

Feeding the Advertising Engine of Success

By Richard Silverstein, DPM



Dr. Richard Silverstein

It was the year 2000 and I had just finished my surgical training and was gearing up to tackle the process of starting my professional career. Nothing in podiatry school or residency could prepare me for the adventure which was about to begin. So many options, so many decisions, and no one to guide the process. No daily e-mail blogs or internet resources that we have become all too familiar with when looking for the guidance of someone who has been there or someone who has done that.

Coming out of residency there were many challenges that were all equally important but had to be prioritized in order to methodically develop a plan. Fortunately, I was looking to work in the same city I trained, so there were many attendings that I would now call colleague, who to this day I regard as mentors, helping me navigate from resident to practicing physician.

I was married with a young family so I wanted to hit the ground running with bills to pay and a career to begin. Another main focus was to begin the process of becoming board certified. This was always being worked on and planned for in the background, an obvious necessity to obtain and maintain local hospital privileges.

To start, I worked part-time in one of my attending's office to have some revenue coming in. I also worked part-time rendering podiatric services to assisted-living facilities for another colleague. This was a start that helped me stay afloat while trying to look for my own practice. The benefit of this arrangement was steady income without having to look for patients. The patients would be fed to me. No cares other than showing up to work, doing a great job and getting paid. No overhead expenses or staff issues, but also no job security. You don't realize it at the time, but these are the baby steps of progress and learning.

About 50 minutes outside the city of Baltimore, I developed a friendship with a podiatrist who wanted to retire. He had an outstanding reputation in the community and was looking to sell his practice, as he was in his mid-70's. It was the perfect fit! He had built a very busy full-time practice for over 45 years, but had let it dwindle down to two days a week. On a Friday in the late summer of that same year, he worked his last day and ended a 45-year career. That next Monday, I took over.

A simple letter had been sent to all of his current patients detailing the new transition and briefly introduc-

ing me to the community. My "office" was two rooms rented out of a local dentist's office while sharing the waiting room. My "office staff" was a kind, middle-aged woman who was my only link to knowing the particulars of the practice and the patients. As I recall, her first words to me were, "Please let me know if I should look for work elsewhere." My response was, "You aren't going anywhere, I need you!" We primarily used one room to see patients and the other was my personal office where I would chart using a primitive EMR. Billing was to be done by me as well, after much instruction by my predecessor.

Marketing Without Accountability

With all of this on my plate, I quickly decided to continue with the local yellow page ad which my predecessor had run for years. As I recall, it was no bigger than

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a credit card-size ad which now had my name, address, and phone number, and listed 4 or 5 of the services that I provided. No web page or router number to measure the effectiveness of this type of marketing campaign. In the year 2000, there were very few options for bringing in new patients to the practice other than by word of mouth, local foot screenings or other "dining with doc" luncheons sponsored by the local hospital. The benefit of having a part-time practice is plenty of time to schedule these types of events.

As the years went by through the early 2000's I became busier and busier and with a lot of hard work and effort my schedule started to fill up. Each year, I increased the size of my ad in the local Yellow Pages to the point where I was buying a half-page, which cost me hundreds of dollars each month while also requiring me to commit for a full year. It was a huge commitment to sign these annual contracts. When I look back on it now it really is crazy to think of all the money that was spent on an advertising campaign in which it was difficult at best to determine return on investment.

Today that would never be an acceptable plan because with the advent of business web pages and

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Success *(continued)*

online advertising campaigns we have something we never had before—accountability through software analytics. As much or as little accountability as you could want. For me it was about the former. Part of the fun of running a business is making decisions that will

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either help or hurt you. Carefully weighing the options based on a risk/benefit analysis and writing out a plan and sticking to it, with course corrections along the way to ensure success.

Right about this time, I also spent a few thousand dollars to develop a web page. It was very primitive and, by today's standards, not very functional. No ability to download new patient forms, review online testimonials, or watch videos of services rendered. There was also no way for me to evaluate how many people were finding my web page.

What I was trying to do was cover all bases. With

the phone book ad campaign I was taking care of the “advertising” component. The web page was part of my “branding” component. There was no cohesiveness to this plan and these two entities did not work with each other, they worked independently and without any real accountability. I needed an expert to put the pieces of this puzzle together and to build a machine that would run and generate new patient referrals while allowing me to do what I have been trained to do: be the doctor.

The tipping point for me was when I had signed up for an online advertising campaign through the company that printed my yellow page ad. This company was a huge national advertising firm and I felt like a very small fish in the vast ocean of the advertising world. Every month I had a brief phone call with a different representative and each time (and most times) they did not even know what a podiatrist did. Although some new patients were coming in, I felt the relationship with this company was doomed. If they didn't know what I did as a professional, how would they adapt to the ever-changing market and meet my needs? When the contract was up, I decided to find another marketing agency.

