



A Successful Website
for Your Medical Practice
or Health-Related Business



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Preface

Physicians use the internet and social media more, on average, than most other professionals. About 80% of all the consumers who use the internet use it to look for information about health-related issues. These two facts mean that -- whether you are a dentist or optometrist in private practice, a medical supply retailer or wholesaler, a hospital, or a company offering health-related services such as weight loss or aesthetic treatments -- you must be online and looking good.

This ebook gives you a thorough, nontechnical, accessible introduction to what you need to know to have a successful website for your practice or your company in the 21st century.

Whether you decide to hire someone to provide web design and management services for you (in which case we at Haden Interactive would love to work with you), to hire someone in-house to take on these duties, or to implement the recommendations in this ebook by yourself, you will know what you need to know to make the best strategic decisions.

Before we jump in, let us tell you a little bit about Haden Interactive.

We are a web design and SEO firm working in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and in Kansas City, Missouri. Our location means that our overhead is lower than similar companies in larger cities, but it doesn't mean that we don't have access to the best talent. Over the years, our creative team have worked with organizations large and small in a number of different fields.

In many cases, our clients have been medical professionals or health-related businesses. We have worked with hospitals, physicians in private practice, healthcare pro-

professionals in dentistry, optometry, and physical therapy in the United States and the United Kingdom, manufacturers of and sellers of medical supplies in Asia and the U.S., insurance companies, medical transcription and billing services, and nonprofits in health and wellness.

We know how to make websites successful, and we know the special concerns of medical professionals and health-related businesses.

We're happy to share the knowledge we've gained over the years. If DIY isn't for you -- and it shouldn't be, because your time is simply too valuable -- then we'll be happy to build and manage the website you need for the results you want.

Please visit us at www.HadenInteractive.com to see more examples of our work.

Our team:

- Rebecca Haden, M.A., Creative Director: Rebecca has been writing for the web since 1998, and has been an SEO professional since 2006. Her degrees are in Linguistics and she has extensive experience in marketing and strategic communication. Featured in the Wall Street Journal in 2009, Rebecca has optimized websites and provided SEO strategy and content for clients on four continents. Before taking on the web, Rebecca was a writer and a teacher, and she still teaches writing at a local college. Rebecca is a frequent presenter at conferences and workshops.
- Rosamond Haden, C.O.O.: Rosamond worked in the corporate world before joining Haden Interactive as COO in 2010. Rosie's experience and training in management in the legal, retail, and healthcare fields give her special insight into the needs of clients in those fields. Rosie's skills also ensure that Haden Interactive projects are on time, on budget, and as described — every time.
- Tom Hapgood, MFA, Chief Designer: Tom holds degrees in journalism and fine arts and teaches Web Design, Motion Design and Typography at the University of Arkansas. Tom has designed websites for clients such as Marriott, MTV, American Bankers Association, Lifetime, Nickelodeon, Water Environment Foundation and Verizon. He led the interface team for the Pachyderm web-based presentation software. With a background in both fine arts and journalism, Tom has presented at conferences for College Art Association, Museums and the Web, New Media Consortium and Siggraph, as well as at WordCamp.
- Julianne Darnell, B.A., Accounts Director: Julianne comes to Haden Interactive with experience at the Chamber of Commerce, as an insurance adjuster for a major logistics company, and with over a decade as an entrepreneur. Her background gives her insight into the needs of our clients, and her communicative skills ensure that our web design and management aligns precisely with our clients' goals.
- Jeremy Bishop, Web Content Specialist: Jeremy is near graduation with a degree in Business and has worked for some years in electronics repair.
- Kim Herrington, Web Content Specialist, B.A.: Kim has degrees in English and French, and is an experienced blogger. Kim's background is in publishing and public works.



CHAPTER I

Begin with a professional website

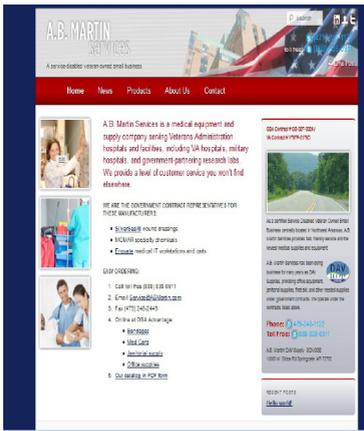
*“Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.”
--Arthur C. Clarke*

We used to try to help people succeed with home-made or generic stock websites. What we found was that they ended up investing time and money without seeing the results they needed. After years of working with all kinds of professionals and organizations, we can tell you that you won't get the results you want without a professionally designed and built website.

