

The Holistic Way

the 8 steps to creating and having a successful website

How as a massage therapist do you go about creating your own website and making it a success for you? Marek Duchnowski - web entrepreneur and holistic practitioner looks at the 8 steps of website design and how to attract new clients through your website.

The Internet has revolutionized the way we communicate, do business and find information. With 62% of UK households on the Internet and 24hr broadband connections, the days of looking for a therapist in the yellow pages are all but gone.

Information about Complementary therapies has exploded on the web in recent times, with massage being particularly well represented on many portals such as www.massageexchange.com and www.worldmassageforum.com.

We are finding that 50% of all enquiries for therapists are coming through their websites, and this figure is increasing. Some practitioners are reporting as high as 90% of their business comes through their website.

With the current cost of web design and hosting at an all time low, every massage and body therapist should be taking advantage of this powerful new marketing medium that is the web.

Step 1: Your Vision- Setting Your Intent



What I hope to bring out in this article is that developing a website is much more than just a few pages on the web. It's about you and your vision for how you want your practice to evolve and grow.

Defining your Vision is the most important step because it forms the foundation of your website and defines what your practice is going to create and achieve.

Actually visualize where you want to be with yourself and your practice within a time frame. Use this process as an opportunity to look at your practice as a whole and ask yourself; what's working? What's not? What am I enjoying and what am I struggling with?

Then ask yourself "what's my USP"? This is your "Unique Selling Point" and it's what differentiates you from everyone else and determines the power of You, Your Business and Your Brand to reach and connect with the clients you want to attract.

Answering these questions will help to formulate a strong targeted message and image of your practice to your prospective clients of what you are about, what your intentions are and why they should come to You.

If all this ignites a fire within you when you think about your future and creating your website then this means "Go For It"!

Step 2 ATTRACT -The Right client

In order for your website to become successful people have to be able to find it by typing search phrases or 'keywords' into search engines such as Google. A website which mirrors these search phrases has a better chance of coming up in the search results. Good results mean a greater number of visits and in turn, more valuable enquiries.

Identifying the most popular search phrases for your audience allows you to optimize your search results by strategically placing the most relevant keywords throughout your web pages. This process is called Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and there are many tools on the web such as www.wordtracker.com that can help you discover and define these keywords.

Keywords are extremely important because they give you an insight to your prospective clients needs - then you can match your services/products to those needs.

A step-up from this is to use your keywords to set up a more effective "Pay Per Click" campaign with Google. This is where you sponsor a key phrase by paying Google a fee every-time somebody clicks your sponsored ad (these are the ads which appear above search results and on the right-hand side of the Google results page). The advantage of this method is that you can get your site listed almost immediately to attract very relevant, targeted traffic, whereas SEO can take time.

Your keywords can also help you in choosing your web address. For example if a lot of people are searching for "Holistic Massage in Manchester", you could choose the address www.holisticmassageinmanchester.co.uk which would help you in your over all Google ranking (or score).

Step 3 PREPARE-Your Content

Content is "King" on the web. 75% of users site high quality content is the most important factor for repeat visits. You need to write content that is compelling, relevant and up-to-date and the search engines will reward you for it.

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Web usability studies have shown that users do not always read, rather they scan pages and in general do not like long, scrolling pages, so use bold statements as questions that your prospective client has and tell them how you can help them in a concise way.

Organisation of content is also key, with an easy navigation system so people can find information easily.

This is where you would need to create the site structure of the website - the names of the buttons. Here are some suggestions for a typical therapist site.

1. About me
2. About my Treatments
3. Advice
4. Latest News
5. Clinic
6. Talks and Courses
7. Links
8. Contact

Relax and Enjoy www.relaxandenjoy.co.uk has a great site structure to find your therapy quickly

The beauty of the web is that you can start small and expand when you need to.

Step 4 DESIGN-Look and Feel

Going hand in hand with step 3 is how you want your site to look and feel.

Your design has to connect with the Head which is all about the right information being well structured, easy to navigate and easy to get in touch with.



Of great importance is to connect with the Heart, which is all about connecting with the emotions of your client. A client that connects emotionally to you will connect more deeply with you and be more loyal. The design and imagery you use has to inspire and put across your vision for your practice.

It is also important to decide what image or feel you want to portray- modern, conservative, clean, trendy, warm, cutting edge. All this will reflect your brand and needs to tie in with all your off-line literature.

A good example of a site that connects with the heart www.homeopathyworks.co.uk



Step 5 Create

There are mainly 3 options to get your site built

1. DIY - get your own HTML editor such as Dreamweaver and create the site yourself - be aware that you will need a lot of technical expertise to do this effectively.
2. Go to companies like www.123-reg.co.uk where you can build a site on line using templates - cheap and easy to do but usually very standardized and generic.
3. Go to a specialized web design company dedicated to practitioners and therapists such as www.vitalwebdesign.com and www.webhealer.com where you will get a design which reflects you - check out their designs and speak to a couple of their clients to see what they are like.

www.imagowell-being.co.uk is a good example of clear, concise content and attractive design

Step 6 Innovate

To ensure people are attracted to your site and come back choose special features to make your website more interactive and provide useful services that will benefit your clients. Some examples are;

businessstools

the holistic way

- On line booking of appointments
- Keep in touch with regular electronic newsletters
- Offer discounts by booking on line
- Create a video and put it on You Tube
- Have a Blog with all the latest news, links and articles and a great way to keep your content fresh and up to date.
- Give away free advice/ techniques of how to massage

Step 7 Promote

On line

As well as registration with key search engines in order to get better listings on search engines, it is crucial to have as many websites listing your web address as you can get. Exchanging links and helping each other in getting more exposure for your services will result in better search results and more exposure.

Getting listed on local and national directories is also very important so get listed with your national body and local business directories as well fellow practitioners websites..

One way to keep visitors is to offer a free newsletter which they can sign up to and receive regular updates from you.

Also get out there and surf the many blogs and sites and write articles for them - the more your name is out there the more visible you shall be.

Offline

Make sure all your promotional materials e.g. business cards, leaflets have your web address on and anytime you give a talk/course collect people's emails. It is also a good idea to keep your offline branding and design consistent with that of your website or vice-versa.

Complementary clinic www.stress-solutions.info use e-newsletters to keep in touch with clients

Step 8 Love

The web is very dynamic so it's important to match that energy and keep your site content updated, maintained and relevant. Use site metrics to monitor who visited your site, which keywords and search engines etc. Where have they come from and how long have they stayed?

What pages do they view and which one's are not viewed? Be challenging and be prepared to change it! Nurture your website and it will pay dividends.

Conclusion

Your website is your 24hr shop window to the world and your prospective clients will judge the quality of your practice by the quality of your website. It is therefore important to get it right and make it look beautiful, professional, and searchable and so that it serves and inspires your clients.

When we do the 8 Step process, I have seen time and time again that the website re-inspires the practitioner and their practice. And guess what, they attract more clients both on-line and off-line.

Make 2008 the Year you join the Internet evolution.

About the Author

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