PHP TRANSCRIPTS: <u>Module 2b</u>

– WEBSITES –
Effective Design 101

» Veterinary Website Design

» Key Principles

1. The first principle comes from traditional newspaper media. If you think of a newspaper being on your desk, or being in a news stand, almost half of it is never seen because the newspaper is folded. The *above-the-fold* section, as it's called, is the most valuable portion of a paper. This concept is also utilized in the advertising world, with the above-the-fold area being significantly more expensive than the area below-the-fold. So what does this mean for a veterinary website? We have to make sure that the above-the-fold area of your website – the part that people see immediately when they arrive at your site - is a 10 out of10 since so many of your potential clients will never scroll down beyond this if they're not initially impressed.

2. The second principle is derived from how people actually read. People tend to read from left to right and from top to bottom. This means that the most valuable portions of your above-the-fold real estate are located in the top left and the top right sections of the screen. Therefore, we have to make sure those areas are working extremely hard to motivate potential clients.

» Website Frame

So, where do we begin? Let's start with the frame of our website. Between the background of your website and the actual content, there is the border of your body. A big mistake is to just make the border straight lines. If you can imagine a website that it totally linear, it is extremely boring. Instead what we have to do is to make a website border that is interesting, through using an interrupted line, or some other fancy transition that's going to break the monotony.

» Website Background

Next, we actually have to create a background for the website, using warm and engaging colors. A key here is that we don't want anything sharp and off-putting. A great strategy is to use a textured background, something that appears to be like paper or fabric/material. This makes the website look almost like a scrapbook, something in which we really want to engage, almost like a warm hug for your clients inspiring them to get to know you better.

» Website Navigation Bar

The next anchor for your website is the 'nav bar'. There's the option of either having this at the top of the website or along the side, but from a usability perspective the top is typically best.

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2 most important areas of your website

1. The top, left hand portion of the above-the-fold section is the most important, so this is where you'll put your practice's logo. We want everybody who comes to your website to know exactly who you are right off the bat.

2. In the second most valuable area of your online real estate, the upper right corner, we want to have a clear call to action, which could be your phone number. I highly suggest that you do use your phone number, along with a call to action. The number should be large, bold and surrounded by action words like "Call us today!", "Book your appointment!" or "Call right now!" Just that little bit of motivation will go a long way toward increasing your conversion rate.

In between these two areas is a great location for Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) icons. For those clients who are active on these platforms, they will be able to instantly connect with your practice. We should never overlook this great, free marketing tool.

About Us/Contact Us Page

What are the big mistakes that I see over and over again on the navigation bar? Essentially, it all comes down to it being too complicated. Think about the top 2 pieces of information we know our clients want when they come to our websites, and the first is the "About Us" page. This is the most popular page on a veterinary website, so we have to make sure that it is extremely easy for our clients to find it. Why run them through a maze instead of just giving them what they want?

The next most important page is the "Contact Us". I can't tell you how many veterinary websites I've reviewed that have their contact page buried amongst a number of dropdown menus. It's often so difficult to find, and so frustrating that I'm sure many of the potential clients who would look them up and try to give them a call never actually make it to that step.

We have to make the nav bar really simple. In between these 2 anchors (*Contact Us* and *About Us*), we should have 3-5 other tabs, or links, but definitely no greater than this. In the case of usability and navigation, less is definitely more. We don't want to be confusing; instead, we want to really encourage engagement. This takes care of what we call the header portion of the website.

» Website Slider

Now, below the header, but still above the fold, we need to have what's called a slider. A slider, or an image that changes, should also not have a border that is linear. Be creative - use curved lines or a nice transition. The key element of a slider is that it focuses on the human/animal bond, so this is your chance to really engage with your clients as for many of them this is all they're going to see as they often never scroll down.

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Next, the slider must be dynamic. This means the area should be moving rapidly, with at least 3-5 images that are changing. On the right hand side of the slider, we should have a "New Client" form, which speaks directly to those new prospects. If I'm a client and my pet has an issue, I may be just checking out veterinary websites and then going back and forth to Dr. Google. But if there is a form that says, "You're a new client! Enter your name, email and your pets name, and let's get your pet's problem solved!", that's really going to speak to my need. That will motivate the potential client to take the action. All of these little tricks add to the increased conversion rate that will ultimately drive the growth of your practice.

» Website Buttons

Below the slider (but again, still above he fold), we have another key location of online real estate. Here, we have the opportunity to make 3 or 4 important buttons. These can include a "Hospital Tour", which increases client engagement, or "Book an Appointment Online", which targets both new and current clients and makes your website "sticky" (meaning the client will come back again and again). Finally, you can also include a "Prescription Refill" form - there are many clients who are just not comfortable picking up their phones because they'd much rather do everything online. For example, they could be at work or in their car, where doing things online is much easier than picking up the phone, so if we give them that option they will appreciate it.