That doesn't mean that you must have the most expensive website. For the best results, make a list of the things you need in a website, and share this list with the designers or design firms you're thinking of hiring to build your website. Compare it with the feature lists of any stock or DIY options you're considering. Make sure that whoever or whatever you choose can accomplish everything on your list.

What are the characteristics of a successful, quality website?

- The design expresses your brand -- the look and feel of your practice or your company.
- The colors match the colors of your brand and your logo or other identifying visual elements are well integrated.
- The visual quality is high: this includes good typography, margins, and layout, correct punctuation and spelling, and quality photos or illustrations.



- The code is up to date, so the site looks good with different browsers and different devices. Good code can also make your website faster.

- The navigation, or movement through the website, is easy and organized. Visitors can tell right away what you have to offer, and can easily find the information they need.

- The content is well written, and captures the tone of your practice or company, whether that's playful or elegant.

These elements are essential for reinforcing the fact that your practice or company is trustworthy and up to date.

It's worth remembering that new clients and patients will often see your website before they meet you or see your building. Current patients and customers might be ready to overlook an outdated or unattractive website, but new patients and clients have no reason to do so. The average new web visitor spends just 5-12 seconds deciding whether to leave a web page or to stay and explore further. Much of their decision is based on the immediate visual appeal of your website.

EXAMPLE 1

a new website for a private practice

When we met Dr. M., he had a website that had been built about a decade previously. It was a plain white screen with his name in a green box, and a list of pages of information.

When Dr. M. built his first website, there was very little competition online and people had limited expectations about the web. Times have changed. We created a new website that included photos of the staff, the office, and the doctor. The colors and the design expressed the high energy of the office and the overall look and feel



showed the family-friendly nature of the practice.

A couple of years later, we updated Dr. M's site by converting it to the WordPress platform, which allows fast, efficient updates, and added a blog to provide more patient information. Dr. M. diverted some marketing funds he had been investing with the phone company toward professional blogging, social media management, and website maintenance. Traffic to his website from his service area doubled in one month.



Sell products

Websites give product information better than print. They can include videos, slideshows, lots of photos, and links to manuals or print documents to download. Of course, you can also take orders and accept payment online.



Tell stories

Share case studies, news, and other information online. There is literally no limit to how much information you can add to your website.

Multimedia increases your options.



Provide forms

Have forms for your patients to fill out, either as electronic forms or as PDFs to print and fill out. Either way, you get more accurate, timely information and the intake process is streamlined.

Websites need to be updated regularly. If you have not updated your website in several years, you should do so. It is a matter of changing technology, not of fashion: browsers change, the way people use the internet is evolving rapidly, and people's expectations change.

Your business needs can also change. It's possible that your website was just what you needed when it was first built, but that it no longer meets your needs.

EXAMPLE 2

the first website for a new insurance product

A major insurance company was planning a new product. They could have added the new product to the offerings on their main company homepage, but they realized that they needed to appeal to a different audience and to provide a different set of resources and services for the new audience.

We built a new website that had the look and feel they wanted, as

well as news feeds and opportunities for creating lots of new articles and informational pages.

In this case, the subject at hand is one in which there are frequent changes. The company knew that they could become a primary source for information on the topic, so they made the creation of strong content for their web visitors a priority.



Keeping up with changes in requirements and best practices is a challenge in this company's field. Helping visitors with that essential task adds value to the website and thus increases the company's value to their visitors.

Your practice or company may have other needs. Perhaps your patients would like to be able to book appointments online, to ask questions about insurance coverage, or to download forms.

Think about the visual appeal of your website, the message it conveys, and the services and resources it offers your patients or clients.

You can see that there are several different skills involved in building a website:

- Site architecture considers the way the different elements you want in your website are arranged. There are some standard kinds of site architecture, or you can choose a site you like and copy the way it is put together, or you can have a professional develop a strategy for you.
- Website design includes the graphic elements, the look and feel of the design, as well as color and typography. This is the artistic part of the design process. While you want a beautiful design, you should also insist on a having a highly usable design that will be visible for search engines.
- Coding refers to the actual construction of the website. There are enormous differences in skill level among people who say they build websites, from people who have read a book to professional web designers and developers. Ask for credentials before you make your choice, since -- while design is easy to see -- you won't usually see the code.
- Web content, the words and pictures you use on your site, is the most important element for search engines and for conversion. Many web design firms leave this up to you.

In addition to the website, you'll have to think about hosting -- that is, you'll have to pay for some space on a server where your website can live.

If you plan to use your website to send or collect patient information, you'll need a higher level of security for your website than the level needed for a typical business website. Be sure to discuss this special need with your web professionals.

Because of the range of skills required, it's often wisest to hire a web firm rather than hiring freelance workers or trying it yourself.

