

# DEVELOPING A WEB SITE

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In my article last month discussing practice management strategies to successfully overcome difficult economic times, I strongly advocated that doctors develop a well thought out marketing plan using the Internet. I have been on this bandwagon with my clients for probably the last two years. What is amazing to me is how quickly Internet marketing has changed over this time – almost on a monthly basis. So more than ever, every dental practice needs to get into the game right now with the creation – at the bare minimum – of a practice Web site which in essence becomes your online brochure. Described differently, this becomes your new Yellow Pages ad for the twenty-first century.

In the above referenced article, I mentioned three companies that my clients have used that do nothing but design dental practice Web sites. Those mentioned were [TNT Dental](#), Page1 Solutions, and PBHS. I also had a client recently use TeleVox and the results were fabulous. Two more excellent cutting-edge companies are Roadside Multimedia and Veneer Video. There are probably many more that you could find ... by doing what? – searching online, of course (how to prove a point!).

I suggest that you spend an hour or two researching these companies online and looking at their sample sites. The time will be well spent. You can get a flavor for what is appealing and what is not. Some sites are too simple while some appear over the top. Some may seem too gimmicky, but eventually you are going to find something that you like and relate to professionally.

I would strongly advocate hiring a company that designs these kinds of sites all the time rather than “farming” the project out to a family member or friend who “designs” Web sites. Based on my experience, I can almost guarantee that you will not be pleased. Usually you – the doctor – are going to spend much more of your precious time rewriting and managing the design of the site. Also, there is a real skill to the html computer language that is “behind” the site and does not appear to your eye. These professional companies understand this process, and their sites are consistently easier to position on the first page of an Internet search.

Let me be clear: the planning and creation of a site is going to be time consuming no matter who helps you. You can also expect to spend anywhere between \$1,000 and \$20,000 depending on the complexity and innovation of the site. So better to work with a company with lots of experience as to where the typical roadblocks occur.

The site should be very easy to navigate. Try to make a great first impression with your home page (much more on this to follow). Every other page on the site should only deal with ONE topic, such as financial policy, customer service, whitening, implants, etc. – don't combine. When a prospective patient finds your site, the research shows that they may only spend 10 to 15 seconds there UNLESS they find what they are specifically searching for.

You will need to name your site and reserve and protect that name by giving it what is called a URL (Web address). This is very inexpensive – the cost is about \$30 per year (two-year minimum) from register.com. Then you also need a company to host your site up in cyberspace. Companies that design dental Web sites usually provide these hosting services either as part of the Web site design fee, or for a minimal monthly charge.

There are two other major pieces to the puzzle of Internet marketing. The first is being able to position your Web site so that prospective patients can locate it when they are doing an Internet search. The second – and this is probably the most difficult – is to make your site so appealing or different that it motivates a patient to call your office (or at least request information) after they have visited the site. Check out this newsletter next month for my ideas based on client experience on both of these rapidly changing topics in order to maximize your return on investment.

### **Mayer A. Levitt DMD, FAGD**

*Dr. Levitt has been a great friend of The Madow Group for many years, and is one of the best resources for practice management efficiency tips in dentistry. Dr. Levitt also trains successful dentists who are at, or near the end of their clinical careers to become consultants in their area of the country. Dr. Levitt is the president of Jodena Consulting, offering personalized business and practice management advice to the dental profession since 1989. For more information, call (401) 421-3615, email [jodena@cox.net](mailto:jodena@cox.net), or visit [www.jodena.com](http://www.jodena.com)*