



Doctor, have you checked your website's pulse lately?

For the most part, the Yellow Pages (as a source for finding a veterinarian) are on life support. Internet search engines are now responsible for the majority of searches for virtually all service providers. Even people who use the Yellow Pages often follow up by reviewing a practice's website before calling for an appointment.

So, assuming you have a web site, you probably feel this article is not for you. If so, you may be wrong. A random review of many veterinary web sites found that **at least 85%** of all companion animal practice websites have room for significant improvement in terms of being **attractive to pet owners**.

That's not to say that 85% are not attractive. Indeed, many are very professional and "attractive." The problem is that most are attractive to **other veterinarians, not pet owners!**

Here are some simple steps and questions you can answer to see if your website is in need of help.

First, is your website coming up near the top of Internet searches? Here's a simple test: Using Google (or your favorite search engine) type in "veterinarians [insert the name of your town]." Hit "search" and see what happens. Is your practice one of the first 3-5 practices that are listed in the search results? If not, your condition is "serious." If your practice's name doesn't come on the first page, your condition requires "intensive care." You don't have a website? Condition: "critical."

Next, look at your website and answer these simple questions:

1. What appears in the upper left-hand corner of the home page? Is it a specific call to action, such as "call us for an appointment at [followed by your phone number]"?
2. Is a picture of your building a prominent feature on the home page?
3. Is the "About Us" tab clearly and prominently displayed? (If there is no "About Us" tab on your site, answer "no" to this question.)
4. Does the "About Us" tab lead to a photo gallery of your doctors and key staff?
5. Does each picture of the doctors and staff include the team member with a pet?
6. Does most of the content associated with each Doctor on the "About Us" page talk primarily about school of graduation, special medical/surgical interests, involvement in associations, awards received and the like?
7. If you have a photo gallery on your website, are there **any** pictures of rooms or areas of the practice in which the rooms are empty? (That is, pictures without people **and** animals?) If you do not have a photo gallery, answer "no" to this question.
8. Do you have a Facebook and/or Twitter logo on your site?

Scoring

The answers to questions 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8 should be **Yes**

The answers to questions 2, 6, and 7 should be **No**

If you scored perfectly, congratulations! Your website is probably in good shape and you can shift your priority to other potential areas of need for your practice.

Frankly, anything less than a 100% correct score means that there are opportunities for you to make improvements.

The Good News

The Partners for Healthy Pets website (www.partnersforhealthypets.org) has an entire category of helpful tools on Internet Marketing and Social Media. These **free** tools come in the form of fun video modules, which in turn are accompanied by downloadable step-by-step instructions that even technologically challenged practices can understand and follow.

These tools will help you craft a message for your website that will attract clients and result in them calling you for an appointment. They will tell you what it takes to create a truly **client attracting** website and help ensure that your practice rises to the top of search engine results. The tools will guide you the steps to get you engaged in social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Finally, sites such as Yelp are giving your clients an opportunity to comment on your practice – both in positive and potentially harmful ways. The tools will help you understand how you can monitor the online comments being made about you and your practice, and give you helpful ideas on how to respond to comments made by others.

Don't Put this Off!

Every day that your website is not optimized for client attraction costs you new clients. Take the first step today –visit the Internet Marketing & Social Media section of the Partners for Healthy Pets Resources Toolbox.

Partners for Healthy Pets is dedicated to ensuring that pets receive the preventive healthcare they deserve through regular visits to a veterinarian and is committed to working with you to enhance the health of your patients and your practice. Learn more about Partners for Healthy Pets and explore the Resources Toolbox at www.partnersforhealthypets.org.