EXAMPLE 3

an updated website for a home medical supply company

Homefront is a company that provides oxygen, hospital beds, and similar home health care supplies for a wide range of clients in urban and rural areas.

They rely on referrals from hospitals, doctors, and insurance companies for their business, so a professional website is a must for them. At the same time, they also get calls from individuals needing their products, so they wanted a welcoming, reassuring website that would be easy to use for people who might be under stress.



The website we designed for them combines comforting colors and images with plenty of information so busy professionals can tell immediately that their company is the right choice.

The example sites in this chapter should make it clear that every practice and company has different needs and goals for a website.



Visual elements

Here are some of the visual elements to think about:

- logo
- colors
- photos
- layout
- typography



Roles and tasks

Fill out the Roles and Tasks worksheet on p. 22 This will provide useful guidelines for what your website will need to do and be. Here are some tips:

- Include both visitors and staff.
- Base your lists on observation.
- Brainstorm to add possible future needs.



Marketing message

Your website can help you grow or maintain your practice or sell your products. What do you want your visitors to do once they find your website?

- call
- email
- fill out a contact form
- buy products or book an appointment



Tone and voice

Should your website be fun and friendly, or professional and upscale? Do you want to provide lots of information for people seeking help with the services and products you provide, or to make it very easy for visitors to shop or to book an appointment? Are you selling products, offering a service, or just providing information?

The clearer you are about the effect you want your website to create, the more quickly and effectively your web team can create the website that works for you.

Action Steps

Begin by thinking about your visitors: current patients, clients, and customers as well as the new people who will find your website through search or by word of mouth. List the tasks you'd like them to be able to perform as your website, as well as the actions you want them to take from a marketing standpoint or from the point of view of streamlining your practice.

- Think about the look and feel you want at your website, the tone and message you want to convey. Find existing websites that have this style, or create a document that expresses the style you have in mind.
- Think about the way you welcome and process patients or clients. Create a document that shows the process, and how you want your website to fit into that process.
- Fill out the Roles and Tasks worksheet on page 22.
- Think about your unique selling proposition: what makes people choose you rather than a competitor. Write a sentence that expresses this.

Once you have determined exactly what you want your website to say for your practice or company, you are ready to have a website built.

Take the worksheets and documents you've created to the designer you've chosen and ask for a proposal or estimate. Your preparation will make the estimate more accurate.

If you currently have a website, use the documents you've created to analyze it and determine whether it meets your needs as it is, or not. If not, have it redesigned or rebuilt.

A good website is the centerpiece of all marketing efforts, and it can be the anchor of a terrific practice or business as well.

Roles and Tasks

1. Patients/Clients

(example: download information forms and check insurance coverage)

2. Staff/Team

(example: update event calendar monthly or send out weekly emails)

3. _____

CHAPTER II

Bringing visitors to your website

“Selling to people who actually want to hear from you is more effective than interrupting strangers who don’t.” -Seth Godin

It’s essential to have a good website, just as it’s essential to have a good practice or business, but you can’t expect people to know about your website just because it’s online. When you opened your practice or founded your company, you put up a sign, got a listing in the phone book (if it was a while back), maybe had a grand opening or ran ads to announce your new venture. You have to do much the same thing with a website.

There are five main sources of traffic to a website:

- direct
- referral
- search
- social
- campaign

8,676 people visited this site



12.43% Search Traffic

1,078 Visits

63.61% Referral Traffic

5,519 Visits

23.77% Direct Traffic

2,062 Visits

0.20% Campaigns

17 Visits

Traffic Sources

Each website has its own traffic source profile, but all sites should have a variety of sources.

2,387 people visited this site



59.95% Search Traffic

1,431 Visits

19.15% Referral Traffic

457 Visits

18.85% Direct Traffic

450 Visits

2.05% Campaigns

49 Visits

Let's look at each of these sources more closely. All of them are important, but they are all different. The method of increasing each one is different, and sometimes they provide different things to your business.

Direct traffic refers to people who come to your website by typing in your web address or by using a bookmark. These people may be current customers, they may have heard of you by word of mouth, or they may type in your web address after seeing it on your business card or other promotional piece.

Referral traffic is composed of people who have clicked a link to your website on some other website, or in an email. These links might be in lists compiled by a professional organization, in a blog or other website writing about your company or your website, or in an email sent by a current client or customer to a friend or colleague.

Search traffic is the people who find you by typing keywords (search queries) into a search engine such as Google. These may be current patients looking for your practice by name, they may be people looking for information about healthcare services and products, or they may be people looking for general information that happens to be on your website.

Social traffic comes from Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms. People may click through from links that you place there, or from links to your website shared by other people.

