

Transcript: Module 3b

Your Website's Content

» The Importance of a Blog

The most effective way to share your practice's content is through a series of articles, otherwise known as a blog. These publications are typically between 250 and 800 words, and we recommend that you produce 1-2 of them, each and every month. That being said, why is a blog so important? Well, for example, writing these articles can help you establish yourself as an authority, both in a medical sense and in your geographical area. It's also one of the most important things you can do for search engine optimization.

Google's search engine algorithms are looking first and foremost for novel content. This will be used to assess whether your website is relevant for their search results. Finally, a blog is one of the most powerful client engagement mechanisms. This is because it allows you to speak directly to your clients, sharing announcements, important medical information and general pet interest topics.

Let me take a moment to illustrate how a blog can be effective. As you can see, I've typed in "pet food recall Dartmouth", and even though this practice has only written one blog article on this topic, they are dominating the local search engine results. What this also highlights is that whenever someone in your area is typing in pet related terms, they are going to come across your practice's website. Since in Module 2 we transformed your website into a 10 out of 10 first impression, that potential client will be converted at a higher rate into an actual client.

As we can see in the online world, content is king. Let's take a moment and review why this is so. First and foremost, novel content achieves high search engine rankings. This is because Google's algorithm is designed to show fresh and updated content. Secondly, as we've just seen, blog articles are found by potential clients that are searching pet related topics in your area. Thirdly, your blog will engage your active clients. It will create a culture of them coming back to your website again and again to read the latest articles. This positions you as your clients' pet health educator.

The next important point is that content creates a dynamic and exciting hub for your practice. This makes not only your website but also you practice something

your clients want to be associated with. Finally, content in the form of a blog develops a practice asset. Every time you publish an article, you carve out a piece of online real estate. This will extend your practice's reach and visibility while providing helpful information to the public, who, in return, will reward your practice with their business.

So now, as a practice, we have to learn what is involved in creating this effective content.

» Let's look at the 3 key principles.

The overarching goal is to create a system. To start with, we have to be consistent, and in order to do this, we must share the workload. If it is left to just one person within the practice, the baseline of articles published every other week will never be achieved. On the other hand, if one person is delegating the tasks, it's much more likely to be implemented. The goal is to have ongoing contributions throughout the year to be published on a consistent basis.

The next principle is that you must be accurate. This means, that while we are sharing the responsibility for writing the articles, we are centralizing the accountability for their accuracy. In short, while the whole team is potentially contributing, only one person is responsible for the quality and the output of the work.

Finally, in this system, we must write in a way that ensures these articles are going to be found. It can be very frustrating to go through the effort of being consistent and being accurate if your articles are never found by your local pet owning population.

Let's summarize with an illustrative model. The content on your website, in the form of blog articles, must be written accurately, published consistently and structured in a way to achieve maximum visibility. Do all of this and you will almost certainly increase your client engagement.

» Let's take a look at the Editor's job.

Ok, so that was the why and the what. Now, let's roll up our sleeves and look at the how. The best way to achieve elements of consistency and accuracy is to select an editor from within your practice. A note of caution: the editor should not be a veterinarian, because we as vets are already so busy, it's just not realistic to fit this into our already chaotic schedule. On the other hand, putting someone else within

the practice in charge of scheduling and editing the content will ensure that this system does not grind to a halt.

The editor's job is as follows:

First, they must create a content and topic calendar. Successful practice content development first involves compiling a list of topics, and then creating and maintaining a detailed calendar of when each of these topics is to be scheduled. The most effective way to do this is through the use of an editorial calendar.

Next, the editor must assign due dates to other members of the practice team, while also recognizing their own deadline for publishing the article. Once the article is received by the editor from the staff member, they are then responsible for proofing the writing. This is to include checking for spelling and grammatical errors, and ensuring that the tone of the article is in line with the voice of the practice.

Once the article has been proofed for errors and is ready to go, the editor's job is to format it and upload it into the blog. Formatting could entail cutting and pasting the text into the website administration panel, adding images, adding links, adding videos, or any other interactive element.

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Once the article is in place, you can then schedule when it will actually be published. The beauty of today's technology is that you don't have to wait to publish each blog article individually. Instead, if you have multiple blog articles, you can upload them into your website's interface and schedule them to go live at a date in the future. This will allow you to keep a steady flow of content in the works, always ready to be published. If you do not have this function, please ask your web developer as not all websites have this capability.

