



Creating a Web presence

For more on this topic, go to www.dentaleconomics.com and search using the following key words: *Glenn Lombardi, Officite.com, Web design, Web presence, site, Internet, navigation.*

This month I am speaking with Officite.com President Glenn Lombardi, who shares advice on how **DENTISTS** should approach creating a **Web presence**. Go to www.officite.com to see some examples of what we will discuss.

Dr. DiTolla: I think many dentists are afraid of how much work is needed to create a Web site because they have no idea how one is developed. How much work is involved for the dentist in building a Web site?

Lombardi: The best advice I can give is to find a qualified, experienced Web design firm that specializes in the dental profession. If a dentist were to use a general Web design company, one that does not have expertise in the dental community, the process would be much more involved. The dentist would be responsible for selecting colors, conceptualizing designs, and directing layouts.

This information then would go through a creative process, which could take as many as three detailed meetings and perhaps three months to complete. More importantly, the dentist would be responsible for writing the new Web site's content. This would include a practice profile, service descriptions, information about procedures and treatments — just to name a few elements. Writing content can be laborious. This part of the process can take as much as three months and can turn into a full-time job for the dentist.

But when a dentist chooses a Web design firm that specializes in the dental field, the process is quite simple. That's because, first and foremost — as is the case with Officite — much of the process is already complete. We have already conducted patient surveys to learn what they are looking for in a dental practice Web site, such as colors, touch, navigation, and detail. We also write and supply all content. With more than 2,000 Web sites to our credit, we have a well-rounded library of options for dentists, ranging from information on Invisalign® to detailed descriptions of veneers and general teeth whitening services.

We tell clients it's anything anyone would want or need to know about dentistry. Our goal is to make the process simple by using our researched and proven system that incorporates well-written content with clean navigation and a contemporary, smooth design. Our clients just need to give us basic information to get a professional, manageable Web site up and running. Generally, this can be done in

three to five business days.

Dr. DiTolla: It's important to point out that Officite handles the written content because dentists are notorious for confusing patients when they try to explain what needs to be done. Usually, the dentist turns to the dental assistant to ask for help or clarification. So, if dentists were to create their own Web sites, they may lose effectiveness since dentists aren't the best at describing — in patient-friendly terms — what kind of services they offer.

Lombardi: Exactly. People searching the Internet want quick, simple answers. Once they gather enough information, they will decide if they are coming to your office. Essentially, you have to make sure the navigation is clear and the content is written well, not only to inform, but also to drive them into the practice.

Dr. DiTolla: I have noticed that for every business I want to use or every restaurant I want to go to, I look at that business's Web site first. If the business doesn't have a Web site, I actually get suspicious. So for a dental practice, once a dentist commits to Officite and says, "OK, let's create a Web site," how long does the process of customization usually take?

Lombardi: You should expect to have a "live" Web site within three to 10 business days after you sign on as a client. The only aspect that usually takes some time is a picture, no matter whether of the office, the doctors, or any staff members. We usually recommend a professional photographer take these pictures to ensure the highest quality and fastest turnaround time.

Dr. DiTolla: It's amazing that a site can go live within the span of about a week. To go from no Web presence to having an established, mature-looking site in that short of a time is incredible. Once a dentist has a Web site, how often should it be updated?

Lombardi: We think that dentists should update their Web sites at least quarterly, if not monthly. As you said, one of the problems you encounter today is looking suspicious if you don't have a Web site. Consumers don't expect a plain or outdated-looking site. They expect a dental practice's site to have relevant information and look contemporary. **DE**

Dr. Michael DiTolla is the Director of Clinical Research and Education at Glidewell Laboratories in Newport Beach, Calif. He lectures nationwide on both restorative and cosmetic dentistry. Dr. DiTolla has several free clinical programs available online or on DVD at www.glidewell-lab.com. For more information on this article or his seminars, please contact him at www.drditolla.com.