

PHP TRANSCRIPTS: Module 2a

– WEBSITES –

Create a Client Attracting Machine

» The Importance of a Veterinary Website

Why has a website become so important to businesses? Well, your website is now your virtual front door, and it is through which prospective clients are judging your practice every single day. We have to remember that in the absence of training, prospective clients cannot generally evaluate the quality of our medicine. In reality, the only real mechanism they have to assess our practices is by our outward appearance. Given this, we have to make sure that our website - the foundation of the outward appearance - is a 10 out of 10 as first impressions influence everything.

If we do this correctly, prospective clients will find your practice and flock to it. What's more, your active clients will end up using your website as your primary client engagement tool and will be less likely to default to Dr. Google.

A recent study by Carlton University analyzed the behavior of website visitors. Can you guess how long it takes for a website visitor to form a first impression? Only 1/20th of a second. But more interestingly, the impressions formed in that short amount of time have a significant influence on the subsequent judgment of the content on those websites. For example, if a user had a positive first impression, he or she would assess the content in a more positive light (the so called 'Halo Effect'). If, however, there was a *negative* first impression, then all the content they read afterwards is more likely to be judged negatively.

But just how does this impact the veterinary profession? Well, let's say, for example, somebody was recommended to your practice, and he or she visits your website. If they get a poor first impression, what will happen? Some will go ahead and book the appointment anyway, simply because the word of mouth recommendation was so powerful. But a lot of them, based on that first impression, will very quickly leave your site and not book an appointment, and this amounts to a missed opportunity. This will ultimately decrease the conversion rate that we discussed in the last module.

In this same scenario, if prospects do go ahead and book appointments, what happens next? They enter your clinic, but they are predisposed to confirm their initial first (negative) impression. That means that in the exam room, we have to work harder in order to show them that we aren't that unappealing, unattractive practice that they saw on the website. We have to prove that we are a great facility, with competent staff and have advanced technology, etc., despite what our website would suggest. These are what I call *judgmental clients*. They are ready to evaluate negatively anything that you do.

If, on the other hand, we can create a great first impression, more likely than not potential clients will book the appointment right away. You therefore won't miss out on that client, which

significantly increases the conversion rate, ultimately generating new clients without any additional advertising.

And in this scenario, what happens when these clients walk through the door? They are already predisposed to judge your practice and your service in a positive light, because everything about your website – your outward appearance – suggest you are a quality outfit. They've had that great first impression and are ready for more!

Why do we want to confirm our first impressions? Subconsciously, we all want to be right, so if at first glance, we think something is bad, we want to confirm that our feeling was indeed correct. If our first impression is that something is great, we want to always be looking on the positive side. I want to create for you those "yes" clients. We are going to do that by turning your website into a 10 out of 10 first impression.

» What are the 3 keys to a client attracting website?

1. Your website must be BEAUTIFUL.

How do we create a beautiful veterinary website? In short, we have to really emphasize the human/animal bond. This is the compassionate connection that clients are seeking from their veterinarians. If we can use the imagery throughout the website to really showcase this bond, we're going to go a long way toward making that connection with the client.

Some principles to follow:

- **No pictures of surgery.** Why? Because people naturally import the image of their pets under that drop sheet. As veterinarians, we're proud of our surgery service, but we must recognize that it's a scary experience for most owners. So, if you want to have a picture of the surgery service make certain it's a reassuring one (e.g. a photo of you framed in surgical attire, with a happy, healthy pet by your side). That will put clients who are thinking of bringing their pets in to your practice for an elective surgery at ease.
- **No pictures of empty rooms.** A common mistake is to have a hospital tour with a clean and tidy, but empty exam room. From the client's perspective, they see a cold, steel table, which doesn't give off that feeling of warmth you want them to feel about your practice. Make sure in each of the rooms you actually have a picture of a pet interacting with a person. This is part of that human/animal bond.
- **Do not use the picture of your building as the foundation for your home page.** As a veterinarian, you may be very proud of your facility – it is the cornerstone of all your hard work. In reality, though, potential clients are less interested in this and more concerned with how you are going to care for their animals. Remember the old saying, "Clients don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care." We have to emphasize that first, and then through the hospital tour we can showcase our facility.
- **We must have dynamic images.** On the homepage, use a large, human/animal bond image that is constantly changing. This creates a dynamic, fresh feel to your website, making it look as though it's current and always changing.

- **Use warm and inviting colors.** We have to make sure that we don't use linear lines or cold colors. We want to put our potential and current clients at ease, make them smile, and get them ready to come into our practice and confirm their great first impression.

