



WEBSITE PROTOCOL

BY NANCY LASHLEY, ATHENA MARKETING

You've probably been feeling the crunch to get a website up. So how do you go about it? Most companies that will work within your budget do not produce websites that are as high in quality as the image you want to portray. Some companies will try to up-sell you or give you the run-around about the size and type of website you will need. Other companies won't work with you on an individual level, limiting your choices to marginal quality, cookie-cutter websites. Well, you may rest assured that the online consumer can tell how much time, effort and money you put into creating your version of what is the most effective and informative method of telling people who you are.

Your website is really an extended version of a traditional brochure, so all of the old rules still apply. Just like a brochure, your website must be easy to read and understand, and reflect your image with enough information to help your prospective new patient decide whether you are the right solution for their particular problem.

Once a prospective new patient has actually logged onto your website, it is not necessary to bombard him/her with useless design, color, sound and animation, as exciting as these devices may seem. Such devices are best used when advertising yourself, and even then one must use restraint, unless you are advertising 24-hour emergency care or discounts on cleanings. Would you be attracted to a dental office whose website is full of unnecessary clutter? Wouldn't you assume the quality of dentistry at that office is full of unnecessary clutter also?

Beyond any splashes of color or flashing banners (which are totally unnecessary to a pre-qualified prospect, since they are already at your figurative front door), a website must offer user-friendly information. The benefit of an informative website is that your potential new patient can learn more about you and your office in a safe, anonymous manner, and find information to justify their decisions about you -- good or bad.