The last step of the process is to share this new blog post on all of your social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter. This will provide your blog and your website with maximum exposure, not only to your own social network, but also to that of your friends and followers who will share the content.

» Topic list

Now that we have an editor, one of their first jobs is to ensure that a topic list is created. They can either do this themselves, or elect a member of the team to be of assistance. Part of the homework for this module is for you to sit down and create a list of 24 blog topics. This translates to approximately one full year of content, and trust me - this is half the battle. Once you have the topic in front of you, writing becomes the easy part.

A very common question involves the type of topics a practice should be writing about. Fundamentally, this should be a reflection of the personality of your practice, but should also be pet-interest focused rather than overly medical. Another tip is to match your topics with the season. So, for example, in October you could write about dogs and chocolate. The key is not to be overly descriptive, especially about features, but rather emphasize the benefit of the article to the client and make sure you're solving a problem. What we're looking to do is give something to the client that they can take away as great value. That can either be solving a problem, or lightening their day with a special pet story.

Just a note, one of the tools included in this module is a blog topic list, so I encourage you to download it and use it as your source of inspiration.

» Schedule

Having a schedule will not only overcome the stumbling block of finding inspiration on an ad-hoc basis, but it will also facilitate the editor's ability to distribute the workload. This will transform the process from an overwhelming burden for a single individual into a true team effort that will be very manageable. Another resource included within the toolbox is an example schedule. I recommend you download it and use it as a template for topic writing and publication planning.

I would like to take a quick moment and walk you through various aspects of this schedule. The first thing to note is that there are only two articles per month. From experience, this has proven to be a manageable quantity that every practice can achieve. A trick I often use is to write the two baseline articles per month, and then supplement them with small announcements. For example, if you bring on a new staff member or start carrying a new line of dog food, this makes a great hundred word article that anyone can write.

Next we have the topic, and this will be selected from the list that you just created. Then, we have the keyword phrase, but at the moment I'd like you to leave this blank because we're going to be discussing this point in depth in the next module. Then we have the author, which will be the staff member assigned to write the article. This field is the key to sharing the responsibility that we discussed previously.

Next, we have the rough draft due field, which is the date that the staff member must provide the article to the editor. Then, we have the publish date. This is when the editor will actually publish the article. Remember to ask your web developer to give you the ability to schedule multiple posts in advance. Our clients have found this to be a very useful feature as it saves the editor a great deal of time and effort.

» Let's see how this works in practice.

As you know, we start with the editor who is the pivot for the entire process. They then create the topic list, which is used as the basis for the schedule. With the schedule in hand, the editor can then assign responsibilities and due dates to each of your staff members. When the posts are written, they are sent back to the editor whose job is to proof, format and publish.

Once this article is live, your practice will be in front of more potential clients who, when they come across your 10 out of 10 website, will be inspired to become your actual clients. As your client base grows, this will create more word of mouth referrals, generating more prospective clients who, in turn, will become active clients. As you can see, this process is indefinite and all based on a successful content development system.

» Common mistakes to avoid.

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The first is not scheduling at least six months in advance. If this process is not woven into your day to day practice with an advanced schedule, things will get busy and the system will derail.

Another common mistake is failing to include the team. There is often the temptation to take on all the responsibility yourself, but we have to be realistic about both time and energy, as this is such an important system.

I'd also advise you to avoid writing content that is overly medical in nature. Clients are more interested in pet interest topics than clinical ones. The two keys are pet interest and benefits. If you're able to incorporate these components into your writing, it will hit home with your audience.

Copying text from other websites is a serious, albeit innocent mistake, but Google will punish your website if it has any duplicate content so all articles must be 100% original. You can still use other websites as a source of inspiration; just make sure that your text is completely unique.

The final mistake is not writing for visibility, and this is the topic that we'll be covering in detail in the next module.

Ok, so there you have it. We've reviewed the system and touched on some of the most common mistakes to avoid. It's now time to put your own content development system into place. Your first step is to select an editor from within your practice who is not a veterinarian. Within the toolbox you will find an editor's job description which is an excellent starting point. Once the editor is in place, have them create a topic list and a six month schedule.

Follow these guidelines and your own content development system will be in place. In our next module, we will be discussing how to write for visibility and that's going to take the "Dr. Google" phenomenon and make it work in your favor.

See you in the next video!