

Taking the
PAIN
out of the
internet



Yalcin Yilmaz, director of PhysioPulse, looks at harnessing the digital superhighway to grow your practice.

It's a fact. If you're not on the internet, you simply don't exist. Gone are the good ol' days when having a tiny Yellow Pages advertisement would cause the phone to ring off the hook. Today, if you have an outdated website or worse, no internet presence at all, then you'll struggle to keep yourself busy and your appointment book full.

If you need clients, you need a website. A good website will help you to establish your credibility and superiority to your business competitors. In this day and age when people have a problem, say a sore neck, they wiggle their fingers on their computer or mobile phone and 'Google' it to find the answers. Go ahead, Google 'physiotherapist' and your suburb. Does your website show up at the top of the search results, or does a competitor's? If you don't have a website, who do you think will end up booking this new client?

This is why you should establish a solid internet presence immediately. A good website will help you to grow your practice, book yourself solid and simplify your life.

What makes an effective physiotherapy clinic website?

The internet is like a buffet restaurant serving endless variety and choices. Having a website will ensure that your business is on the 'menu'. Of course, you want to do more than just sit on the digital menu. You want your website to take your practice to the next level. Here are some useful points and ideas to help your website do just that.

Business websites: the basics

Your website is your public business card (and much more). Everything a potential client wants to know about your business should be accessible here. As a minimum, your site must include:

- Your address and phone number, and instructions for getting to your clinic. Consider inserting a Google Map so people can find you with ease.
- Business hours. If you are ready to accommodate your patients out of regular clinic business hours, make sure to highlight it on your site, as the ability to take after-hours appointments could set you apart from your competitors.
- A prominent enquiry form and a means of easily requesting appointments will reassure a patient that you value their time and care about their business.
- Communicate what makes you different to, or better than the other physiotherapists in your area. Do you offer any specialist treatments or sophisticated equipment that is uncommon in your field? Promote it.

- Display your rates, special discounts, deals and promotions.
- Your website should also have a list of frequently asked questions (FAQs), so as to assist potential clients and save you time.

A good website can improve customer loyalty

Your physiotherapy clinic offers important services that can positively affect patients' health. Why not combine videos with informative content on your website? You can educate viewers about their body and how regular treatment can help them regain movement and function following an injury, or perhaps how physiotherapy can enhance health and wellbeing. By posting interesting and educational content on your website you will be positioning yourself as a credible source of expert information. Quality content, such as videos and articles, can increase traffic to your site, including potential patients. And who doesn't want to book an appointment with an expert in their field?

Content is king

On the internet, content is king. Your website should be regularly updated with fresh, current and engaging content. If the content has not been updated in six to twelve months, what reason are you giving people to visit your website again? Unless you are a gifted writer then you will probably struggle in this department. It is important to make the website-browsing experience simple and the content easy to find and read. That's where a quality web developer can assist. Remember, internet users' attention spans are as short as a mouse-click these days!

You only get one first impression

Use your website to enhance and complement your business

branding. Research suggests that the human eye associates colours, shapes and forms to a certain experience and stores it in the memory (often permanently), so be sure to use your logo and colours consistently. Your website is an important extension of your physical clinic, so ensure your page layout is clean and the design looks professional.

Avoid animation and audio that starts automatically when viewers click onto a page. Not only are they irritating, but they date a website quickly. A professional design, consistent branding and text formatting teamed with a light background should help you make the best first impression possible to your prospective clientele.

Keep it current

If information on your website is not accurate or up to date, it will do more harm than good, giving internet browsers a negative impression of your business. Be diligent with your website. Every time your prices change, a new service is added, there is an alteration to your trading hours or you introduce a new offer or promotion be sure to update that information on your website too.

If you want the freedom of updating your website and content yourself then talk to your web developer about a content management system (CMS). However, many CMS packages are too complicated for the average person to manoeuvre, so make sure you get the right package that will make your life easier and won't cause you stress. Alternatively, ensure your web guy is friendly and happy to handle your requests for help.

Embrace new technology

Old news: the internet is here and it's here to stay. It's time you embrace it, but don't copy what your competitors are already doing.

Try new strategies and see what works best for you. Perhaps try creating e-newsletters, internet-based promotional offers or connecting with clients through social media. Stuck for ideas? A good and reliable web developer will help you turn the often intimidating process of developing a website and marketing your practice into your secret advantage, without making you jump through hoops.

Stay 'human' with a blog

A blog is an online journal that you can update with fresh news, ideas and thoughts about your practice, staff or anything of your choice. It's a great way to communicate with clients, both prospective and current, more personally and build customer loyalty to your clinic. A blog can give you an air of approachability and transparency in your business practices as well as humanising your online presence – qualities which are much appreciated in the digital era. Having a blog is a great way to let clients get to know you, the personality behind the business and establish yourself as a knowledgeable expert. Your web developer will happily guide you in designing a blog and can help you get started.

Get a professional: it generally costs less

As you can see, there are a lot of elements at play in order to create an effective website, so please, for your clinic's sake, resist the temptation of accepting your

nephew's offer to build it from his bedroom. The financial benefits of a well-presented, professionally designed website will far outweigh the cost of hiring a professional. Professionals will be able to not only produce an effective website, but also give you all the advice and direction you need to harness the internet to your biggest advantage.

When looking for someone to build your website, ensure they understand you and your business. Check their portfolio, testimonials and references—spending a short time being diligent will save you headaches and frustration down the track.

Remember, you are in the physiotherapy business. You don't need to be an expert on everything about the internet. Leave it in the hands of an IT professional so that you can concentrate on the more important things: your patients and your business.

By hiring a qualified and experienced web developer to help you build a solid web presence you will be able to harness the power of the internet to enable you to simplify daily procedures, increase appointments and run a more successful practice.

PhysioPulse is a leader in website creation, management and marketing for physiotherapy private practice businesses. Visit www.physiopulse.com.au or call toll free on 1300 30 60 75 for more information.