite things.

there's some gum burning depending on the strength of the product used."

Even though Velvet Smile is very much in Dr Judson's voice, it's integrated with Smile Solutions. Dr Judson works with Smile Central which is the marketing arm of Smile Solutions. Many people are surprised at how much time effective social media can take.

"If you want to put a post out today, it actually takes quite some time to have the photo taken, to find the content, curate the content, then write the post," says Dr Judson.

"Working with Smile Central also means that I can access the skills of the different specialists we have at the clinic. This insures that any information is accurate and timely. It's also a great learning experience for me because I like to research what I post."

Making dentistry 'cool'

As Dr Judson shows, using an influencer will certainly get a practice's message to a younger demographic. Trying to use a 50-year-old expert in a white coat to impart knowledge is simply not going to work on social media and the message will be lost. When Dr Judson first started looking at Instagram pages of different dental clinics, the first thing she noticed was the similarity in practice colour schemes. They were predominately bright blue and yellow, and came across as "a bit daggy".

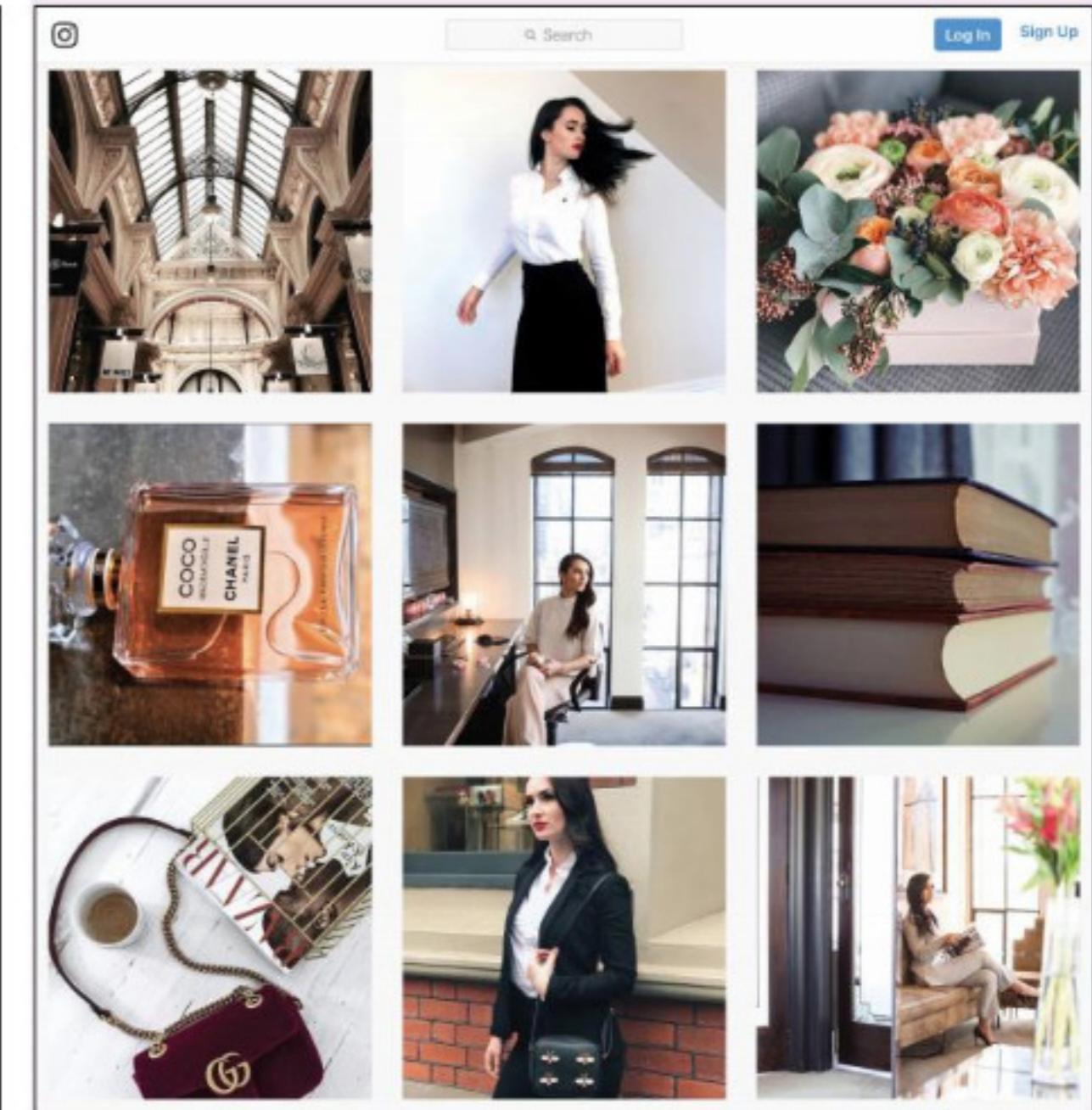
"I think people within my age

group don't really engage with classic content people post," says Dr Judson. "You need to do things in a way that gets onto their level and that's what I am trying to achieve with Velvet Smile. I try to make the information palatable so they actually listen to what I say. I want to refresh dentistry, make it cool and make it edible!"

A dental trend among many influencers is to have porcelain veneers placed, and the impact can be seen on their tens of thousands of followers. Young patients think veneers are nothing more than a fashion accessory. Influencers like Dr Judson are making them understand that the dentist will cut into a virgin tooth to fit those veneers. They need to know that the veneers may have to be replaced every 10 to 15 years and there's a lot of upkeep involved. At the end of the season, you can get rid of that Gucci bag but veneers are something that's with you for life.

"A lot of people message me or talk to me about their dental questions, hopes and aspirations," says Dr Judson. "It can be quite scary. Often, they don't have all the information they need to make a decision but they are planning on going ahead anyway.

"Hopefully, as the reach of Velvet Smile grows, these people will have a better understanding of what they are planning to do," says dentist and influencer. "And if more dental practices use the skills of influencers to assist people in making good dental decisions, all the better." **Bite**



FACE VALUE

Dr Amelia Judson's tips for growing your Instagram.

1. Do not buy followers or likes.

"It doesn't build credibility—it is actually more damaging to your brand and your practice's reputation. Prospective patients will be suspicious if your page has 10K followers but posts only get 13 likes. It looks very dodgy! And you don't want dodgy and dentist in the same sentence."

2. Engagement is key.

"The way that Instagram works is through an algorithm that is constantly changing. One thing that stays constant is that the algorithm favours posts that have a high level of likes and comments from real followers. You will gain far more meaningful reach through organic interaction compared to paid boosts on your posts."

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good subject matter, apps like VSCO cam that provide nice filters and, most importantly, good lighting—preferably natural lighting—to really elevate the photos you are posting."

4. Don't try and sell, sell, sell.

"There are so many sponsored posts out there, so if you just post the promotional material for your latest deal on Zoom whitening, your followers will think it's an ad and will not care! Instagram is not designed for aggressive marketing via a page and getting 'bums on the seats'—there are much better ways to market."

5. People are interested in what other people do behind closed doors. "Take *Humans of New York* for example—so let them in! If you have a clinic dog, people on Instagram *love* dogs—post little fluff in your waiting room in some loops. Let them get to know the incredible people in your team. Instagram is not just about attracting new patients but continuing to foster a relationship with your valued patients."