Campaigns are specific, measurable efforts you make to bring people to your website. This includes email marketing, QR codes you place in your office, or text campaigns. Campaigns are intentional marketing efforts designed to bring people to your website.

Clearly, each source of traffic can be increased by different methods. Direct traffic can be increased by telling your patients or clients to visit your website or adding your web address to your printed materials. Referral traffic can be increased by linkbuilding -- adding links to your website to other websites online, either by adding them directly to listings at places like Google Places or Angie's List, or by asking other webmasters for links.

Search traffic increases when search engines see your website as a valuable resource -- more valuable than the other websites competing with you or offering similar information. We'll discuss search engine optimization in the next chapter.

Social traffic increases when you engage effectively with people on social media platforms. You can also conduct search engine marketing campaigns, or SEM, which is the term used for paid ads on search engines such as Google. We'll discuss social traffic in a later chapter.

Campaign traffic increases when you conduct effective marketing campaigns that direct people to your website.

Simply increasing traffic to your website will generally help you reach your goals, as long as it is the right traffic. For example, if you serve a local community, traffic from people in other states is not useful. Traffic from people who are not likely patients or customers of yours, who are coming only for a giveaway you promoted on Facebook or a humorous video that went viral on YouTube, will probably not be profitable for your business. Don't seek traffic just for the sake of traffic.

The visitors you want are those who want what you have to offer: goods, services, and information.

Action Steps

Use analytics to determine what sources of traffic you currently have. Check conversion rates for the various traffic sources if you have the data. We'll discuss analytics further in a later chapter; right now, collect this data if you can.

- Identify the sources of traffic that are currently bringing people to your website. Determine what you have done or are doing that is successfully bringing traffic.
- Plan how you will do more of the things that are working. If you get traffic when you send out a newsletter, plan to send more newsletters. If social media brings you traffic, see how you can increase your involvement in social media.
- Identify the sources of traffic that are not currently working for you. For example, organic search should normally be your largest source of traffic. If it isn't, you need to make efforts to improve your website's rankings in search. Or perhaps you have little to no traffic from social media.
- Plan to increase at least one source of web traffic. Create a specific goal and strategy for doing so: not, "We'll get more referral traffic" but "We'll increase referral traffic by 4% over the next three months by requesting links from our vendors." Not, "We'll get more social traffic" but "We'll increase our social traffic by 10% this quarter by posting three times a day at Twitter."
- If you can measure conversion at your website, check your conversion rate. Calculate the benefit to your company of increasing either your traffic or your conversion rate. If you need assistance in order to be able to do this, get that assistance.

CHAPTER III

Getting found

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is widely misunderstood. It really comes down to good communication with search engines. Modern search engines exist to help people find what they need. This is good for you; as we said before, traffic that comes to your website because they want what you have there is the right traffic to move you toward your goals.

To understand SEO, you need to understand some things about search engines.

First, a search engine is the piece of software that looks for stuff. The major search engines, Google and Bing, are the ones we all know about, but every search box has a search engine behind it. If you have a search box on your page, that's a search engine. If you look things up on Facebook or at an e-commerce site, you're using a search engine.

The simplest search engine just looks for matches for the string of symbols you type in. You type in "mare," and it gives you everything it has using the word "mare" — plus "amaretto," "nightmare," Mare Crisium on the moon, and so forth.

We could help them out by saying things like "+mare -nightmare" or "mare OR horse," but getting exactly what we want from a very simple search engine requires skill and can be frustrating. Companies like Google noticed the disadvantages of these search engines and began improving search engines by making them smarter. By now, they know that a mare is a kind of horse and will avoid giving you stuff about the moon if they can tell you're looking for stuff about horses.

We can't assume that the search engine will get that "My favorite Palomino temptress" is a horse. That really requires a human level of understanding of English (as of this writing). Even smart search engines are not as smart as people.

We tend to see two kinds of errors when people write web content:

- They write for dumb search engines, coming up with sentences like, "Tampa Horse Stables will meet all your Tampa Horse Stable needs for horses and stables in Tampa." This leads to bad content which modern search engines won't offer to readers.
- They write for people, entirely forgetting about the search engines, and use phrases like "excellent mount." This confuses search engines, preventing them from offering the content to the right people.

Modern search engines use algorithms to determine which of all the websites online is the most likely to meet the needs of the person who typed in a query.

When search engines first got smart enough to do this, they relied on things like the number of times the words were in the article, or whether they were in the title.

Now, they use more sophisticated methods. Continuing to write for dumb search engines is seen by smart engines as attempting to game the system, and of course it can lead to poor quality content from the point of view of human readers.

