



Making Your Podiatric Practice Website a Supercharged Marketing Tool

Your website has the capacity to be your hardest-working employee.

BY MARK TERRY

It's safe to say that every podiatric medical practice needs a website. In the year 2021, for certain, a website is a basic and straightforward advertisement, the modern equivalent of a Yellow Pages ad (remember them?).

If a static website is all you want or think you need, that's fine, but that makes it an extremely underutilized part of your practice's marketing campaign. Let's take a look at how a website can supercharge your practice's marketing efforts.

Back to Basics

Although people "of a certain age" may remember a world without websites, there's now an entire generation that has grown up with them. So perhaps there are people who aren't familiar with just how bad some of those early websites were, before a sort of "best practices" evolved. Although most of the early issues with slow downloads caused by flashier websites are gone, there's still a fair amount of poorly designed websites out there, mostly because they forget what they're trying to accomplish. For a physician website, there are a number of key elements.

1) **Build credibility and set the tone.** Your website may be the first encounter a patient has with you and your practice. You really want it to reflect

your professionalism, but also the tone of your practice—warm and welcoming.

But in terms of credibility, common information includes physician bios, educational information, certifications and accreditations, and membership and leadership positions in respected

associations. You can also include press releases, any news of local or national awards, even patient testimonials. Note that this is only part of your website, and it may not be the most important.

2) **Mobile friendly.** Lorcan O'Donaile, DPM, of Achilles Foot Clinic in Ballincollig, Ireland, says, "Your website should be mobile friendly. Between 80% and 90%—and it's climbing consistently—of your people who are searching for local services, including your podiatry practice, are doing so on their smartphones. So your website needs to be smartphone-optimized.

19 out of 20 people who visit your website are not ready to make an appointment. They leave the site and go elsewhere or don't get treatment early enough or at all.

3) **Easy-to-use with easy-to-find information.** Another way of putting it, O'Donaile points out, is "easily navigable." For example, it should be very easy for potential patients to figure out how to contact you on the website—with a clear and obvious phone number that is clickable. It should also make your address and a map obvious. They will also want to know your prac-

4) **What you can do for them.** As mentioned earlier, there is a tendency for physician websites to focus on the physician and their credentials. But do patients care? Well, yes, of course they do. O'Donaile says, "As a customer, you look at a website and you're just not sure what they can do for you or if this is something that can solve the issue you're looking for. It seems obvious, but it's quite common." So, in addition to physician credentials, make sure your site describes your practice and its focus.

Continued on page 88

Supercharged Website (from page 87)

5) **The kind of patients you want.** Rem Jackson, CEO/Owner of Top Practices, says, “Don’t put content on your site for the types of cases you don’t want. If you don’t want to do wound care, don’t have informational content and videos about wounds.”

6) **Connect to your patient portal.** Just as you should make it easy for patients to contact you via phone or email and have a map to your practice, you want to make it as easy as possible for patients to make appointments or to access their medical information.



Dr. O'Donaile

The website can be and should be the hub for your medical practice. As such, you should consider linking your website to important tools such as your patient portal, your practice management, and EMR or EHR software. If you don’t have it already, you should consider scheduling software, making it easy for patients to schedule and change appointments.

7) **Don't be static.** Your website can be and should be more than a static advertisement. Update it regu-

larly with information of interest and of use to your patients—the types of patients you wish to care for. O’Donaile says he has been guilty of that himself. “Absolutely, it’s a given you need to be excellent clinically. But you need to be more than a good clinician, because it does nobody any good if nobody knows you’re there. That’s true of all professions and all businesses.” The key, he says, is to have good quality marketing and to have a marketing philosophy.

O’Donaile says, “You need to believe that the marketing is there for

4.5% of the people who land on your website are ready to pick an appointment right now.”

That means that about 19 out of 20 people who visit your website are not ready to make an appointment. They leave the site and go elsewhere or don’t get treatment early enough or at all. O’Donaile believes that by adopting a marketing mentality and by leveraging marketing approaches that overcome resistance, you can increase the odds

“We have to offer our help or assistance before we ask for their contact information.”—O’Donaile

the good and there to help you. I personally believe it is our moral duty to make sure that people you could help, that don’t know about you yet, find out about you, rather than going to the wrong source for information or the wrong place for treatment. Isn’t it better that they come to the right place and they come see you? You need to embrace marketing in order to help those people.”

He goes on to say, “I understand people who are afraid of marketing, especially when it comes to healthcare—they associate it with sleazy sales. It doesn’t have to be like that.

of website visitors becoming patients. “What you should be trying to do is exchange this useful information for their contact information so you can follow up and start to build a relationship with these people. That way you can begin to help them overcome those barriers so they are less skeptical and willing to book an appointment.

It’s important to understand that skepticism exists and to be empathetic to that skepticism. To work to get past that skepticism, you have to make sure that the message on your website is resonating with those people. “We have to offer our help or assistance before we ask for their contact information,” O’Donaile says.

To work to get past that skepticism, you have to make sure that the message on your website is resonating with those people.

larly with information of interest and of use to your patients—the types of patients you wish to care for.

Jackson says, “Like owning a car, it requires maintenance and gas. But if you don’t fuel and maintain it, you have a good-looking piece of junk on the side of the road.”