Right about this same time the design platform governing web sites was changing and the web site I had was no longer functional for use with cell phones. With current data supporting the idea that more and more people were using their cell phones for internet searches, it was imperative for my web site to be visible and functional, on any type of platform.

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Podiatry Content Connection: “Be Visible, Connect and Gain New Patients Online”

Podiatry Content Connection offers a powerful program, designed specifically for podiatrists, to attract new patients, remain viable in a competitive field, and do it all in a time-and-cost-effective manner.

From designing a mobile-responsive website, to getting on the first page of Google, boosting your reputation, being in 70+ directories, to social media, PCC experts can do it all for you. At the very heart of our PCC strategy is Quality Online Content—a fresh and useful blog, and a companion article, every week (twice as much content as other companies). Properly curated online content is the best way to reach and serve

patients who are searching online for answers to their foot and ankle problems.

PCC is a “Podiatry Only” company, offers buyer protection in writing, and sustains an amazing 96% client retention rate as average ROI rates are 8-10x investment. PCC donates a percentage of its revenue each month to various colleges (TUSPM, KSUCPM, etc.) to support industry alumni and scholarships.

For a Free 2019 Practice Acceleration Session, call or text Randy Rosler at 917-572-5088 to set up an appointment. PCC is the complete online marketing solution. Attracting a steady flow of new patients is vital to the future health of every podiatry practice. •

Success *(continued)*

Full-Service, Podiatry Only

While at a podiatry conference in New Jersey, I ate lunch with a gentleman from **Podiatry Content Connection**. The appealing aspect of this company amongst the 2 or 3 other ones represented there was the fact that it was a “podiatry only” marketing agency. The only clients they take on are podiatrists. How unique!

Now my first thought was, they are too focused and/or small to be able to effectively help my practice, but having come from a large firm, with less than personal service, it became clear to me that “podiatry only” is exactly what I wanted and needed. After doing my due diligence and speaking with several of their clients and looking into other companies, I signed up for a one-year contract. I have to say it was the best decision I made.

“Podiatry only” means they know the ins and outs of our profession. They know what plantar fasciitis is as well as onychomycosis. They know what we do and know the appropriate questions to ask when doing the initial screening and set up. I was sold, especially on a program they offered called “*Dominate 365*.”

This program, aptly named, is a powerful, full-service program for podiatrists who are interested in being a leading provider in their local community. The custom-built website acts as a hub to its other parts of the program, including:

- Directory Optimization
- SEO
- Google Adwords campaigns
- Facebook Advertising campaigns
- Weekly blogs and articles
- Internal marketing (powered by AI software)
- Social Media (weekly blogging)
- Reputation Management
- Educational podiatric video library
- Monthly review calls with a senior level marketing manager

The first order of business was to redesign my website. After initial conversations, a unique and personalized website was constructed. I was able to fully critique it, make suggestions about color and design, and after multiple revisions, we were done. They were very competitively priced and I was not up-charged or nicked and dimed for anything. They understood that my satisfaction was very important and I wanted to be a part of the process. Think of your web page as a painting that is never quite finished. It can always be worked on, updating newer services offered while removing older ones that are outdated.

An Effective Campaign

At this same time, my Yellow Pages ad campaign was ending and I decided to downsize it and shift the

monthly savings into an internet Google Ads campaign with Podiatry Content Connection. This was an extremely effective campaign that directed people to my web page based on internet search terms related to the foot and ankle needs of the community. PCC was well adept at setting this up and explaining the process to me. They also helped direct the posting of many patient testimonials on my website and to the online review sites that are pivotal in maintaining your online reputation and relevance.

Every year, I continued to increase the amount of money I was spending on the Google adwords campaign while also shrinking the size of my Yellow Page ad. I was basically shifting this resource from one area to the other. At any time, I can go on my cell phone and see how many people have clicked onto

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my website. A router number ensures that my front staff knows from the caller ID that incoming calls are being directed from the webpage. It is all very logical and it works. There is nothing I need to do during the week to allow this engine to turn and move me forward. This is very empowering, being able to see the effectiveness of the money I am spending. This is the accountability I alluded to earlier. I am up-to-date with the technology and once a month, every month, I have a prearranged phone call with my personal account representative who goes over my account and shows where my practice ranks in terms of searches and online presence.

Fast forward to today, almost 19 years after I started private practice. I look back and am amazed at how things have changed. I am comfortable knowing I have a podiatry-specific marketing agency, Podiatry Content Connection, behind me to ensure my practice is healthy and relevant. They take care of everything and if there is ever a problem or if I want to update my website, I have only one phone call to make. *Click here for more information.*

Dr. Silverstein graduated from the William M. Scholl College of Podiatric and completed his surgical residency training at Sinai Hospital of Baltimore. He is Division Head of the Podiatry Section in the Department of Surgery, University of Maryland, Harford Memorial Hospital in Havre de Grace, MD. He is a consultant for Erchonia Corporation, Podiatry Content Connection, and Akina Pharmaceuticals. email ersilver1@aol.com
