Half Brained website?

Iain Scott highlights how dental websites need to focus not only on aesthetics, but also on function

It is rarer to see websites that have both effective design and function, these I’d define as being full brained: not only is the design captivating, influential and appeals to the general dental patient (or potential patient), but the site’s functionality works: it’s quick to load, easy to navigate and all the relevant information is easy to find as it’s right where it should be.

This is the advantage of using a good web design agency that have a team in place with both right brained designers and left brained developers working on the website design projects. Their work is balanced and effective; it attracts qualified potential patients through effective Search Engine Optimisation, and then converts them into paying patients through excellent conversion tools from the design.

You may be aware that the different sides of the brain are responsible for different functions; the left half of the brain is logical, analytical and objective, whereas the right half is random, intuitive, creative and subjective. In the majority of people, one side of the brain is dominant leading to distinct personalities and skill-sets: left brained people tend to be methodical, organised, technical, deep thinkers, while right brained people are geared towards being creative, abstract and conceptual thinking.

Looking around our studio, I see developers typing away, boxes furrowed in concentration, writing the lines of code and planning the infrastructure that makes our websites work. Clearly they are left brained. Across from me I can see David, our lead designer; he’s leaning back in his chair, focusing on his sketch pad, thinking about design concepts and ideas for one of our current projects, creativity oozing from him: clearly he’s right brained, guided by his imagination and powers of visualisation.

Not a team effort

It is amazing how many dental websites I see that have clearly been put together by only a designer: they’ll be visually exciting, quite often with striking graphics or animations, but lack easy navigation, the structure is not intuitive and they are virtually invisible to the search engines.

Alternatively there are many that have been put together by only a developer or programmer: the website design will be laid out in an orderly fashion, there may be one or two graphics, but nothing creative. On the other hand, it will probably do well from an SEO point of view (attraction) as the content will be well organised, and it’ll have been built with future updates in mind.

However, will it actually promote the practice and lead to increased sales, almost certainly not! Clearly, more attention is required for conversion.

For both types of websites, I’d describe them as being only half brained, not through any fault of the site author, but just because of the way the human brain functions.

About the author

Iain Scott is managing director of website design agency, Base Creative. He will be speaking at the RACD Conference, Dentistry Meets Aesthetics, on 23-25 September 2010 at the Hilton London Metropole. To register, visit www.racd.org.