

Should You Have a Web Site for Your Practice?

DCPI Staff

The Internet has replaced much that was commonplace in our society. Phone books, maps, travel agents, etc. are almost things of the past. Starting in elementary school, today's students have learned to find it (and buy it) online.

Even so, only 62 percent of DCs reported in a recent survey that they have Web sites for their chiropractic practice.¹ More than 50 percent of those who don't have a practice Web site either thought they were too expensive (26 percent) or they "didn't see the benefit" (25 percent). According to Dr. Alicia Farrell, a doctor who took the survey, the benefits are easy to define: "Established patient communication and attraction of new patients."

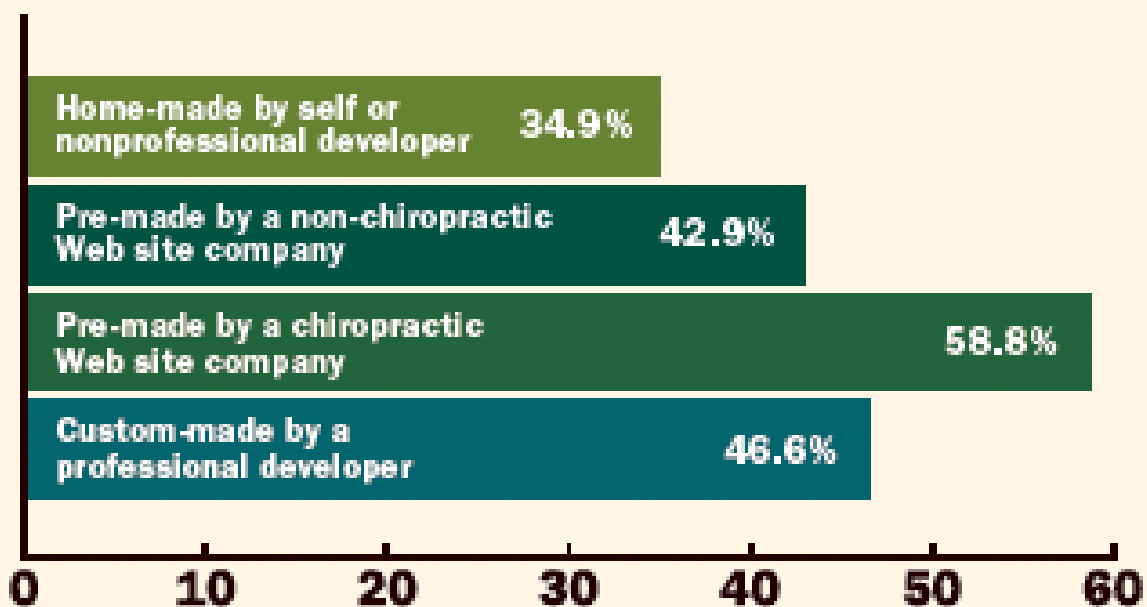
Purpose, Creation and Cost

There are several reasons to have a chiropractic practice Web site. When asked, almost half of DCs (44 percent) stated that the primary purpose of their Web site was "making people aware of my practice." As Dr. Ronn Radcliff puts it: "Most consumers search the internet looking for a service or product. If you're not on-line, you don't exist."

Almost a third (29 percent) of doctors stated that "attracting new patients" was the primary purpose of their Web site. "Communicating with my existing patients" and "informing consumers about chiropractic care" were chosen by 10 percent and 9 percent of DCs respectively.

When asked who created their Web site, 21 percent of doctors created it themselves or had a non-professional create it for them. Twenty-eight percent of doctors chose custom Web sites created by a professional developer. When it came to generally non-custom or pre-made Web sites, only 7 percent of DCs chose a site created by a non-chiropractic company, while 44 percent chose one created by a company that specializes in chiropractic Web sites. Who created the chiropractic practice Web site does make a difference when it comes to informing the community, attracting new patients and communicating with existing patients:

How Effectively Does Your Web Site Inform Consumers About the Importance of Chiropractic Care?



Percentage of DCs rating their Web site excellent or good in terms of effectiveness

How Effectively Does Your Web Site Communicate the Value of Your Practice?



Percentage of DCs rating their Web site excellent or good in terms of effectiveness

While "homemade" Web sites are probably cheaper, they fall behind in communicating with patients, informing consumers about chiropractic and presenting the value of the doctor's practice. Web sites by non-chiropractic companies are remarkably poor at attracting new patients and behind in the other three categories.

