



Building Your Practice in a Digital World

Your virtual presence will produce actual results.

BY SHAWN TOOLEY

Growing a podiatry practice takes more than being a great doctor. That still matters, of course, but it is no longer the whole picture. These days, many patients make decisions long before they ever walk through your door. They search online, read reviews, look at your website, check your office hours, and try to get a feel for your practice before they ever call.

That is why digital marketing matters so much now. It is not just about promotion. It is about helping people find you, trust you, and feel comfortable reaching out. In many cases, your online presence creates the first impression. If that first impression is weak, outdated, or confusing, a potential new patient may move on to another office without giving yours a chance.

Your Website Is the Hub

Your website is one of the biggest pieces of that puzzle. Patients do not want a website that feels old, cluttered, or hard to use. They want something simple. They want to know what conditions you treat, what services you offer, where you are located, and how to make an appointment. They also want to feel confident that your office is professional and current. A clean, easy-to-use website does a lot more than just look nice. It helps people trust your practice.

It also helps to have useful content on your site. When patients go online, they usually are not searching for a specific doctor by name. They are searching for answers. They type in things like “heel pain

with someone who may become a new patient.

This is where digital marketing has really changed the game. Practices can now use technology to track what people are looking at, what

Digital marketing tells you what patients care about and what may be bringing them in.

when I wake up,” “how to treat an ingrown toenail,” or, “best treatment for bunions.” If your website has pages or articles that answer those questions in a clear way, you have a much better chance of showing up in search engine results that give your practice the chance to connect

pages they visit (and for how long), and what services seem to get the most attention. That kind of information is helpful. It tells you what patients care about and what may be bringing them in. Instead of guessing what works, you can make better decisions based on real data.



A Steady Stream of Positive Reviews Is Critical

Reviews now play a bigger role than many doctors realize. Most people want proof that other patients had a good experience before they make that first appointment. A strong stream of recent reviews helps build confidence and gives potential patients a sense of what your office is really like. Reviews can speak to bedside manner, wait times, communication, and overall satisfaction in a way that marketing copy never can. They also help keep your online presence active and credible. A practice with very

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few reviews, or reviews that are years old, may look less established than it really is.

AI is making this even more important because search tools are getting better at pulling quick answers from online information. When a patient searches for a doctor, AI may look at signals like review quality and volume, and whether a practice appears open and available to take a call. That means reviews and office hours are no longer small details.

them, they are more likely to remember your practice when they need care.

Email is also a smart way to remind patients about everything your office offers. Many people only know you for the problem that first brought them in. Maybe they came to you for heel pain, but they have no idea that you also help with custom orthotics, diabetic foot care, fungal nails, sports injuries, or wound care. That is a missed opportunity. A steady email program can gently remind patients that your

tients. They may call before work, during lunch, or later in the afternoon. If someone is available to answer the phone during those times, that matters.

That is why office hours listed online should reflect when the office can actually take calls, not just when patients are being seen. If your team is there at 8:00 in the morning answering phones, but the office is listed as opening at 9:00, you may be missing opportunities. The same is true during lunch. If your website or Google listing says you are closed, patients may move on and call another office that looks open.

Good content helps answer questions. Reviews strengthen confidence. Email keeps you connected to current and past patients. And strong phone coverage helps turn interest into appointments.

People want convenience. They want to know they can reach someone. They want to feel like help is available. Wider listed hours, provided someone is there to answer the phone, can make your practice seem more accessible and more responsive. That matters to patients, and it can influence who gets the call.

At the end of the day, building your practice means making it easier for people to find you, trust you, and reach you. Digital marketing helps you show up. Good content helps answer questions. Reviews strengthen confidence. Email keeps you connected to current and past patients. And strong phone coverage helps turn interest into appointments.

None of this replaces good patient care. It supports it. The practices that continue to grow are often the ones that combine great care with better communication, smarter technology, and a stronger understanding of how today's patients make decisions. **PM**

They are part of how your practice is judged online. If your reviews are strong and current, and your hours show that someone is available to answer the phone, your practice has a better chance of standing out when patients are looking for help right now.

Email Marketing Educates and Reactivates Patients

One area that often gets overlooked is email marketing. Many practices think of email as just a reminder tool, but it can do much more than that. In fact, it can be one of the best ways to stay connected with patients and keep your practice top of mind.

Email works especially well for patient education. You can send simple, helpful messages about common foot and ankle problems, seasonal concerns, treatment options, or preventive care. A patient with diabetes may benefit from regular foot care reminders. Someone who enjoys running may appreciate tips on avoiding overuse injuries. Parents may want to learn more about foot issues in children. These emails do not have to be long or fancy. They just need to be useful. When patients get information that helps

office offers much more than one type of treatment. Sometimes people do not schedule because they simply do not know you can help with their problem.

Reactivating past patients is another big benefit. Every practice has patients who meant to come back but never got around to it. Some got busy. Some felt a little better and put things off. Others may not realize it is time for follow-up care. Email gives you a simple way to reconnect. A message about diabetic exams, orthotics checks, chronic heel pain, or foot pain that tends to flare up during certain times of year can encourage someone to return for care. Often, the need is already there. They just need a reminder.

Be Sure to Answer Every Call

Another important part of building your practice has nothing to do with ads or websites. It has to do with answering the phone.

This sounds simple, but it matters more than ever. You can do everything right with your digital marketing, but if a new patient calls and nobody answers, that opportunity may be gone. People often call when it is convenient for them, not just when you happen to be seeing pa-



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