

The web development process

Get it right in the beginning and save yourself a headache down the track...

By Kimberley Ward



“A good website is designed to demonstrate to a patient why they should choose you over a competitor. To ensure this overall goal is achieved, it is important to follow a sound web development process...”

This six article series will focus on the importance of your web presence as an integral component of your practice marketing. I will walk you through the web development process step-by-step, giving a real life example along the way.

We are living in the so called ‘information age’, a time characterised by our ability to find and share information instantly, thanks to the technology that has now become part of our everyday lives. A major component is the world wide web - a huge encyclopedia of information at your fingertips. As we use the web to search, interact and learn, it is imperative that your brand is represented where your current and potential patients are searching for you (and your competitors), and that your web presence conveys the right messages about you and your practice.

The benefits of having an online presence are many and varied and include:

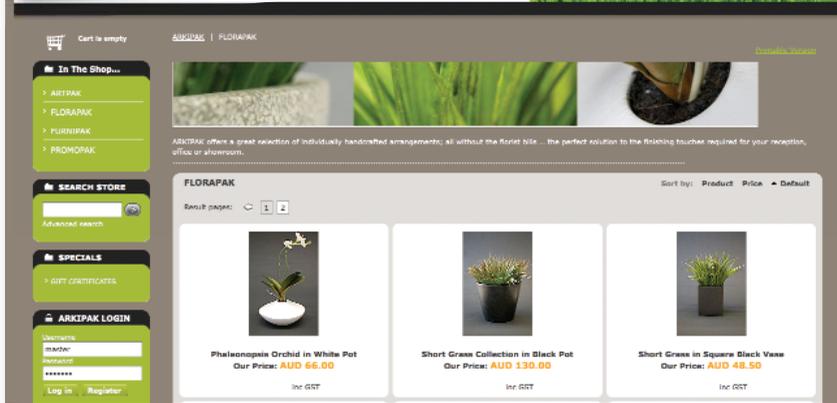
- Reaching a new audience;
- Presenting a professional/credible image;
- In a sense being ‘open for business’ 24 hours a day - patients can find out about you, at a time that’s suitable to them;
- Improved customer service - by including an FAQ section or ‘Patient Aftercare’ section, you can answer questions for patients without them having to visit or call your practice;



- Education - you can educate your patients online with information on treatments and procedures. This may mean less time is required explaining complex procedures in the chair and can lead to greater treatment plan acceptance as this information forms part of their decision making process.

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The first step in this process is appointing a champion within your workplace to coordinate the process from start to finish. This is important to ensure consistency of message and to ensure there is a member of the team to drive the project. Once



In the case of Arkipak, LDA's online store, this web development process was followed to the letter. A comprehensive questionnaire was completed, which outlined the target market for the site, the demographics of this market, the functions required on the site and the overall feel that the site should achieve. A mood board was created with cuttings showing colours and finishes, which set out a desired tone. The board referenced other websites that achieved this feel and the shopping cart system that was to be used in the site. The board also included magazine cuttings, objects and fabric samples that contributed to the character to be achieved. The overall feel aimed to be fresh and organic - hence the green grass and the background colour references cardboard packing boxes. The result is a clean, easy to navigate site that aims to let the products do the talking.

this person has been appointed, the next step is the completion of a questionnaire and subsequently, the development of a brief. A questionnaire will generally aim to get you thinking about how your practice is currently perceived versus how you would like it positioned and will ask you to outline the message you would like carried throughout your site. Your responses to this questionnaire will form the basis of your brief, which web designers and developers will look to for guidance on the direction your site will take.

As so much is reflected in the feel of the site, it is important at this stage that you be clear and specific on what you are wanting to achieve. Providing examples of sites you like can greatly assist in briefing a designer regarding content and feel; collect clippings of anything that moves you and provide this with a brief as part of an abstract 'mood board'. Just try not to get too caught up in the detail of the design

and page layout - leave that to the people who do this for a living!

At this stage, it's important to have a clear idea of your target demographic, as this can influence colour, navigation, tone and other inclusions on your site. It's also important to then drill down to what these users want and expect from your site - focus on the user experience and ensure your site meets their needs and expectations, rather than falling into the common trap of using the web as a place to blow your own trumpet.

Finally, you should ensure you have the domain names you would like registered, as a developer cannot begin work on a site until this vital step has been completed. Remember that you can purchase more than one domain name and point them to the one correct site. Often companies will consider purchasing variations of their actual name including both .com and .com.au extensions.

In the next edition, we will attack the next step in the website development process - Supply of a site map.

About the author

Kimberley Ward is Business Development and Marketing Manager for Levitch Design Associates, one of Australia's leading healthcare interior design consultancies who offer an integrated approach to practice presentation. Custom corporate identity solutions, brand development, graphic/web design, promotional strategies and marketing campaigns are some of the services provided. For more information, contact (02) 9880-9300 or visit www.levitch.com.au.