

# ESSENTIAL TACTICS FOR ATTRACTING NEW PATIENTS TO YOUR SITE

By Fernando Diaz-Lundstedt



**H**ow can you handle the marketing power of the Internet in a creative and reasonably priced manner?

The options appear to be overwhelming and the challenge is to develop a sensible plan to organize your research.

First, define a clear objective for your Internet presence. Are you looking to attract new patients? Do you need an online brochure for your existing patients? Are you interested in enhancing your professional image using the latest communication tool?

If you are interested in obtaining more new patients, the following guidelines will assist you in the design of your strategy.

## Search engine positioning is critical for your success

You will need a top position with the search engines for the key terms, in this case: dentist or dental and your location. Secure a name for your website that offers the best position. For example, if you are Dr. Name located in NiceCity, one option could be NiceCityDental.com or NiceCityDentist.com

Remember, the key concept is to be listed at the top of the search engine listing for your location. You can always add your name to the description of the home page:

*NiceCityDental.com Dr Name's Dental Practice in NiceCity*

Your name and the name of your practice are secondary to the objective of securing top listing with AltaVista, Metacrawler, AOL, Yahoo and the other search engines.

One word of advice in regard to Yahoo: This is a directory and not an automated search engine. That means that they have a selective process and only websites with original and relevant content are listed. Description of standard services and general information about business hours and such will not get you a listing with Yahoo.

## Only a professional looking website will do

The free design website and the amateur look are not an option for a dentist. Think about it. How can you expect to have new patients willing to spend a significant amount of money in dental services, when your website looks like you may have plastic chairs in your reception area!

The website for professionals needs to be creative, very efficient and affordable. There are real differences between the companies and individuals that are offering web development.

One way of separating rookies from real pros is by reviewing their portfolios. If the candidate does not have previous work neatly organized for your analysis, rule it out! It is that simple. Don't pay somebody to learn web design at your expense.

The other step that you need to take is surfing the web relentlessly. Find website designs that are appealing to you and add them to your favorites sites. After a while go back and review them, most likely you will find themes, colors, ideas that show a pattern. That is the starting point for yourself and the web design professionals.

## Work with creative people

There are a lot of people that are trying to sell cookie-cutter type of websites, regardless of your desires and objectives. Stay away from them! They don't care about anything other than recycling their own stuff.

Working with more creative professionals may cost a few dollars more, but it will set the right tone for your Internet presence. The overall look of your website needs to be pleasant, graphically balanced and creative.

The home page of your site is the equivalent of the new prospect's initial phone call. It needs to persuade the potential new patient to review what you have to offer. In this area, a professional writer can help you, too.

## The right budget

No serious company will quote you a price without finding out the scope of the assignment. Simple web pages without a lot of creative energy can be found everywhere. The challenge is to sort all these options out and to determine the right balance between quality and the obvious budget requirements.

Many web designers don't want to work with anybody that has less than a millionaire's budget. However, I believe that you can create an attractive, rich in content Internet site within a reasonable cost range. **DT**

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