

# Content gets your website noticed

*But don't forget the real goal is to get patients to come to your practice*



by Howard Larkin

**R**egularly refreshing content on your practice website is essential to keep it high on the list when patients use online search engines.

But as informative as your site may be, it's also important to keep in mind that the real goal is to get patients to contact you, according to presenters at the inaugural

practice management seminar presented at the XXVI Congress of the ESCRS in Berlin.

"More content equals more visits," says Marc Schaller, creative director of Mavo Studio in London, UK. "One hundred pages beat 10 pages, and 500 are even better. But it can't be nonsense. It matters what the site is about."

Ideally, your overall brand image should guide the content that you use, Mr Schaller explains. So before developing a website, Mr Schaller recommends asking yourself the following questions to help you focus the image you want to project:

- What is your business for?
- Who are you targeting? Is there a specific demographic or age group?
- What differentiates you from the competition?
- How do you want people to see your practice?
- Do you want to blend in or stand out in the market?

The answers to these questions should guide everything from your practice name to the design of your website, your logo and all patient education material you produce. It also should guide the content of your website, Mr Schaller says. For example, if your primary interest is laser refractive surgery, your brand image

should probably appeal to younger patients. On the other hand, if you are primarily interested in lens implants, you may want to include material geared toward older patients.

Similarly, if you are targeting the discount end of the market, your brand image might emphasise price, volume, and value. If you are looking for lower volume and higher fees, building an image as a leading researcher might help.

And, of course, your website should include basic information such as:

- practice history;
- physician and staff biographies;
- information about the services you offer.

These can include features such as frequently asked questions (FAQ), copies of published articles and pieces explaining procedures written specifically for your website;

- an interactive e-form to contact your office or to book an appointment.

To improve your website's ability to attract traffic and raise its visibility on web searches, Mr Schaller recommends including interactive content, such as patient testimonial videos.

One easy and low-cost way to produce a custom patient video is through the website Animoto.com, says Michael Malley, founder of the CRM Marketing Group, in Houston, US, which specialises in refractive surgery marketing. All that Animoto requires is to upload about 30 still pictures. With those photographs, the site's software pieces them together with background music. "It can take a few tries to get one that works, but it is a really easy way to get a unique video," Mr Malley says.

Another way to include patient videos is to give patients a video camera and let them make their own statement. Mr Malley recommends keeping them below five minutes with two minutes being a good target. He also recommends finding attractive patients for such videos. "People want to have LASIK to look better and feel better, so you want to reinforce that."

Mr Schaller also suggests writing all web content with search criteria in mind. Services such as Google are more likely to move your site up the list if you continually refresh your content and include links to outside content, he notes. Newsletters and blogs are good ways to accomplish this.

Also, repeating key search words such as "eye care", "LASIK", "cataract" and the city where you are located throughout the site will improve your chances of showing up



Mike Malley, CRM Marketing Group

when patients search the web. Also, experienced web coders can increase your chances of moving up on search results by making your content more easily read by search engines, Mr Schaller says.

But having a website is about more than creating an image and educating patients. In the end, it is a marketing tool. That means the ultimate goal is to generate traffic to your practice, Mr Malley says.

One way to do it is to offer patients something on your website to make an appointment. It could be a button on the screen offering a free LASIK assessment where this is allowable, or an invitation to an information session.

The button brings up an email or other online scheduling system to book the appointment. This tactic even works when the practice isn't offering anything of tangible value, Mr Malley says. He notes that one of his clients has been very successful with a button that offers a "VIP LASIK evaluation".

What's the difference between a VIP evaluation and regular evaluation? "It's really no different," Mr Malley explains. "Maybe you just smile more. But people respond to it better than if you just say 'free LASIK evaluation'. It makes them feel special, and people click on it like crazy."

Mr Malley also suggests integrating your web marketing with other online technologies, including email and texting. This is a good way to promote new services, such as the availability of all-laser LASIK or a new presbyopia-correcting lens. Inviting established patients for a "patient appreciation day" by email or text message with a link back to your website can generate a surprising amount of traffic. Mr Malley says one LASIK centre displayed an advertisement on the scoreboard at an American football game. The advertisement directed spectators to text a number for "Free LASIK evaluation" that linked back to a practice website. Through the website, they could sign up for their free evaluation.

Anniversaries are also good web and email promotion opportunities, Mr Malley says. "It gives you an opportunity to emphasise how long you have been in the community, which means you must be a quality provider. It also gives you an opportunity to put out messages like 'LASIK is safer and better than ever'. It's very reassuring to the patient."

European Society of Retina Specialists  
**EURETINA 2009**  
 Nice, France

Preliminary Programme now available online  
[www.euretina.org](http://www.euretina.org)

14-17 May 2009  
 Nice Acropolis Centre, Nice, France

**9<sup>TH</sup> EURETINA CONGRESS**

Tel: +353 1 210 0092  
 Fax: +353 1 209 1112  
 Email: [euretina@euretina.org](mailto:euretina@euretina.org)  
 Web: [www.euretina.org](http://www.euretina.org)

**EURETINA**  
 European Society of Retina Specialists