dentistry can be a challenging environment at the best of times, but with competition for patients so rife it can be a challenge in itself to make your practice stand out. For specialist or referral practices in particular, this challenge can prove particularly tough, as you're not only selling your services to patients, but you're also selling yourself to fellow professionals as well.

Given the massive change the internet has brought about in our world, it's fair to say if you want to market your practice successfully, you really do need to have a practice website. While some dental practices may be happy with a simple “nuts and bolts” website – one that contains just basic information and contact details – to really make a success of your referral business you should endeavour to create something that sets you apart; something that "sells" your practice and your practice team to fellow professionals and patients alike.

There are many ways you can achieve this, and with the services of a professional web design team, you will find this far easier to accomplish than without. In essence, for your referral practice to become an online success, your practice website needs to be unique, it needs to be exclusive – it needs to embody everything that is unique about your practice, but in digital form. For your website to be truly exclusive, it needs to be a number of things: it needs to look appealing, it needs to contain lots of interesting and engaging content, and it needs to be optimised for the web.

In order to fully realise your practice vision, the very best websites will consist of a strong blend of eye catching, intelligent design, and content that reflects who you are, and the core values your practice team hold dear. For referral practices this point is particularly important – both for attracting patients, and practices seeking to refer.

To meet the needs of these two different groups, many websites will now be split into two sections: one for patients, and one for professionals. In each section you will need to include content suitable for the target market you are seeking. This may include video, or written testimonials (from patients and/or den-
tists), treatment guides, and even a practice blog.

Though of course, creating an exclusive practice website is a significant task, this isn’t a task you need to achieve on your own. After all, you’re a dental professional, not a web designer, and you should rightly spend your time concentrating on that which matters most: your patients. To make the most of your online marketing efforts then, it pays to trust experts with experience in dentistry to help you achieve the best website to help your practice grow.

The first thing anyone sees when they open a new web page in their internet browser is the design. If your website looks cheap or poorly designed then chances are the user will choose to look elsewhere. Remember, your website is a 24/7 “shop window” for your business. How you present yourself through your shop window says an awful lot about you and your business. It’s therefore vitally important that what you display looks good!

Compatibility is also another important factor to consider for any practice website. Poorly designed, static web pages will not display very well on portable devices, and can prove particularly difficult to navigate if viewed through these mediums. An experienced web design team will know that good web design is much more than just what a website looks like – it also includes the technical elements that many people will just take for granted. If a potential referrer visits your website and either can’t see or can’t navigate their way around it easily, then you may well find your website turns away many more referring clinicians than it attracts!

The third “pillar” of good website design is content. Good content is absolutely key to all successful websites, as ultimately people visit websites in order to digest information. Content is also extremely important from a technical perspective as well, as high quality, regularly updated content can help boost your search engine results and can also influence your “conversion rate” – that is, the number of people who contact you as a result of visiting your website.

Indeed, many practices nowadays will run a practice blog as a good way of engaging patients in issues relating to oral health. As a referral practice, you might also like to consider posting case studies and examples of complex or particularly difficult cases you have treated. This can be a great way of demonstrating your commitment and skill, and will show colleagues the type of specialised service you can offer.

To help you make the most of your online marketing efforts, employing the services of an experienced web design team really can make all the difference. Companies such as Dental Focus® Web Design for example can really help make your referral practice stand out with an exclusive website design that is search engine optimised, GDC compliant, and fully compatible with all internet browsing devices.

In this highly competitive age of dentistry, it’s absolutely essential that you market yourself effectively to the world. For referral practices, this is especially important, and it is crucial that you make use of all the tools at your disposal. To make your practice an online success, invest in an exclusive website, and see your referrals grow.

About the author
Adrian Adler aka The Wizard is a Project Manager at Dental Focus® Web Design. His passion is in creating exclusive websites for dentists that perfectly reflect the individual and business.

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