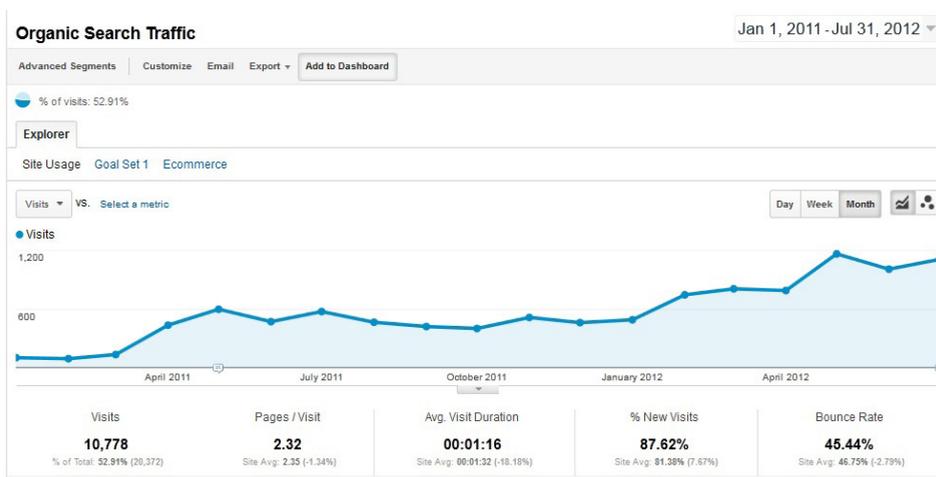
Work with the search engines, not against them, and you'll see your search traffic increase over time, as in the chart below.

Generally speaking, writing plenty of good content that will be useful or entertaining to your visitors -- while remembering that search engines are not as good with language as humans -- will result in good SEO. That's just not as easy as it sounds.

Your first goal should be to add good content to your website. A blog or a series of good articles and pages will draw the attention of search engines, add to the value of your website, and showcase your expertise.

Once you have plenty of strong content on your website, you should consider adding good content at other high value websites with links back to your own site. This might mean guest blogging, writing articles for online magazines, or creating good original content at Google+, YouTube, and other strong social media platforms.

High quality links to your website are a vote of confidence, from the point of view of the search engines. This is one of the most important factors -- right after the quality of your website -- in determining the rank of your site.



L

Some specific things will get in the way of having your website chosen by search engines as the best option for people searching for the goods and services you offer. Avoiding these errors will go a long way toward improving your rankings with search engines.

- **Too little content** Search engines need hundreds of words, not dozens, to get a clear idea of what your website offers. Remember, search engines can't read pictures or watch videos, so you need plenty of words.
- **Duplicate content** Having the same text on your website that is found on other websites, or the same text on more than one page at your website. This can be the result of copying and pasting others' articles, or of using a template site that already contains text.
- **“Keyword stuffing”** The practice of using main keywords to an unnatural degree is called “keyword stuffing,” because you're stuffing your page full of specific words. This leads to poor content and is heavily penalized.
- **Poor grammar, spelling, or punctuation**, because these are characteristic of spam or robot-generated websites
- **A “top-heavy” site** A website with lots of ads above the fold, or anything else that interferes with finding the actual content of the site, is considered poor quality.
- **Flash, iframes**, and other technologies that aren't easily crawled by search engines will prevent the search engines from “getting” your website.
- **Cheating** Anything that looks like an attempt to game the system will (now or in the future) be penalized by the search engines.

Action Steps

Make your website as good as it can possibly be, and you'll have a lot of SEO needs covered.

Refuse to be tempted by old-style "SEO tricks," and you'll be good for a lot more.

- With this in mind, check your website content to make sure that it communicates clearly with search engines and with people, at the same time.
- If you currently have a website and you have analytics or webmaster tools installed, check to see the keywords that usually bring people to your website. Are they the right ones, or does it look as though your visitors are looking for things you don't have to offer them?
- Use Google's Adwords Keyword Suggestion Tool to make sure that search engines can understand your website. Copy and paste your URL into the search box and see whether the keywords that are suggested are good choices for your practice or business.
- Use the tool to test some keywords that you think might be good choices for your website. Look for terms that have plenty of visits and not too much competition. Then list longer phrases that you find in your analytics, or which you think would work well for you. Share these with your web pros.

CHAPTER IV

The value of blogging

"Web marketing is about delivering useful content at just the precise moment that a buyer needs it." --David Meerman Scott

A blog is one of the most valuable things you can add to your website, from the point of view of SEO and online marketing.

Regular, original, quality blogging can do a lot for your website:

- Increase authority.
- Increase your website's value to your visitors.
- Bring search engines to your website.
- Help rank for more different keywords.
- Bring traffic.
- Improve rankings for primary keywords.
- Increase engagement.

