

Designing A Website for a Freelance Medical Writer

FROM THE FREELANCE WORKSHOP

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“A website is today’s version of a business card,” said Susan McCrossin, Principal of PA Internet Marketing, during her presentation at the AMWA-DVC Fifth Annual Freelance Workshop on April 21, 2007 in Blue Bell, Pa. In today’s business environment, there are many reasons to have a website including:

- Building brand identify
- Attracting new customers
- Converting visitors of the site to customers
- Encouraging visitor/customer referral.

Best of all, a website can work 24 hours a day 7 days a week, making it an invaluable and economical business tool.

Who should build my website?

There are many companies capable of building a website. The business owner must decide how much time versus how much money s/he is willing to dedicate to this form of marketing. Obviously, the more tasks the owner assumes, the more economical the website will be to design and maintain. As a rule, basic hosting for a website should cost about \$9 per month. If additional functionality is needed, such as document management, expect to pay more.

What should the content include?

When building or updating a website ensure the site is easy to navigate and downloads quickly. Implement modern web 2.0 design style guidelines including using large fonts, bold colors (especially green), and centering the page on the screen. Consider adding downloadable brochures, white papers, and document sharing capabilities. Any pictures being used on the site should be clear and easy to see. Develop a schedule for maintaining, updating, and creating content for the website. Every page of the website should have a call to action. Finally, recruit some close friends to download your site to ensure easy navigation across multiple computer platforms.

What marketing should support a website?

Once the website is active, add the URL to all business stationary, business cards, and business emails. To increase the traffic to the website consider implementing a search engine optimization plan. Search engines like Google and Yahoo use different ranking systems to list websites when a keyword is searched. Using strategies to move your website up the rank can mean the difference between being on page 1 or on page 1000 when a potential customer searches on a key word. Strategies might include:

- Ensuring searchable key words are between 2% and 8% of the text on each page
- Submitting the website to search engines and directories

- Enticing other websites to link to your website by developing content like white papers that can be downloaded from your site (.gov and .edu sites are best)
- Registering the website site map to Google and Yahoo.
- Purchasing search advertising.

Whatever your marketing strategy, monitor your key word search rankings and your visitor traffic.

Unlike a business card that is designed, printed and passed around; a good website is an ever-changing marketing tool. Developing a plan, building a user friendly site, changing content frequently, and using tools to market the site will ensure the best return on investment.

For more resources and a list of helpful tools visit the PAInternetMarketing website at: <http://www.painternetmarketing.com/search-engine-marketing/tools.asp>.

Rebecca O'Donnell has over 20 years of commercial and product development industry experience, and is the owner of TK Solutions a medical writing and scientific communications company.