Examples

Let's take a look at a few images from veterinary websites. Have your paper and pen ready to write down the initial feelings you have when you see these images.

No. 1



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I use these images in my lecture series, and the common comment on this one is that it's cold, and that the animals look like they're in jail. Where are the people? Have these animals been abandoned? Loneliness and abandonment are not the feeling you want to convey to your potential clients.

No. 2



The common question regarding this image is, "What is that dog doing? Is it eating or vomiting?" Clients may ultimately come to the conclusion that this is not somewhere they want to bring their pet, and this mistake is so easy to make. We want to make

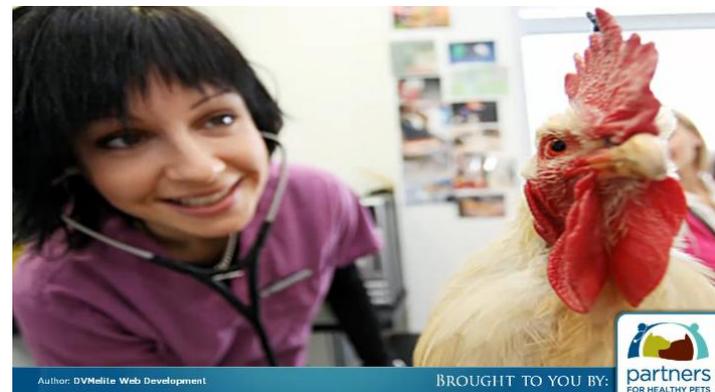
sure that your images are full of life and clearly convey compassion.

No. 3



The usual comment about this image is that it makes people smile. It makes them happy and comfortable, and they want to get to know everybody in this image.

No. 4



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Your feelings about this picture are probably the same as the last. It makes you smirk. You want to get to know Susan as your veterinarian and maybe even her quirky little client.

Take-home message - Your images must be full of life. They must put your clients at ease, and they must emphasize the human/animal bond. If we can do this, clients will come to us, and they'll come to us with a great first impression.

2. Your website must be SIMPLE.

If it's difficult for you or your staff to change or update your site, or if it's a struggle to reach your web developer, then your staff will get frustrated and ignore or avoid its upkeep. This ultimately will prevent you from keeping your site at a high level of professionalism and is the cycle in which so many practices get stuck. If your websites start to stagnate and become static, it quickly becomes more a liability than an actual client generating asset. Your website must also be easy for clients to use. There's nothing more frustrating than going to a website and not getting what you want; not being able to find the contact information or easily access the "About Us" page. When we go to a website, we have a short attention span - we frantically search for the information we really want, but if we don't find it, we'll move on to the next thing. So, we have to make sure that we know what our clients want, and that we present it in a very easy, accessible and immediate manner.

And in this domain, two things stand out. We know that our clients want to be able to contact us, and we know that the most visited page on a veterinary website is the "About Us" page. At a bare minimum, we must make sure that those 2 pages are clearly marked and easily accessible.

» Your website must be EFFECTIVE.

In order to have our websites do their job, we have to make sure that there is a clear 'call to action'. A good example of a clear and visible call to action is the practice phone number listed with a direction such as "Call us today!". We also must speak to our potential clients. For instance, the new client welcome form communicates to that prospect that if they're looking to get involved with your practice, they simply need to fill out the form to get started. This will motivate a significant percentage of potential clients, who would otherwise just visit your site and leave. We have to focus on the conversion rate at every single turn.

Your website must be "sticky"- meaning that people will come back to it again and again. To accomplish this, we have to make your website *useful*. A great way to make your website useful is to offer online scheduling, online prescription refill forms, and to have a hospital tour with which clients may interact. Your website must also have an inspirational element. This area is where you're going to put your *Start with Why* boilerplate that you created in the last module, your inspirational messaging that you'll be able to copy and paste in any place that reaches your potential clients. One of the best places for this to be located is on the home page of your website.

An additional trick is to use blog articles to keep the content fresh. We will eventually be discussing blogs in greater detail, but a take-home message for now is that your blog is the engine behind your website, and therefore your practice growth. A blog is simply where you post articles. Your website should utilize as many different mediums as possible to engage your clients. If each of these mediums, from forms to text to video to blogs, all contain your inspirational message, it will go a long way to your connecting with current and potential clients.

All of the components that make your website effective can be found in your Silver Bullet Checklist - a tool that you'll be able to download and implement into your practice's website.