We know that it's hard to find the time to blog. But can you afford not to have a blog at your company website? Check some recent research on blogging:

- 81% of companies with blogs say it's important for business.
- Businesses with larger websites get up to 600% more leads.
- Companies that blog get 55% more web traffic.
- The #1 reason for blogging? It's "valuable for promoting my business."

These results don't come from a few blog posts or an occasional blog post. They come from regular blogging over the long term. The best time to start your company blog? Years ago. The next best time? Now.

For a medical practice, blogging has value beyond anything it accomplishes in the way of marketing. 80% of internet users look for medical information at some point, and you know from your own experience how many patients walk into your office with information they've gleaned from a website.

Imagine if they got that information from *your* website. Not only would you spend less time debunking errors, but you would also be able to provide exactly the information you want your patients to have.

Imagine pulling up a web page on your tablet to show a patient just how the surgery you're discussing works, or to clarify the symptoms you're asking your patient to watch for. Think about answering most email questions with a link to the page at your website.

Anything that you often need to explain can be explained thoroughly with pictures and videos as needed at your blog. You have instant access any time, any place with an internet connection, and so do your patients.

Your patients will feel that your blog is an additional way that you meet their needs, an extension of your service to them.

So how can you get all these benefits? Regular blog posts two to five times a week have been shown to provide the best results.

If you enjoy writing and have the time, you can certainly write your own blog. However, there's no reason that you should feel that you have to do it yourself. Professional bloggers can produce high quality content on a regular schedule, and the return on investment is significant.

What should you blog about? Here are some failsafe options:

- Questions customers, patients, and clients ask you.
- Things people wonder about during the purchase process. Write for people looking for anything new in wound care as well as those looking for the best deal on silver bandages.
- Things that let you show off. Have you won an award? Are you an expert on something? Blog about those things.
- Objections people have. When you ignore concerns, they don't go away — you just don't have a chance to respond to them.

Focus in on narrow topics when you write your blog. People searching for information online don't usually want a broad overview of a subject (Wikipedia gives them that). They want answers to the specific questions and concern they have right now.

And of course, be sure to proofread. Errors in spelling and grammar make people (and search engines) trust you less.

Healthcare professionals often worry about the possible dangers of blogging. This is a valid concern, but it doesn't have to get in the way of your blog.

There's a difference, legally speaking and in daily life, between consultation and education.

- Your website can share information, backed with sources and research references if that works with your style, with complete confidence. You might want to avoid sweeping subjective statements like, "Surgery is never/always the best option."
- Your website can present facts in a neutral way. You can, for example, say that "eating healthy foods such as fish and green vegetables has been shown to correlate with general eye health." You might not want to say, "Marigold essence tablets are the vision-restoring miracle of the future!"
- You can make sure to have a statement somewhere on your website saying that your posts or papers are offered "for informational purposes" and encouraging readers to meet with their doctor, lawyer, financial adviser, etc. to determine the best option for their particular circumstances.

Here's the bottom line: don't make diagnoses online. Do have a disclaimer on your website. And do respond to comments asking for specific medical advice for a specific individual with, "Please make an appointment so we can discuss your situation thoroughly."

Action Steps

- Set up a blog at your website.
- Determine who will write the blog. Consider hiring a blogger if you do not have a writer on staff.
- Decide on a posting schedule, based on your resources. Remember that 2-5 times a week gets the best results.
- Decide whether you will use pictures as well as text. If you plan to use pictures, choose a consistent style. You may need to buy pictures; remember copyright restrictions and be sure that you have the right to use any images you choose.
- Use the Blog Brainstorming sheet on p. 42 to begin thinking of topics.
- Make a calendar or list of topics to cover, balancing promotional topics with informational topics. We go for 80% informational and 20% promotional.
- Post according to the planned schedule.
- Share your blog posts by linking to them in social media and using them in newsletters or email campaigns.



Blog Brainstorming

1. Questions Patients/Clients Ask

(example: benefits of certain treatments or possible side effects)

2. Explanations Staff/Team Often Need to Give

(example: insurance information or schedules)

3. _____

CHAPTER V

Using social media to your advantage

Social media has become the new word of mouth.

The average American now spends over three hours a day interacting with social media. We use it to keep up with friends, for professional development, and to get advice and information.

Participating in social media can also increase your online visibility and authority, bring more traffic to your website, and help you develop connections with patients and customers (or potential patients and customers).

We see two problems in social media among medical professionals:

- People confuse social media marketing with advertising. If you talk about yourself all the time, and all your posts sound like ads, people will not follow you or pay attention to you.
- People confuse social media marketing with recreation. Playing angry birds with your patients usually won't get results.

In short, you have to consider your goals and the goals of your target market.

