

Chapter 5

Establishing your Website

In this chapter, we will map out all the necessary information you need to know about creating a website that is both a functional resource and powerful marketing tool. In addition to this we will explore how to register a domain name; create your online content; explore what you should add; and, what you should avoid on your website.

We will also explore establishing an online shop; various payment options; registering with search engines; reciprocal links; advertising banners; email databases; online consultations; and web seminars.

To begin we need to consider the benefits of having a website and the reasons are many. Having a professionally designed and well oiled website provides a valuable resource for your clients and presents a professional edge to your practice.

First and foremost it is important to know that it is not necessary to spend thousands to establish a professional looking website. Nor is it necessary to feature dozens of pages or have fancy flash graphics on your site to be effective. On the other hand it is not recommended that you build your own website unless of course you have professional training in website production and graphic design. If you opt for a very basic site with little attention to the design and functionality you will present an unprofessional image to your clients. It will simply look home made which is fine if you are making jam for charity but when it comes to websites a professional look is very important.

Having a website provides a practical way for your clients to

research you and your services before they call or email you. You may be surprised just how many people make buying decisions via the internet over conventional methods such as press advertising or other non-electronic media. In many cases, your clients will come across your website via email advertising, your business card, or a classified or press advertisement. Your website is perhaps even more important than your phone number.

Before we look into the design and content of your website you first need a name. Just in the same way you may have registered a business or company name to trade under so it is that you need to have a website domain so that your clients can search your site on the internet and locate your website.

Registering a domain name

Securing a domain name is a relatively simple task and there are many options. My suggestion is that you go with a domain registration company that is in your own country and check to see that you can actually call them if required.

When selecting a name for your website you will probably need to have a few options up your sleeve as your desired name may or may not already have been taken by someone else. This is particularly the case when you are choosing a *'com'* domain which denotes a website with an international flavour.

If, for example, if you are living in the United Kingdom then your website will end in *'co.uk'* or if you are living in Australia it will end with *'com.au'*. There are other options to these as you will discover when registering your domain name online. Further alternatives include: *.tv .us .info .net .org .biz .mobi .ws .name .ag .am .at*.

The list goes on and on.

When registering your domain you may find it easier to find your name if you choose to have the name ending with the country

web code.

Although *‘.com’* and *‘.net’* are the most widely preferred options perhaps the most important is the name you select. What comes after *‘www.’* is the name which best represents your business. For example, if you are a Reflexology practitioner, a memorable domain name might be one of the following domain names:

www.treatyourfeet.com
www.healingyoursoles.com
www.solefeeling.com

Alternatively if you are a massage therapist, then you might choose a domain name which represents the benefits of your therapy. For example:

www.backtobalance.com
www.mostlymassage.com
www.massageworks.com

Another recommendation is not to make your domain name too long.

An example of a domain that is too long would be: www.southsydneyholistichealingmassageforthebodyandsoul.com.au.

Every time someone wants to visit your site they will have to type in this long name, which in web terms is a few too many seconds too long. Plus there will be many more chances for the customer to make typing errors.

If you have not already secured your domain name some recommended websites for domain registration include:

www.godaddy.com
www.planetdomain.com

www.australianwebsites.com.au

www.australiacheapdomains.com.au

www.net2.co.uk

www.ukreg.com

www.MyDomain.com

Happy domain hunting!

Creating your website

Once you have secured your domain name you will need to be clear on your website production budget as well as the content for your website.

The best way to get started is to search the internet through a search engine such as www.google.com and type into the search bar the names of your modalities to get an idea of what is currently out there.

Once you have found a variety of websites that you like (and I suggest you take your time to research this) you can start to make notes and draw simple maps of how you think the layout of your website could be. Take note of the features that you would like added and remember the more animation and dynamic drop down menus you desire as apposed to a more static looking website, the higher the price will be.

It is important to take your time to plan your website as the more of an idea you can have as to the content, look and feel of your website, the better prepared you will be when selecting a website designer to construct the website.

As for the content, (in other words the information for your website) it is ideal to have this in an electronic format so that it can be easily cut and pasted into the website as per your directions when working with a web designer.

You will also need to consider how many pages you will need. More simple websites feature: *About Us*; *Contact Us*; *Bookings* or a *Registration Page*; *Frequently Asked Questions*; and, an *About Us*

page.

