Using Newsletters to Stay in Touch

A newsletter is a wonderful way to distribute information to your existing patient base and an excellent way to reach out and market to prospective patients and other professionals regarding the services and products that you provide. A newsletter can be a beneficial and cost-effective investment for your business or organization. Whether you’re using a newsletter to boost sales and referrals or to educate readers, you should expect a payback that offsets the costs of publishing and distributing the newsletter.

The payback may be easy to quantify, such as an increase in sales or referrals, or the benefits may be more difficult to measure but equally important, such as increased patient confidence. In either case, a newsletter should generate a return on investment that is worth the cost and time to produce it.

A newsletter can focus the reader on useful or new information, but the goal is to generate results. Articles should be chosen for their ability to attract interest in new products or services or provide answers to frequently asked questions. A newsletter is also a way to advertise any specials, promotions, or seminars that you may be offering in the near future.

Bigger isn’t necessarily better. A four-page, 8.5-by-11-inch newsletter is by far the most popular format. However, many companies, especially small practices with limited resources, may not need that much space for their newsletter. Newsletters that fill pages with generic “filler” items such as recipes and famous quotations may be bulky but not effective. Small newsletters, even as little as a page or two, can be just as effective in relaying important and interesting information to your readers. Topics can include information on the latest research, updates on new technology, attendance at conventions or educational programs, new hours, or personal information on staff members.

Newsletters can be created monthly, quarterly, or annually. A quarterly newsletter can provide patients with updated information and yet not require a daunting time commitment. However, some audiologists find it helpful to send shorter, monthly newsletters to keep in touch with their patients. The newsletter can be created using simple software such as Microsoft Publisher, or in some cases, it may be more cost-effective to enlist the services of an outsider to create and publish the newsletter.

In addition to creating the newsletter, accessing your patient database is essential. You may want to send different newsletters to different segments of your patient base.

For instance, you may not want to send a newsletter that contains information on a new technology to patients who purchased new aids within the past few months. Or you may want to produce a newsletter for your pediatric patients. The purpose is to keep your patients connected to you and your organization and to let them know that you are keeping abreast of the latest technological and clinical developments.

Ideas for Newsletter Topics

- Hunters and Hearing Loss
- Are Two Hearing Aids Better Than One?
- Nine Out of Ten Consumers Say Hearing Aids Improve Quality of Life
- Open-Ear Hearing Aids: Discreet and Comfortable to Wear
- Bluetooth? What Is It?
- Patient’s Perspective
- My Ringing Ears
- Keeping Your Hearing Aids Dry
- Using Good Communication Strategies
- Custom Ear Molds Are Available for a Wide Range of Applications
Starting a Web Site for Your Practice

With increasing numbers of consumers engaged in online commerce, audiology practices need to have an Internet presence and a Web site that will captivate and cultivate business. Not all audiologists or patients are computer savvy, but as the Internet grows in popularity as an avenue for business, having a Web site related to audiology practice has increasingly become a measure of credibility and information for the consuming public, not to mention a powerful marketing tool and source of referrals to expand your patient base.

When you have your own Web site, you have control over the content. This means you can do everything possible to maximize your site for organic search engine optimization. Creativity is helpful in designing a Web site that will hold visitors’ attention and cause them to return for future visits. You may decide to share some personal details of your life, such as your background and how your unique qualities contribute to the business. Including photos or interesting facets of the business may also be of interest to current and prospective patients. What you chose to include in your Web site will, in part, depend on the message you are trying to convey. Most important, you will want the Web site to be creative and original enough to set you apart from your competition.

The first step to building a Web site is to do some basic research on Web site creation by professionals specializing in this marketing arena. Doing it yourself may be possible for some—there are plenty of articles and Web sites available for the daring and creative. However, for those who need...
additional expertise in design and implementation, Web site development services can prove invaluable in creating a Web site that will captivate visitors. When consulting with these companies about creating your unique site, keep the following in mind:

- Be sure you have a clear understanding about initial design costs and monthly fees to maintain the Web site. Software is available that can make it easy to perform your own monthly maintenance and updates to the Web site.

- Get references of other Web sites the company has created and take time to look them up to get an idea of its previous work.

- Determine how many pages are included in the original package and what’s involved in terms of cost and man-hours for updating your site.

- Have photographs of your office and staff ready to provide to the designer. Limit the number of photographs as they will increase the time to load the site.

- Include information that highlights the personal nature, not the size, of your audiology practice. Show how the products or services that you provide have benefited your patients. You may even want to include a page for patient testimonials.

- Remember the basics—your company’s name, logo, address, and telephone number should be easy to find, and they should appear on each page of the Web site.

- Check to be certain that preferred keywords such as audiology and hearing aids appear on your home page. This will help ensure that your site is easy for patients to find.

- Make sure the Web site will be identified by all of the major search engines.

- Be sure the text offers concise, easy-to-understand information about what your practice offers. Use visuals to draw visitors in, but don’t confuse them with too many words or flashy pictures.

- Personalize your site with links to local and state programs of interest to your patients and links to organizations that may provide more information on hearing loss.

- Ask for a mechanism to track hits on your site. Like all marketing efforts, tracking your Web site’s activity will help you determine its usefulness and help justify the cost.

Once the creative portion of the Web site has been completed, you will want to make certain that the finished product is attractive, offers information that is appealing to visitors, and is easy to navigate. However, the job isn’t finished because a good Web site requires continual maintenance.

Businesses and organizations, whether large or small, need to regularly monitor Web site performance to ensure that opportunities that become available are utilized. Improvements in technology occur constantly. Although Web site development has certainly been simplified, the marketing challenge has become greater as more organizations have recognized the importance of Web marketing and competition has exploded.

Having an effective Web site can be a cost-effective and easy way to advertise an audiology practice. It is not a coincidence that more and more patients are doing business on the Web. Maybe now is the time to reach out to a Web site developer and get more information on how the Web can work for you and your audiology practice.


If you have a practice management success story, experience, or idea that you would like to share in an article, send your idea to David Fabry, PhD, content editor for AT, at dfabry@audiology.org.

Illustrations by Johanna van der Sterre.

Also of Interest

A variety of practice management resources, including articles, photos, and sample forms, are available on the Academy’s Web site.

Log in to www.audiology.org and search key words “resources & tools.”