The two most effective choices are pre-made by a chiropractic company and custom made by a professional. These are both superior at communicating with existing patients and attracting new patients with custom sites taking a slight edge. Chiropractic company Web sites are better at communicating the value of chiropractic, while custom Web sites are more effective at communicating the value of the practice.

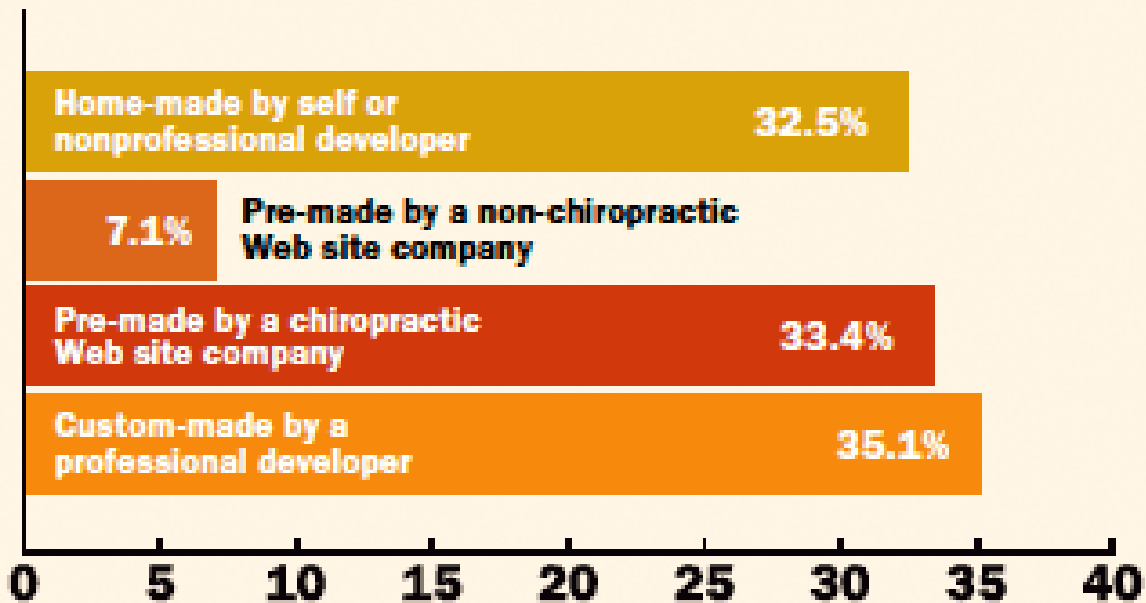
Web Site Performance

Attracting new patients is an important aspect of having a Web site. While some doctors don't believe that Web sites generate new patients, they are not in the majority. Only 14 percent of DCs stated that they "almost never" gain a new patient from their Web site. Another 23 percent stated that the number of new patients from their Web site was "less than one per month." One-third of doctors gain one to two new patients per month from their Web site. Another 20 percent enjoy three to four new patients per month, with 6 percent receiving five to nine new patients per month.

and 3 percent with 10 or more new patients coming from their Web site each month.

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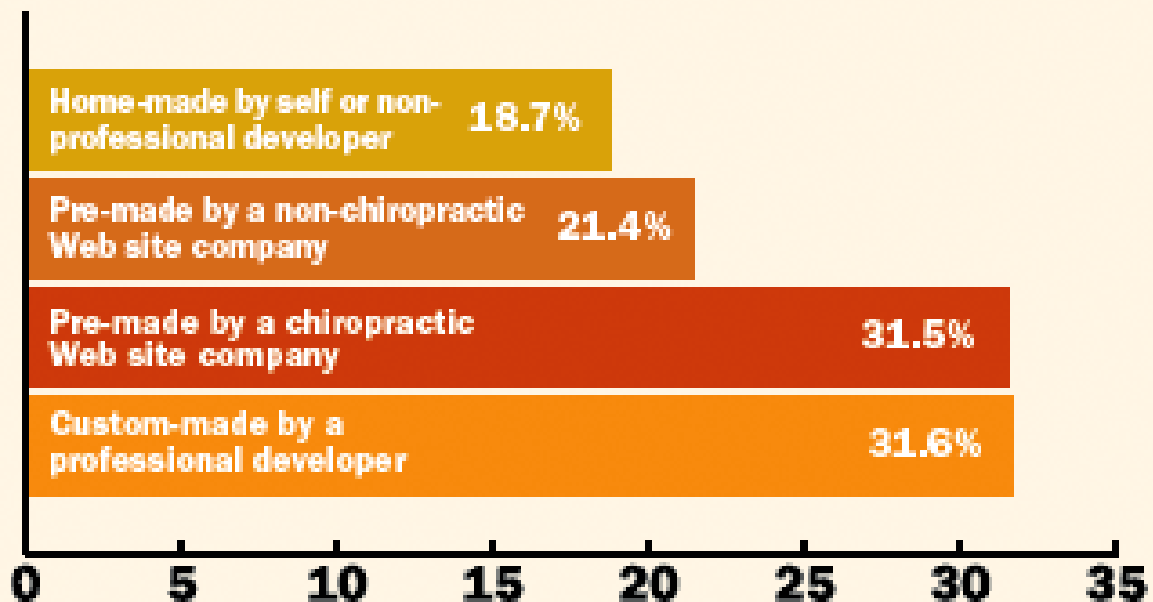
How Effectively Does Your Web Site Attract and Schedule New Patients?