A more complex site may also include such headings as: *Online Shop; Links; Forum; Newsletter Registration; Search this Site facility; Add to Favourites page; Blog; Media Room; Send to a Friend page; Client Testimonials; Guest Book; Special Offers; Privacy Policy; Site Map; Resources; Downloads; Articles and Press Releases.*

It is not necessary to have all of these options as some websites are hundreds of pages long. If you can convey clearly what you offer and persuade customers to book with you, you have succeeded.

Generally, the higher the price for the service or product, the more you need to tell to sell. If you are offering a workshop that costs thousands of dollars then a few sentences will probably not convince your audience. On the other hand if you are simply selling a treatment then a few paragraphs may be enough. Generally, depending upon the topic and the level of interest your customers may be happy to read through all the pages listed on your website. For those who just want the basic information they will also be able to get this if you make your content easy to read.

When it comes to images, your web designer may have access to stock photography or you may have your own collection of images (which is preferable as most stock photography looks like stock photography). Whatever the case may be, be sure to have copyright on the images you use and not simply borrow these from other websites you like. Fines can be hefty for copyright infringement.

Once you have your plans, you can use the internet to locate a web designer in your area. It is best to choose a web designer you can visit in person as you will probably need to visit them on a number of occasions in the construction phase.

Most website designers will be happy to meet you for a no obligation introductory session from which a basic template can

be generated to give you an indication of where they are headed with the project. It is also ideal to set a quote for the website upfront to avoid an ever escalating fee for the website's construction. You can easily spend thousands of dollars with no set quote.

When selecting a web designer, ask them to send you *links* to examples of the websites they have produced and ask them to give you an indication on how much these websites cost so you have a comparison that aligns to your website.

I recommend obtaining three separate quotes initially from three different web designers. You may be surprised just how vastly different quotes can be. This is not to say that you should opt for the cheapest quote as there may be a reason for the low price. Do your due diligence and be happy with your web designer, it will be the grounds for a long term business relationship.

Website content and things to consider

Once you have found a web designer you have confidence in, there are a number of things that you should add to your site to maximise your marketing efforts.

Likewise, there are a number of things you should avoid. In Seth Godin's book *The Big Red Fez – how to make any web site better*, he gives several helpful insights of what works and what fails to hit the mark with website design, content and functionality.

Here is a brief summary of some of the ideas presented in *The Big Red Fez*. These include:

- Show me the money.
- Keep it simple.
- Page loading...
- Make it easy for me.
- Remember me.
- Make it legible.

- Test, Test, Test.
- Say thank you.
- Make it easy to share.
- Offer me something special.
- Offer me [more].
- Say sorry.
- Check for typos and grammar.

Show me the money

Show me the money is the principle that when a person lands on your home page their attention is immediately drawn to one place in particular. What that place is depends on what you wish to stand out the most on your home page. Perhaps it is a special offer, a free e-newsletter or free information report to tell your customers about your products or services. When you and your designer create your website you should determine what the most important items are for you. Illustrate this with good design and navigation and you will be able to influence how someone moves around your website.

You can do much to assist your net surfer to catch the right wave simply with the use of clever design or an attention-grabbing headline which compels the reader to click wherever it is that you want them to go. You need to remember that everyone who visits your website is just one click away from leaving so make your content fresh and engaging and give the customer the information they are looking for with sound navigation and innovative design. Your web designer will be able to assist you in creating a logical layout to drive the net surfer around your website to the pages which ultimately translate (if done well) into a purchase.

Keep it simple

Have you ever been online filling out a web form which ends up taking forever? If you keep your web forms simple and avoid

endless drop down menus to select a country for example, you will do your customers a favour. The trick to a great website is to make it seamlessly smooth for the person buying, whether it is booking a massage treatment or buying a product, the bare minimum of personal information the better. The last thing you want to do is waste your customer's time with unnecessary information and endless typing.

Page loading...

A website should load fast and this includes your introduction. A great deal of money is spent on websites that are trying too hard to look like television. Have you ever come across a website that requires you to download a program just to open it? Other sites take up to a minute to load or more, and feature a page loading sign that counts up from 0% to 100%. In the time it takes to load the page the customer has already made the one click back taking their business elsewhere. Flash graphics and start pages waste time for your customers and cost the earth to produce. The less clicks to get to the information required, the better off you'll be plus more customers will stay on your website for longer. I recommend you save your money for the website's content and not on unnecessary flash content which takes ages to load.

Make it easy for me

Making it easy for me means, being able to easily navigate through the website. You can do this by utilising a logical search facility as well as offering clear navigation menus. These should preferably be at the top or left hand side of your website as well as offering hot links at the bottom of each page. Include a [back to top](#) on each page which links to the top of the page plus [back](#) and [next](#) buttons for easy navigation throughout the website.