Start with your goals. Use our Social Media Plan Sheet (p.50) to clarify your goals and decide how you will measure your results. Simply increasing followers or getting more “likes” may not be the right metric for your goals.

The Journal of Medical Internet Research recently reported that 85% of oncologists and primary care physicians use social media at least once a week; 60% said that social media improved their patient care. You're probably already using social media.

The question, then, is not how to use social media, but how to use it effectively to grow or maintain your practice and to improve customer service.

That means that in addition to your own goals, you need to consider your patients' goals.

Broadly speaking, people look to the internet for information, entertainment, and connection. Once you establish that connection with a social media community by offering that information and entertainment, the members of that community will be willing to pay attention to messages about you.

Keep the Pareto Principle (you may call it the 80-20 Principle) in mind, and let 80% of what you post on social media platforms be directed toward your readers' goals.

For example, Google Trends tells us that a lot of people are looking for information on weight loss, back pain, and antioxidant foods -- among thousands of other health-related topics. Can you share some useful information on a topic your target market cares about? Can you link to a great article, share a photo, or post a surprising fact on the subject?

If you can't, or don't have the time to, hire someone who can. When you have several good posts a day on a regular basis, you can post a special offer or invitation a few times a week without driving away customers.

Social media can be combined effectively with blogging, the original social media platform, and email campaigns, for highly

effective marketing and communication.

Here's an example:

A plastic surgeon plans a special offer for holiday giving: gift certificates in several dollar amounts at a discount during the month of December.

- She writes a blog post suggesting that plastic surgery makes a good gift.
- She tweets her blog post and posts it at Facebook, LinkedIn, and Google+, using introductory text designed to appeal to the audiences she has at each platform.
- She responds to comments in thoughtful ways, encouraging a conversation.
- She writes a follow up blog post describing case studies: the husband who gives his wife a certificate for a procedure she has been wanting for years; the woman who gives a friend a gift card for the pampering med-spa treatments she gets for herself.
- She tweets and posts this blog post as well.
- She tweets and posts that she's getting ready to send out a newsletter with a special offer for gift certificates, linking to a sign-up page and inviting readers to join her mailing list.
- She sends out the newsletter, linking back to the blog articles.
- She tweets and posts the newsletter.
- She tweets and posts the special offer once a week during December.
- Meanwhile, she continues her usual schedule of helpful, non-promotional tweets and posts.

In this case, an attention-grabbing and possibly controversial idea will probably give some traction to the campaign. The doctor ends up with a larger newsletter mailing list and new followers as well as more sales of gift certificates.

Other campaigns that can have great results:

- A food drive for the community, a coat drive, a fun run, or other fundraising events.
- A brown-bag symposium series on prenatal care, the latest diet craze, or other topics of interest to your audience.
- A series of tips, some but not all of which involve your products and services.
- A “Meet the Staff” series with fun and interesting introductions to your staff. This kind of series has to be entertaining and to provide connections, since the chances are good that few of your patients have really been thinking about your staff already.

Plan social media marketing campaigns as you would any marketing campaign. However, be sure to provide the steady, customer-centered social media presence throughout. If you show up only for marketing campaigns, you will lose trust.

Action Steps

- Determine which social media platforms are most used by your target audience.
- Set up profiles at those platforms.
- Determine who will manage your social media; consider using collaborative tools.
- Post daily, following the 80/20 rule.

CHAPTER VI

Measure only what you want to improve

You have your website built and you have plans in place to create plenty of good content for your visitors, using your blog, social media, and email marketing to deliver useful and entertaining information on a regular basis.

How will you know whether you're succeeding?

Online marketing is not magic. You can't expect instant results, but you can expect excellent results over time.

Some of the results you can measure:

- Traffic to your website is one of the easiest things to measure.
- Conversion measurement requires setting up goals at the website to measure behaviors at your website.
- You can also measure conversions in your practice or your business, using a unique phone number or online coupon.
- Sales and appointment bookings online are directly measurable. So are newsletter sign-ups and landing page opt-ins.
- Patient or customer satisfaction may increase as a result of online efforts. Testing this may require customer satisfaction surveys.

You need to measure your traffic and your conversions, and you need to measure them in a way that allows you to determine which actions are being most effective.

With Google Analytics, a free web analytics program, you can tell where your online visitors find you, what they do once they reach your website, and when they leave. You can, if you set up online goals, determine which kinds of visitors are most likely to convert. You can also see the physical locations of visitors, the kinds of devices they use to visit you (smartphones, for example), and a range of other data that is not available to you with traditional advertising.

There are a number of other analytics packages. Most of the other options are paid, but they may offer additional information, including competitor data.