Now, after everything we've discussed so far, I'd like you to write down what you feel has been the most valuable to you.

What kind of an impact do you hope to see when you implement the 3 keys to a client attracting website?

» Story

By way of illustrating the power of an exceptional website, I'd like to tell you a quick story. Shortly after introducing my website development company, one of our very first website clients came to us with a very poor online presence. To address this we started with building them a beautiful and dynamic website ready to go, and created other marketing initiatives that were set to launch later that year. To get things underway, we decided to go ahead and launch just the website - and the impact was significant. Within 2 months, the practice saw a 30% increase in new clients and a similar increase in revenue.

The most interesting thing we noticed, however, was where those clients were coming from. Of course, they were coming from online searches since the website was very well search engine optimized and people could now find the clinic at a greater rate than they could previously. But, to our surprise, new clients were also coming in much greater numbers from a more traditional source – namely 'word of mouth'.

At first we wondered about this –why, with the launch of a new website, should we would be getting more clients by person to person recommendations? Were more people, coincidentally, suddenly referring others to this practice? What we eventually concluded was that this was likely not the case. Rather, now that there was a 10 out of 10 website that led to a great first impression, when the same friends, family colleagues now visited this website they were more motivated to take action, to pick up the phone and to book the appointment – they were more likely to follow through on the word of mouth referral.

So, with this one successful component, we were able to increase the conversion rate of prospects into active clients, via online and word of mouth referral sources, which made a profound impact on that practice.

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» The Impact - A "Website Diagnostic" Consultation (ad hoc comments from a DVMelite website specialist)

1. Website #1 - Complicated



You have 7 seconds to capture a potential client's attention before they will 'bounce' to a competitor's website. This site would cause a client to tune out during that 7 seconds. There is just too much to have to attend to in order to really make sense of anything on the page. There are also no clear calls to action, making it unclear as to exactly what the visitor is supposed to be doing (shopping, just reading, etc.). The navigation of the website causes its purpose to be unclear. There is too much navigation with 2 separate sections, making things confusing. Remember, simplicity is key.

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An effective veterinary website should have a very clear flow, and communicate to your clients exactly what they're supposed to do. Whether it's going to the practice Facebook page, calling you, or becoming a new client, make that directive clear for the client. Also, the human/animal bond is glaringly missing, which would cause a client to leave within the 7 seconds since there is nothing encouraging them to stay on the site. The client wants a fun and interactive experience while visiting your website.

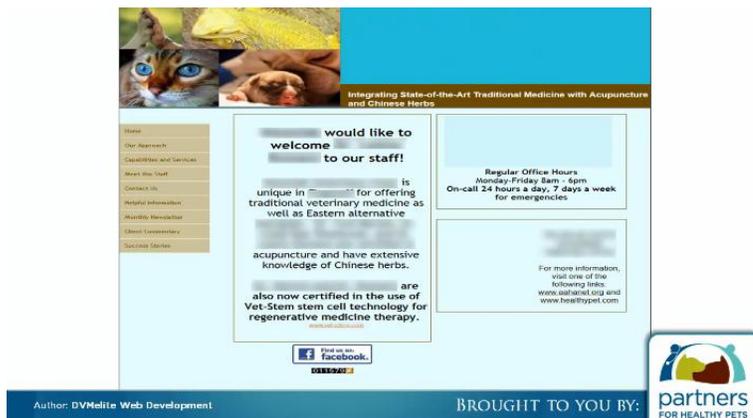
2. Website #2 - Unclear navigation



In this example, again there's nothing telling the client what to do. However, what is striking is that there is too much text. People have limited attention spans, and they won't spend time reading through extended text. Once you've made an initial bond with them, established your personality with them and gotten them interested in investing further in your site, then you can bring more content to them.

Because of all the text, this site may come across as outdated, causing the client to go looking for something more current. At that point, you've lost the potential client, because they're on to looking at another practice. Finally, the use of an image of the practice location / building as the primary focus of the home page doesn't engage the client, and should therefore be avoided. This website is also not dynamic, because there is nothing moving. It looks static.

3. Website #3 - only a limited human/animal bond



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This website features a welcome and a few calls to action, however the side navigation is complicated, and it looks difficult to maneuver. The website as a whole is underwhelming. While they're trying, they need a structure to be able to really emphasize that human/animal bond.