Remember me

Whenever you sign into a website for a free newsletter or to

establish an account you will need to give your name and email address to register. When you do this make sure your web designer can record this information so that each time you go back to the website the site remembers who you are.

I love www.amazon.com for this very reason. Each time I visit the site it says: *“Hello, Lawrence Ellyard. We have recommendations for you”*. Don't you feel so much more appreciated when people remember your name? Why should it be any different when surfing on your website?

Make it legible

Whatever you do, ensure you use type which is both legible and large enough so that people with smaller computer monitors or bad eyesight can actually read your webpage. Avoid background colours or coloured type which clash or are hard to read. The idea is that you want to make reading your website a pleasure for the person reading it, not a chore. Remember if it is too small, too hard to read or just plain ugly, your possible customer is one click away from your competitors.

Test, Test, Test

Test your website to ensure that your web designer has not made fatal errors. There is nothing as off putting as clicking to visit a particular page only to encounter an error page or worse the wrong page. It reflects poorly on you and your practice. Nobody knows your website as well as you do, so be sure to check your website on a monthly basis that all links are working and go where they are required to go. Also, make it your business to check the work of your web designer to ensure they have understood and executed your requests. Do not assume that your web designer does not make errors with links. Test your site before it goes live and get others to check it to see if errors have been made.

Say thank you

Whatever happened to manners? If you went to a shop and made a purchase, do you think you would feel warm and fuzzy if the shop assistant said nothing to you once you'd paid? A simple *'thank you for your booking'* or *'your purchase is greatly appreciated'* is not a lot to ask but so many websites neglect to add this common courtesy.

After you click 'submit', you should be directed to a thank you page where you are thanked for your business as well as being given any important *'what happens next'* information. This may include the terms of being contacted, delivery times or at least the opportunity to continue browsing the website with the click of a button such as *'continue shopping'* or *'click here to go back to home page'*.

Word of mouse

One of the most important buttons on your website is the option to *'send to a friend'*. Here your customers can actively refer you and better still be rewarded for sharing your website with others.

This is what is called: *'Word of Mouse'*. With the click of the mouse, your customers can actively share the benefits of your treatments. Offer incentives to share your website include *'a points system'* or a *'referral rewards program'*. This feature alone can offer you some of the best *word of mouse* and the added benefit is that it costs you nothing.

If you are utilising a points system you can give your existing customer 100 points every time they actively refer a new customer to you. Once they reach 1000 points they may qualify for a free treatment for example. A referral rewards program works in a similar fashion, here you might give your existing customer a free gift for a certain number of referrals.

Offer me something special

Have you noticed that most retail outlets seem to always have some kind of special or sale? What are you going to offer your customers when they walk through your virtual door? Be sure to offer a discount on making a treatment series or a free gift when making a purchase over a designated amount. Make that offer stand out and give them a reason to buy.

Offer me [more]

On your home page instead of creating so much content that the person will get sore fingers from scrolling down the page endlessly, offer an overview with useful links such as [more] or [read on] so that those who want more information can be linked to a new page with greater detail and those who just want the bare minimum can get the information they need within a few sentences. You'll keep everyone happy this way.

Say sorry

If you make an error such as missing an order or being overly late to reply to an enquiry, say sorry. If it was a huge oversight on your behalf be accountable and offer the customer a small gift as an apology. This is part of offering exceptional customer service. Your goal is to exceed your customers' expectations. When you don't, you are like almost every other business. Stand out and offer exceptional customer service and when you make a mistake, exceed their expectations once more.

For example, I sent out one of my meditation CDs in the post and due to poor handling the case was cracked upon arrival. I had packed it well enough but the postman may have had a bad day. The customer emailed to advise that the case was damaged and requested a replacement case. What I did was to send a new case express post plus a second copy of the CD for free along with an apology note personally signed. It only cost me a few dollars and a small amount of time but in the end I turned a not

so happy customer into a customer for life.

Check for typos and grammar

Before you submit your content to your designer to be uploaded to your website, be sure to check your content for typos and grammar. The information presented on your website represents you and should be correct down to the little details. When I am reading a website that is professionally designed and I encounter a spelling mistake or an incorrectly constructed sentence it is a disappointing experience which does not instill a great deal of confidence.