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» Website Inspirational Message

Below these buttons is where we place our inspirational content, our "Welcome to our Hospital" message. This inspirational content is the *Start with Why* boilerplate. Here, you are really emphasizing why your hospital exists, why you get out of bed every morning, rather than just *what* you do. The *why* is really what our clients want to know (again: 'our clients don't care how much we know until they know how much we care), and this is a great opportunity to showcase that message.

On the right of this is a great place to add a video. Using as many forms of media as possible to communicate that inspirational message with our clients will give it a much greater chance of actually being absorbed.

So, there you have it. This is the ideal above-the-fold look and feel of a veterinary website. We emphasize the human/animal bond, have moving and dynamic images, speak to our new clients, motivate them to take action and deliver exactly what we know our clients want. We've sent them to the "About Us" page and the "Contact Us" page, all while filling the website with inspirational messaging and engaging design. Now, let's look at what should be 'below the fold' of the home page.

» Website Blog Articles

Under the inspirational message and Hospital Tour video, we need our Blog articles. A blog is essentially where you place your articles. The most important elements are that they are both human/animal bond focused, which we achieve through the images on the right hand side, and that they are easily shareable. As we can see here, any of your clients should be able to

instantly click a button and share this article across their social networks. You will be rewarded when you develop really high quality content, because your clients will share it. Further, your clients will be able to comment, increasing your client engagement and turning your articles into a real conversation. Don't worry - the comments practices tend to get are not overwhelming. They rarely occur and should always be redirected to book an appointment for a proper consultation.

What does this enable you to do? Well you, as the operator of the website, only need to be able to change the blog to add new articles, or to create new announcements, and they will automatically be shown on your website's homepage. As a website visitor, to see the dates of these blog articles signals to them that your practice is up to date, that your practice is active and that your organization is worthy of my business.

» Website Social Media Widgets
On the right hand side, we have a great opportunity to add a social media widget. A social media widget, for instance, can show the faces of all your Facebook fans so that as a potential client I can see all of those other people who have already put their trust into you and your practice. It will even show a number like "400 fans", and if we remember the emotional motivators we've discussed previously, showing that 400 people have clicked "like" for your practice signals community and social proof. This will make a potential client trust you more than if this feature did not exist, and it's also another great opportunity for the visitor to LIKE your practice, and for you to connect with your clients.

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» Website Footer
Finally, we have the footer which is important because it follows on every single page. So, on the bottom, left hand side, we will want to have the contact info, because on every single page of your veterinary website we want this information to be large, attractive and easily accessible. Next, we'll have a social media widget, which can either be simple icons that clients can click through to connect with you on these platforms, or it can be a 'feed'. A feed basically means that whatever you write on social media profiles will show up here. Again, this is a great way to make sure your website always looks and feels fresh.

In the footer, for example, you can also feature a deal of some kind. What is your monthly special? What is the new message that you want to convey to your clients? Then you can add anything else, like a cartoon, another new client form or an image of a map with directions. You will be able to download this schematic, and talk to your web developer. It is very important that you incorporate all of these elements into your veterinary website.

» Website Testimonials
Another excellent element that this practice has on its website is the testimonials on the right hand side. If I came across this practice's website by chance and read the article, was quite impressed, and then read the testimonials, it is one more feather in this clinic's cap that will motivate me to actually visit this practice.

» Photographer's Brief

I would now like to very briefly review the veterinary Photographer's Brief. This has been designed to ensure that when you hire a professional photographer, you are going to get exceptional results. Otherwise, without this brief, it's usually hit or miss, and unfortunately, there are more misses than hits.

We've broken it down into the general principles. The key element is that every photo should include both a happy, smiling person and an animal. You should never have an image of an empty room or of any potentially painful procedures. Overall, we want to convey a warm and positive personality for the practice.

Now let's talk about the individual categories.

1. With staff member photos, make sure it's not just a head shot, but it's your staff interacting with an animal.
2. It's great to bring the team together and take a group shot. If you can see the top image here, they look like superstars. This goes a long way toward engaging with your clients, and motivating them toward believing that you are a fantastic clinic, and that they should choose you as their veterinarian.
3. With the Hospital Tour, we basically walk through your practice. We walk through each room with a new person and a new animal. This creates a hospital tour that really counts. Can you see the difference in the exam room photos compared with those in the previous video of an empty, cold, steel table? These practices are full personality. You can include any special services that you have, as well as some action shots, which is always fun.
4. Get as many cute images as you can while your photographer is there which you can then ask your web developer to incorporate within your website. Appropriate, professional photography is a winning combination.

And there you have it – a top notch veterinary website!

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