John Wanamaker famously said that he knew that half of his marketing dollars were wasted -- he just didn't know which half. With web analytics (either free or paid), you can see things like this:

- Visitors coming via phone company ads are just as likely to be from a city 100 miles away as from your service area.
- Visitors from Facebook convert less often than those coming through search engines.
- Pinterest brings more traffic than Twitter, but Twitter drives more newsletter sign-ups

Once you know for sure what's working well, do more of what works well and less of what doesn't.

Gallery



Older posts

Kids' Day at Family Chiropractic Center

Posted on November 8, 2012



November Kids' Day is coming up!

All children of Dr. Mysyka's established patients receive chiropractic care the first Tuesday of each month until they turn 16. Because of election day, we moved the November Kids' Day to November 13th, the second Tuesday.

Established patients must call for an appointment for Kids' Day. Don't delay — call now!

Posted in [health](#) | [Leave a comment](#) |

Cranberries for Health

Posted on November 8, 2012



Cranberries are plentiful in the grocery store right now, and they're always great for your health.

Cranberries are important antioxidants. Just as exposure to oxygen can cause rust on metal and white "bloom" on plant foods from carrots to chocolate, oxidation in our cells is part of the aging process. Antioxidants help to shield us from "oxidative stress" and keep our cells in better condition.

Cranberries have lots of phenolic phytochemicals, which are

A doctor's blog

This blog offers information about general health concerns, reports on relevant research, and provides information about the doctor's practice.

The website



A private practice

This doctor's online presence includes a strong website, a blog which is updated twice a week, and social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.

Office staff can update this WordPress website themselves. The website is an important part of this doctor's strategy to maintain and grow his practice, but it is also an important resource for his patients.

The doctor's blog is integrated into his website and maintains the same look and feel. The website includes office hours, testimonials, insurance information, photos of the clinic and of the staff, "Before your visit" information and forms to download, information about the doctor's background, and much more.



Custom design

The site owner knows his clientele well, and the site is designed to appeal to that particular market.

Visual identity



A medical supply site

This company supplies Veterans Administration hospitals with medical supplies. They wanted a simple website focusing on the innovative products they carry.

Their website is very user-friendly and targeted very specifically to their niche market.

Print and web materials are all designed to complement one another.

The company's website, business cards, print ads, and all their other visual identity pieces are all designed to complement one another.

This provides a uniform, consistent effect that makes the company look reliable and trustworthy.



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Media tie-ins

The site has special features that allow the company to make the most of a range of social media and press options.

Landing pages



An insurance website

A specialized product called for a specialized website. The marketing plan focused on plenty of useful content for the target market, so the design of the website incorporates news feeds, articles, and social media feeds.

The site is intended to provide a service for clients as well as an important tool for lead generation and for the company's salesforce.

In addition to the pages in the main navigation, the website also contains specialized landing pages for ads and other sales efforts. Since the company has more than one potential audience, custom sales pages are handy.

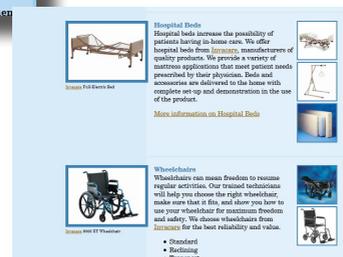


A medical supply company
 This home medical supply company needed a website with plenty of information for doctors, hospitals, insurance companies, and patients.
 The photo-based navigation makes it easy for visitors to find their way around the website.

Click on a photo...

Clear, colorful images of the home health care products in use by happy people create a positive, reassuring feel for this website.

...get more info fast



Images from the manufacturers' library give plenty of detail, and there are also links to the manufacturers' website.

Plenty of information on specific products makes the website a helpful first step for visitors, who will usually call or visit the brick and mortar store to arrange for the supplies they need.

Having photos and links allows the store, which is in a small space but which offers home delivery and installation of supplies and equipment, to keep inventory limited without losing sales.



Interior pages

A website can include unlimited amounts of additional information, saving the busy practitioner time by providing initial data patients want.

Streamline intake



A useful tool

This company is not tech-minded, and they don't use social media, blogs, or any dynamic content at their website.

Nonetheless, having an attractive, professionally designed website supports their business in many ways, making their jobs easier.

One of the most helpful things about having a website is that you can provide forms for patients to fill out before they come, maps, directions, insurance information, and other first-visit help.

Patients feel more confident and the check-in process is streamlined.

A strong web presence allows your practice to stand out from the rest.

Haden Interactive helps you make it happen.

A row of glass vials with blue caps, one containing blue liquid. The vials are arranged in a line, receding into the background. The one in the foreground is filled with a vibrant blue liquid, while the others contain clear liquid. The background is a soft, light blue gradient.

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