The same goes for website alterations or changes made by your web designer. If you try and do changes and amendments over the telephone your web designer could make some errors in type, so always supply any corrections by email, and ensure the amendments are correctly spelled content via email. Always check and re-check your content. Share your website around to your friends for feedback. A fresh pair of eyes can spot an error faster than someone who has read and re-read the same materials many times.

Now that you are armed with the necessary dos and don'ts, you may also wish to consider the following items to expand your spiritual marketing repertoire.

Establishing an online shop

An additional income source to your natural therapy practice is having your very own online shop. Your consultations or workshops can also be shop items.

In my experience having a designated shopping cart as part of your website provides a great way to up-sell additional products in line with your natural therapy practice. Talk to your web designer about which options may suit your needs and what is possible within your budget. You may wish to keep it simple and

only stock a few products or you may wish to open a fully fledged online super-store. Be sure to test your market before you invest a lot of money and time into an online store. Offering a great many products means you will need to have the stock for orders as well as needing space to store the products.

If you do wish to offer an online shop, check for wholesalers who can provide you with a suitable discount for products which you can sell to your clients.

Establish an account where you can pay for your orders on a 30 day account or longer if possible (the longer the better). This will keep your start up costs down and you won't have to pay for the stock advertised on your online shop up front.

Alternatively, you may wish to order from your wholesaler as orders come in. You may encounter, however, that most wholesalers have minimum orders or cannot deliver in an expedient manner. You want to ensure that your customers can get their products fast, so make sure you either advise delivery times in length of days or state the maximum time a customer will have to wait before delivery.

In addition to this you will need to consider freight and packaging for your products. Be sure to cover these costs with orders.

Most online shops charge postage after the purchase of products. For orders over a specific amount you may wish to cover the postage, thus ensuring your customers spend more in order to get the free freight. For example, you may offer a monthly special such as: *"Spend over \$100 and we'll freight your order for free"*.

Look into postage / courier delivery costs and consider also if you are prepared to offer international freight or delivery only within your country.

Palpal versus merchant credit card facilities

If you are going to establish an online store you will need to

make a decision as to what kind of shopping cart system you wish to obtain. If you do not have merchant facilities where you can process all the major credit cards such as *Mastercard* and *Visa* you may wish to bypass this cost by designating your shopping cart through an outside merchant provider such as *Paypal*. See: www.paypal.com for details.

Having *Paypal* as your payment gateway is considerably cheaper over establishing a private merchant facility. However, *Paypal* does take a percentage of your transactions but even so it can be a more cost effective alternative to having your own fully fledged online merchant facility. One problem I see with *Paypal* is that it communicates that you are not a big enough player and so you require a third party to process your credit card payments. In the end it is a question of turnover. Check with your web designer and discuss which options suit both your needs and your hip pocket.

When it comes to accepting credit cards it is also important to know that *American Express* and *Diners* attract higher percentages over *Visa* and *Mastercard*. You will also need to apply to be a merchant with these two individually where as *Visa* and *Mastercard* can be established through your bank when registering for your merchant account. Contact your local bank for more information about establishing a merchant account and to see if your business qualifies.

Another alternative is not to accept credit cards and only accept cash, cheque, internet banking or postal money orders. The problem is that we are increasingly becoming a credit society (particularly online). Most people do not necessarily carry cash and writing cheques have the possibility of being dis-honoured. Postal money orders cost more for the customer, plus they have to go to the post office to get one. Probably the better option of these is internet banking but, if you really want to shine, credit cards are the way to go.

Registering with search engines

There are a great many websites available on the internet today who will charge you a great deal of money to have your website listed in the top ten on search engines such as www.google.com.

In my experience, one of the best ways to improve your ratings in search engines is to make sure you add key words to your internet page descriptions. Your web designer will also have some good advice for structuring and programming your website to increase your exposure and improving your rating on search engines.

Another great way to improve your ratings is to get as many people to visit your website as possible. The more people who visit your site, the higher your rating becomes.

This can be considerably sped up with a high impact website launch that combines emailing to previous clients and advertising through print media where readers will be compelled to visit your site for one of your fantastic offers. Just in the same way an author may do a book launch, launching your website can be an online launch event.

Once you are happy with your website, send it to all of your contacts and ask for feedback. Email, text message or phone your friends and clients. This will get the ball rolling and provide you with valuable tips of how you might improve your website before the official launch.

