

## Eli's Rehab Report

### Practice Management: Attract New Patients With A Well-Networked Web Presence

**The old web rules no longer apply.**

If you don't have a multi-faceted online strategy, you're missing out on a key market. Americans spend 36 percent of their time online visiting websites and blogs, a new **Nielson** study reveals. And 23 percent of that time is dedicated to communicating across social networks.

Here's what you need to know to ensure your web presence attracts and compels potential new patients no matter where they find you:

#### **Relevancy and "Rich" Content Are Musts**

Any potential client who's scouting the web for therapy information is going home in on two things: content that's highly significant and lots of it. A simple landing page with a couple pictures, your tag line, and a telephone number isn't going to cut it.

Best: Online users want content, whether it's in the form of articles, case studies, research, newsletters, or forums, says **Steve Passmore, PT**, owner of Healthy Recruiting Tools in Murray, Ky. They want an in-depth look at what services you're offering, how you offer them, and what others think about them.

Websites with a multi-media approach -- videos, a blog, a forum, and relevant written content will be successful, notes **Michael Arnold, PT**, a therapy marketing consultant currently based in London.

But you don't have to tackle all of those elements at once.

Focus on relevant written content first (newsletters, articles, text) and then work your way to the extras (such as the blog or forum).

#### **Use Social Media To Spread Your Message**

Most web marketing experts swear by search engines like Google for helping potential patients find your services, but the frequency with which online users turn to search engines and other online portals will continue to decrease.

New way: Now, users rely on their social media network to learn about products and services. Social media sites such as Facebook (500 million users) and Twitter (20 million users) allow users to link directly to the sites they find interesting or relevant -- taking search engines out of the equation, the Nielson study shows.

This means that your powerful, highly relevant website could sit fallow if you don't make social media users aware of it, Arnold notes. Your first move is to establish profiles on both Facebook and Twitter, and then you should regularly post information that will turn clients' heads -- and compel them to share your information with their friends.

Example: Fox Rehabilitation in Cherry Hill, N.J. has created a strong Facebook presence for both clients and employees. Rather than focus on one group, the private rehab practice shares awards earned by its professionals and photos of employee development activities as well as articles designed to help families choose physical therapy for elderly parents and information on how clinicians can advocate for patients' care. And don't think the social media demographic doesn't apply to therapy practices. Twice as many online users over the age of 50 use social networks than online users under age 18, Nielson says. And of online users using social networks most heavily, more than 70 percent are female -- which

means they are the key decision makers and family planners in their households.

Try this: Highlight innovative therapies, award-winning services, any information that can help patients feel more in control of their health care decisions, Passmore says. For instance, you might link to articles that give tips for preventative care or share photos of your clinicians using new technologies. And when a potential new patient leaves a comment or message on one of your social media profile pages, make sure you respond promptly, the experts advise.