Shifting Toward a Marketing Philosophy

Often, physicians think that all they need to have a successful medical practice is to be good clinically.

It can be that way if you want it to be, but it doesn’t have to be. The difference between manipulation and influencing people to make the right decision is the intention.”

Pushing Past Skepticism

According to O’Donaile, when it comes to websites, research studies say 2.4% to 4.5% of people who visit a site are ready to buy. That includes people who are gathering information on a healthcare website. “So typically, 2.5%, and if you’re really lucky,

What Types of Information

Keeping in mind then that this means not designing the website for the 2.5% to 4.5%, but for the 19 out of 20 who are reluctant to give you a call or click through.

So in addition to all the basic information, you should regularly update your website with blogs, articles, additional web pages, and downloadable ebooks on a variety of subjects related to your practice specialty. For example, if your focus is on sports medicine, you can have articles and ebooks about different types of sports injuries, whether Achilles tendinitis, plantar fasciitis, or turf toe; in addition to recognizing them, discussing ways to prevent them or home

Continued on page 90

Supercharged Website (from page 88)

remedies, and the different ways you might typically treat them.

Monthly newsletters can also be downloaded from the website and these could include, for example, updates on state health insurance assistance programs, tips for decreasing the risk of diabetes, news on new treatments such as laser therapy for fungal toenail infection, and even recipes.

Videos are also popular. Jackson points out, “Anyone can produce a good high-quality video with an iPhone and have it edited. It’s now a must-have and it’s not hard. Make them about 90 seconds long and focused, with three bullet points and a call to action.” He adds that call to action can be something along the lines of, “If you or someone you love is suffering from heel pain, call our office and make an appointment to help you get back on your feet!”



Rem Jackson

SEO and Contact Information

There are at least two reasons to offer all this content and to do so regularly. First is SEO, which stands for search engine optimization; which is to say, how search engines, such as the big daddy of them all, Google, find and prioritize your website. Although they fine-tune their search algorithms regularly, Jackson says, “SEO is about having excellent content: FAQs, blogs, articles, more web pages, and videos you produce. Backend coding is a factor, and a good web company can help you with that, but trying to serve up high-quality content is a key factor. Ideally, you want to be in the top three on search results for your area, because those are the ones most likely to gain interest from searchers.”

The second is to collect contact information. Some of that downloadable content will only be downloadable if the viewer submits contact information. This allows you to directly market to them.

O’Donaile notes, “What we tend to do in medicine is say, ‘Book an

appointment with us and then you’re guaranteed to pay me and then I’ll tell you what the problem is.’ That model works really well for the 2.5% to 4.5%.” Another approach is needed for the remaining 95.5% to 97.5%. In his practice, they provide information in exchange for contact information and his practice follows up with them. His practice automatically sends emails for about 90 days. “We will also call them on the very

“Anyone can produce a good high-quality video with an iPhone and have it edited. It’s now a must-have and it’s not hard. Make them about 90 seconds long and focused, with three bullet points and a call to action.”—Jackson

next working day and initiate a conversation. My team has been trained to do this,” O’Donaile says.

The idea is to move people from the position of skepticism to a position of making their goal. The phone calls can be 10 to 15 minutes long, and he tells his staff the longer the potential patient is on the phone, the better.

Marketing Headquarters

Good marketing is multi-faceted and multi-channel. This can include local newspaper ads, print flyers and mailings, even local radio and TV if that’s of interest to you. But in this day and age, it should include at least several social media platforms: *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Pinterest*, *YouTube*, for example.

“Websites don’t stand alone,” Jackson says. “It’s the command center and all your satellite sites drive traffic back to your website. Good information on your website supports your local search because your site ranks high because of the high-quality content.”

O’Donaile agrees, saying, “There is no reason you can’t do all of this and still present a brand that suggests professionalism. If you think of all the charities out there that use marketing to present a professional face, they’re using marketing for a better purpose. We can do the same thing. Your website should be the central hub to your marketing system, but not the entire

marketing system. But a well-designed website should be an integral part of the system which has the potential to scale your clinic at a significant pace.”

One Final Bit of Advice

Not all website designers and services are created equal. Jackson says, “You need to take your website seriously. Do your research and be careful whom you select to do your website and to be your digital marketing part-

ner. Ask your colleagues. The design is very important.” And remember who the website is for. A lot of podiatric physicians say they paid a lot for their website and they like the look of it.

“It doesn’t matter what you think of it,” O’Donaile says. “I’m being a bit harsh. But what matters is what your patients think of it. Does it resonate with them? Does it provide them with the solutions they’re looking for? That may be to book now, it may be information, it may be starting a relationship that may lead to them booking an appointment with you.”

He emphasizes, “Your website has the capacity to be your hardest-working employee. It has the capacity to run 24/7, 365 days a year, never asking for a pay raise, never asking for a day off and providing a consistent flow of profitable and appreciative patients whom you know you can help have a better lifestyle.” **PM**



Mark Terry is a freelance writer, editor, author and ghostwriter specializing in healthcare, medicine and biotechnology. He has written over 700 magazine and trade journal articles, 20 books, and dozens of white papers, market research reports and other materials. For more information, visit his websites: www.markterrywriter.com and www.markterrybooks.com.