Reciprocal links

Working hand-in-hand with other businesses using reciprocal links can do a great deal to enhance your practice, your profile, and enable you to stand out in an otherwise overly competitive online marketplace. Reciprocal links are a great way to exchange your domain with other professionals with websites within your industry. It is also a great way to build online communities and strategic alliances.

The more websites your domain is listed with, the greater

your internet presence will be. Select websites that are of a higher profile than your own. The bigger fish naturally have a bigger internet presence and you can get a free ride by having your website listed with some of these websites. For example, if you are a massage therapist, reciprocal link to a massage therapy company who sells massage products online or one of the major massage colleges. If you think outside the box you will find there are many opportunities to increase your internet presence.

In my experience when being approached by other companies for reciprocal links I personally take into consideration the websites that I am exchanging with. My criteria for reciprocal links are three fold:

1. The website must be related to the wellness industry.
2. The website must look professional and be of a high standard.
3. The website must rate well on search engines.

Although I am often approached by a variety of companies for a reciprocal link, very few meet my criteria to be selected. There is no point in listing a site that is not industry related, it makes you look as if you are 'selling out' and will send out a message that you will invite anyone to link sites. This in turn attracts 'spam' and junk mail to your website.

You should be selective and aim for quality sites which will enhance your online profile and offer a mutually beneficial online relationship, which can be further nurtured through strategic alliances. For more on strategic alliances see chapter 12 on networking your business.

Advertising banners

Advertising banners are another way to promote your website and services on other wellness industry websites. In addition to reciprocal links, an advertising banner which is situated on a

high profile and well visited website can really improve your website ratings as well as directing new internet traffic to your website.

In order to achieve this ensure your advertising banner is visually engaging and in much the same way as a small space advertisement in a newspaper, your banner must have an immediate and compelling headline to entice the viewer to click on it.

As you can probably relate, when you are surfing the internet, you are not looking for ads but information. If your banner looks like it leads to important information or contains information about a special offer which is too good to pass up you will have a higher success rate than having a fancy image alone which may look interesting but has no compelling call to action.

It matters that people actually take that step to pointing and clicking. It may seem obvious but featuring a [click here](#) or [click now](#) or [read more](#) link which links to your site is essential.

When creating your advertising banner, make sure it communicates instantly because that is about all the time you have to get your message across online. You may wish to use examples from chapter 9 on how to write a great headline as a starting point for your advertising banner.

When submitting your banner advertisement ensure the recipient has your URL (Uniform Resource Location), which is your website domain address. Be sure to test the banner to ensure it works and links correctly to your website.

Email databases

If another practitioner is willing to share links or advertising banners, you may be able to further the friendly relationship to sharing or at least advertising in their email newsletter. In most cases practitioners will not be overly happy to give you their client list. If they do you may have to check the validity of this list as these recipients may have already been subjected to spam

from other unauthorised parties.

I cannot stress the importance of making sure you select the right email lists. You want your product or service to hit the mark. Just as there is no point in advertising in *Guns and Ammo Magazine* as a Naturopath, the same goes for not advertising online with email newsletters that miss the correct target market.

If you can advertise your services through a reliable e-list (perhaps for a small fee), if the list is extensive and is aimed at your target audience it may be money well spent. A way around paying a small fee is to offer an exchange for a mention on your e-list.

When composing the script for the advertisement, make it clear and easy to follow. If you can arrange for the practitioner who owns the e-list to give you a personal endorsement about your services you will also obtain a better response. This is because it is like a trusted friend making a recommendation about your services.

Online consultations

Have you given any thought as to how you may be able to translate some of your services electronically? In addition to your regular consultations, you may be able to give follow up consultations online in the form of email correspondence or live chat such as MSN (www.msn.com) or Skype (www.skype.com).

You may be able to offer one-on-one scheduled appointments using a mounted pod cast from your monitor or utilise other live portals for your follow-up consultations via the internet. Because the internet is global you may also be able to give consultations in other cities or even other countries. It bears thinking about.

There could be a whole world of untapped business waiting for you. Internet consultations mean you don't have to go to work, you can choose your hours and have the added bonus of working from the privacy of your home.

Webinars (online webcam seminars)

Just in the same way as you may consider offering online consultations, you may choose to offer workshops in your chosen field online. A webinar is an online seminar where you present in real time a seminar linked to webcam with recipients who have already paid online to attend via secure log in. Alternatively, you can present a pre-recorded seminar that customers subscribe to and download for viewing at a time that is more suitable. There is unlimited scope for online classes, consultations and downloadable e materials. If marketed correctly with the right incentives you can open the doors to new business just by working from home.