Percentage of DCs rating their Web site excellent or good in terms of effectiveness

Communicating with existing patients can be accomplished by sending an e-mail newsletter. These usually provide chiropractic and other wellness-related content that patients can easily forward to family friends and co-workers to make them more aware of what their doctor has to offer. "The cost is far outweighed by the constant communication with your patient base; nothing compares," states Dr. Mark J. Maher. Sadly, 40 percent of chiropractic Web sites don't have a patient e-mail newsletter. Of those that do, the majority of these send the newsletters either monthly (28 percent) or bi-weekly (17 percent).

How Effectively Does Your Web Site Communicate With and Retain Patients?

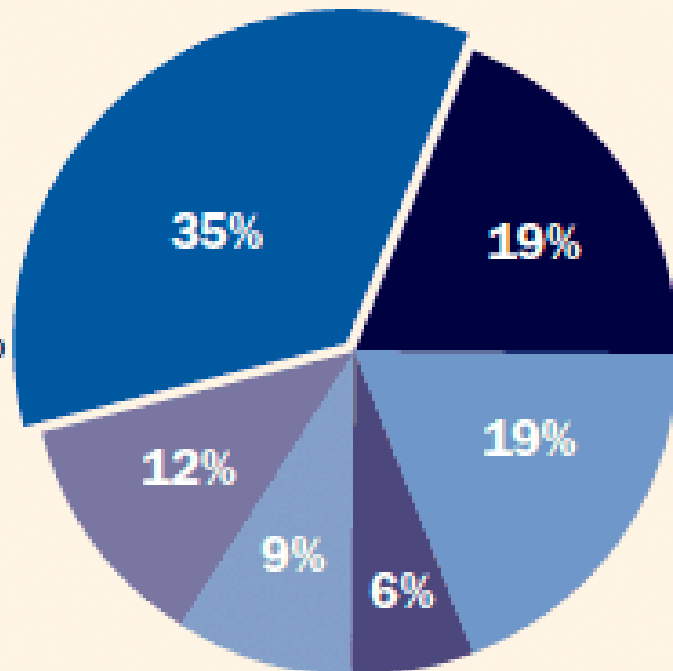


Percentage of DCs rating their Web site excellent or good in terms of effectiveness

When asked if they would recommend their current Web site provider, 75 percent of DCs said that they would. The main reasons they would recommend their Web site provider are: excellent functionality (36 percent), great features (35 percent), low price (35 percent), good customer service (31 percent) and great graphics (26 percent).

If You Could Change One Thing About Your Web Site, What Would It Be?

- **35%** want improved search-engine optimization
- **19%** want more features
- **19%** want better graphics, look and feel
- **12%** want all pages on site to be editable
- **9%** want to add patient e-newsletter
- **6%** want more basic chiropractic information



When it comes to managing their Web site, more than one-third (36 percent) of DCs stated that neither they nor their staff have to spend any time on their Web site. Another 38 percent spend an hour or less per month, including time spent on their patient newsletter. Of the remainder, 4 percent spend four to six hours per month, 2 percent spend seven to nine hours per month and 2 percent spend 10 hours or more per month.

Wish List

When asked what one thing DCs would like to change about their Web sites, more than one-third (35 percent) stated "improve search engine optimization." This was followed by a list of other suggestions:

When asked what additional features she would like to see on her office Web site, chiropractic office manager Janice Webb remarked: "I think it could do whatever I want it to do. I just need to spend some time on it."

Reference

1. Practice Web site Survey. MPA Media, completed May 10, 2010.