4. Website #4 - Immediately engaging the client



In this sample website, the imagery is memorable because both the animal and the person look like interesting creatures. The colors are bright and warm, and your eye is drawn to fun and engaging images. This causes you to become more invested in the information that the practice is trying to convey. The navigation shows calls to action, clearly marked social media icons, an easily identifiable new client form and location information. The navigation is simple but sophisticated, telling clients everything they need to know.

5. Website #5 - Simple but engaging



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The imagery in this example is warm, and there are clear calls to action as well as easy to find contact information. Many websites make it very difficult to find the practice's contact information, so having clear calls to action that cause the client to take that second step is very important. There is a correlation between how long you can keep someone on your website, and how likely they are to become a client.

6. Website #6 - Adorable



"Adorable" is not only a description of the site, but a word that many pet owners would use to describe their pets. So, anytime you can evoke that kind of sentiment for a prospective client,

you are hitting the mark. There are clear calls to action, the visitor knows exactly what to do in order to book an appointment or to get a prescription refill. Because the home page looks like a scrapbook, this client is persuaded to explore your practice further, spending more time on your site.

7. Website #7 - Key takeaways



Your goal is to get someone to your site and to keep them there long enough to get to the information you're trying to convey. The overwhelming difference with successful sites is that they are image and compassion driven, allowing the client to make that bond with the website, which is tantamount to making a bond with your practice. This site makes you feel comfortable enough to stay invested in the website. Prescription refill forms, new client forms and the option to book an appointment online allow your website to not just be an advertising medium, but make it an interactive tool that your clients find useful. Having these forms built into your site provides one less step for your clients to go through to request that appointment or become a new client, and this feature is very important.

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» The Most Common Mistakes Practices Make Developing Their Websites

1. **Working with friends or family.** While these relationships usually start in earnest (friends and family clearly have your best interest at heart), what tends to happen is that people get busy. Things may start with momentum at the beginning, but if your family and friends are volunteers, and not getting paid (or being paid very little), either they're not really invested in the project, or you're not able to push them to get the end result accomplished in the time frame that you want. If you start with someone who can't finish the job, and you don't have access to your web developer, your website will turn static, and your practice will suffer.
2. **Using a free or template site.** There are a lot of options in this realm, but there is a hidden cost when going with a template site. If you have a staff member attempt to customize a template, you're paying that employee for many hours and losing a lot of resources, just to try to achieve a potential 3 out of 10 result. The practice has then lost many thousands of dollars over time, money that they could have given to a professional company to produce a good, quality veterinary website.

With both of these scenarios, one of the key reasons why they tend to fail is the lack of ongoing support. You need a company and a system behind you to really drive the growth of your practice via your online presence.

3. **Remaining in a frustrating relationship with your web developer.** One of the top client complaints when they come to us after using another, usually local, web developer is that they can't make changes to their own website. The number one reason that veterinary websites fail is that they become static or outdated, instead of being that really powerful, dynamic tool that you need them to be.

The role of the web developer within the modern veterinary practice is becoming a new professional service, just like how you would require a resource like a lawyer or an accountant. You really need to be looking to your web developer to be guiding your client engagement and the growth of your practice, because your website is your marketing hub. Unless you have a good way of communicating with your web developer, and they are very responsive, they're not going to fulfill that role that is becoming more and more vital. This is not only the future, but it's what every practice needs right now.

» Evaluate Your Website

Ask yourself these questions regarding your own website. When you finish this video, go onto your own website and see if you have these components. If you do, put a check mark next to it. If you don't, put an X.

1. Does your website emphasize the human/animal bond through imagery and text?
2. Does every single room have a picture of a smiling person and a pet interacting lovingly?
3. Are there any pictures of surgery?
4. Does your website feature warm and inviting colors?
5. Is it simple for your staff to use? Ask your staff.
6. Do you see a clear call to action on your home page?
 - About Us - clear and prominent on the left hand side
 - Contact Us - clear and prominent on the right hand side
 - Call to Action - large, bold phone number listed with action words like "Call us today!"
7. Is it easily shareable on social networks? Can your clients click any one of a series of social media buttons to share your website content with family and friends? This is essentially a free marketing method that you can utilize in your website with very little cost to your practice, so make sure you ask your web developer if you do not have this functionality.
8. Does your website have a blog integrated into the website? (full discussion to come)
9. Does your website have an inspirational message?
 - *Start with Why* boilerplate (Module 1)
 - "About Us" page - framed with the 7 key client bonding questions and a compassion focused image to make a 10 out of 10 impression

If you take the concept of starting with the why and the compassion and integrate these throughout all the website elements, you will create a client attracting machine.