

6 Ways

To Grow Your
Physical Therapy
Practice in the
Electronic Age

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6 Ways to Grow Your Physical Therapy Practice in the Electronic Age

In order to grow your physical therapy practice you must develop a reputation of professional competence and expertise. Patients are attracted to practitioners that are well informed and who make the effort to share the latest developments in their field. Knowledgeable patients are more likely to comply with a course of treatment; the more informed they are about your services, the more likely patients are to refer family and friends to your practice.

Growing your practice in the Electronic Age requires that you grow your presence on the Internet and through email. Simply having a Web site is not enough. A stale, ineffective Web site is no better than not having one at all. Email has become part of our culture, and as a result, many people prefer to receive information via email, and a mouse-click makes it easy for them to spread the word about your practice. Email is an effective and inexpensive way to reach out to new and existing patients. Our tips will help you maximize your online investment and show you how to bolster the profile of your practice and build patient referrals.

1.

Make a Good Online Impression.

In this online economy, your Web site is your first chance to make an impression with prospective patients. A negative impression will steer patients toward your competition, so don't let the message they receive from your Web site be anything less than "we are the best."

The success of any Web site hinges on credibility, and if people find your Web site useful they are likely to view your practice as credible. According to a Stanford University research study the credibility of your Web site improves when you recognize the needs of your audience and provide content to meet those needs. If visitors view your Web site as a reliable source of information they are more likely to view your practice as knowledgeable, experienced and competent.

Does your Web site make a good impression?

- ◆ Is the content current and relevant?
- ◆ Does your Web site explain the full range of services available to patients?
- ◆ Can patients easily contact you through your Web site?

2.

Keep Your Web Site Fresh.

You spent valuable time and money developing your Web site; maintain your investment by keeping the content current. How often does a prospective or existing patient "check you out" by going online only to find stale and outdated content? If visitors don't find something of interest at your site, they will quickly click over to your competition.

Your Web site is your opportunity to reach thousands of people, but you must give them a reason to visit. Keep it fresh by adding and updating content at least once a month. Post articles and advice strategically designed to stimulate interest in the full range

Your goal is to become a trusted and reliable source of information. Do your patients know that you can effectively help them treat the following?

- ◆ Avoiding falls
- ◆ Sports injuries
- ◆ Repetitive strain injuries
- ◆ Joint replacements
- ◆ Lower back injuries
- ◆ Stroke rehabilitation

of health care problems you treat. A Web site is an investment; it should yield a return. Keeping it fresh will pay you back by bolstering the profile of your practice and driving new patient referrals.

3.

Raise Your Profile Through Email.

Almost 2 million emails are sent every second; Email has become so commonplace that it is now hard to imagine getting along without it. Today, most people prefer to receive information via email. Email is effective, inexpensive, wide reaching, and a valuable tool to grow your physical therapy practice.

Engage your patients by regularly sending them relevant and informative emails. A professionally crafted email newsletter provides a low-cost way to strengthen your patient relationships while subtly promoting your practice. The convenience of email will encour-

age new patient referrals, because your patients can easily share your email newsletter with family, friends and coworkers.

An email newsletter has a number of advantages.

- ◆ Custom distribution lists help promote new patient referrals
- ◆ Click-through tracking measures hits to your Web site
- ◆ Newsletter hyperlinks promote your practice and encourage Web visits
- ◆ An email newsletter has no printing or mailing costs

4.

Cultivate Knowledgeable Patients.

In the Information Age, the more informed and knowledgeable your patients are, the better. Well-thought out and continued patient education will generate more activity and referrals. Patients often do not understand the full range of expertise available within a practice or the full scope of services that a physical therapist can offer.

Researchers at Stanford found that companies who publish honest, unbiased information that is tailored to the interests of their clients develop a more credible and trusted reputation. By providing your patients with information throughout the year you establish yourself as an expert and show them that you are invested in their long-term care.

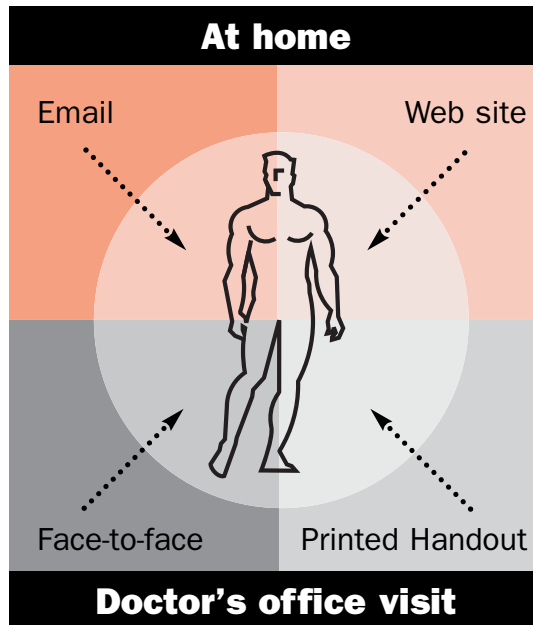
*Informed patients
are satisfied
patients*

One word of caution, don't make the mistake of sending your patients information that you have not read and reviewed. Whether it's printed on paper or presented on a computer screen, you'll want to be ready for any referral inquiry that will result, but more importantly, you'll want to avoid being caught off guard by a patient with a question.

5.

Construct a Coordinated Communications Strategy.

A cohesive communications strategy can help expand additional services to existing patients and jump-start referrals. Construct a coordinated communications strategy that includes the Web, email, printed handouts and face-to-face visits. Physical therapy practices that are adept at using the Internet technologies, along with traditional communications will have an advantage over their competitors.



6.

Make the Most of Information and Technology.

You have invested in information technology, now make the most of it. In today's knowledge economy, physical therapists that are savvy practitioners of online information will have an advantage. With thoughtful and professional use of the web and email you will elevate the professional reputation of your practice and encourage new customers.

It may be true that “content is king,” but the pay-off will not come without consistent attention and planning. Many practices find that utilizing content providers is a good option because they provide convenient access to professionally prepared and updated information.

Providing patients with current and informative content positions you as a trusted expert

Growing Your Practice

You have a Web site; now put it to work. **Upload new information every month** to keep visitors coming back for more. **Make a good impression online** and build your credibility. Once you have people visiting your Web site, encourage them to visit your office by focusing your online content on your strengths and specialties.

Email is everywhere. **Publishing a monthly email newsletter** makes it easy to reach out to your patients and easy for them to pass the word about your practice. **Construct a communications strategy** that includes printed material as well as Web and email content. **Establish your practice as a trusted source of information and expertise.** With these tactics, you will soon find yourself on the way to successfully growing your practice in the Electronic Age.