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Hi, it's Dr. Weitz. Thank you so much for joining me for this episode of the private medical practice Academy. Back in the dark ages. When I first started my practice, people were still using the yellow pages. Let's say you needed a pediatrician. You had opened the yellow pages and you'd look them up as a business. We thought a lot about whether we needed an ad for the yellow pages or whether we just were going to have our names listed for free. If you had an ad, you had to pay for it. So you thought about things like, what would it look like? How big did it need to be? Where would it be placed on the page? Because of course there were more desirable locations than others.

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And basically the price you paid for the ad was determined by all of these factors. If you didn't want to pay for an ad, then you'd just get your name listed. The names were listed in alphabetical order. So believe it or not, you also had to think about naming your business so that you would be at the top of the alphabetical listing. Nowadays, the yellow pages are obsolete. They've been replaced by the internet today. I'm going to talk to you about your web presence and how it factors into your marketing efforts. Your web presence is frequently where patients get their first impression of you. Even if patients don't initially hear about your practice online, they're likely going to go online to learn more about you.

0 (1m 30s):

My kids tease me that I'm the queen of Google. I can find out just about anything simply by Googling it. And I know that I'm not the only one with this talent. So you're going to want to make sure to optimize your web presence so that patients are easily able to find you and get the information that they need. The first thing I want you to understand is that your website serves as the central hub for information about your business. I know that everybody is interested in how social media can help market, but there are a couple of things I want to point out to you. First, you own your domain name and your website.

0 (2m 10s):

You control what you put on your website and who gets to see it. This makes your website prime real estate in comparison, your Facebook business page and Instagram are platforms that are owned by somebody else. They control all of the rules in terms of what you can post. And more importantly, who can see it. We all know that only a small fraction of our posts on Facebook or Instagram for that matter are actually seen by anybody. And if you've ever tried searching for something it's not easy in comparison, people don't need to know exactly your name or details about your business.

0 (2m 54s):

When they do a web search, as long as they can find you by a keyword or two, they're going to get to you now, please hear me clearly. I'm not saying that you shouldn't use social media for marketing. I'll talk about social media marketing in a future episode, but in the end, your marketing efforts need to direct people back to your website. You may be wondering, do I really need to have a website when I'm first starting out? The answer is a resounding yes. As a matter of fact, you need a website. As soon as you're even thinking about

starting out, it's a way for you to communicate with people. Even if you're an employed physician, you can start your website and just provide information.

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For example, let's say you're a pulmonologist. You could put information on the website about treatment of COPD. You're just giving patients information, but then the patients now know where they can find you. So when you leave your current job, your website still belongs to you. And those patients that had been looking at your information when you were an employed physician, can now find you, even though you're no longer with that job, you can use your website for marketing to provide information, including things like your new patient packet with its relevant forms and policies. And you need a website to be able to compete with other practices.

0 (4m 19s):

Think of it this way, your listing on Google or any other search engine is just like the list of names in the old yellow pages. Your website that they click on is your ad. The first step to launching a website is to secure a domain name. This is where you need to come up with a name that people are going to look up. Once you've come up with that name, you have to do a search and actually see if it's available. Now, a couple of things about the name, your domain name does not have to be the same as your business name. As a matter of fact, sometimes having to be the same can be detrimental. You want to come up with a name that's catchy.

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That's easy for people to remember and easy for them to spell. If the name is too long or it's hard to spell, they're less likely to find your website. As an example, the name of my practice, comprehensive pain management was a mouthful. Our domain name, the pain specialists.com was a whole lot easier to say. And to remember the other thing is you want to make sure that the name is not similar to your competition. For example, my ambulatory surgery centers name was advanced surgical concepts. When we opened, there was no one in town with a similar name several years later, though another ambulatory surgery center opened here in Baton Rouge called advanced surgical care.

0 (5m 47s):

Now it should be self-evident that this can cause tremendous confusion. The last thing you want is for somebody to call an office with a similar name and try and make appointment thinking that they're making the appointment with you. This is a surefire way to lose business. Now, once you've decided on your domain name, you need to figure out whether or not that name is available. Personally, I use GoDaddy. One of the things I would recommend to you is that if the name you want is available and variations of it are available, that you purchase multiple variations of the same name. For example, we own not only the pain specialist.com, but the pain specialist with an s@theend.com Y so that nobody can get an almost identical name and add to the confusion.

0 (6m 43s):

Also, when you purchase a domain name, you can buy it for one year or multiple years. Obviously it's less expensive if you buy it for multiple years. And in general, I have to tell you the cost of domain names is very inexpensive in case you're wondering what I mean by inexpensive. You can get a domain name for two 99 from GoDaddy for the first year. And while it goes up the second year, it usually is not a significant increase. Regardless of how many years you purchased the domain name for, I would strongly encourage you to put it on auto renew. What do I mean? The last thing you want is to find out that you no longer own your domain name, because it didn't renew.

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And now you have to either buy it back from somebody, or you have to change your website name. I'm telling you this because it actually happened to me. I apparently didn't see the reminder email from GoDaddy and my domain name expired as a result. It costs me over \$600 to buy back my own domain name. So once you have a domain name, you're going to need to find a place to host your website. And then of course you need to design your website. There are numerous companies that host websites, each offering a myriad of services at different price points. The caveat in choosing a web designer and web hosting service is that you want to own it.

0 (8m 12s):

You can spend either a significant amount of time and effort of your own to create a website, or you can spend money to design the website. In either case you want to understand what happens if you want to change, who hosts the website? How hard is it to move it to another web host? What if you want to change the information on the website? Can you do that on your own? Or do you have to do it using the web developer in the end, your website should be your property that you can change and move at will when you're first starting out, you don't need to have the fanciest website. It does however need to be professional in its appearance and the information you're providing needs to be easy to locate.

0 (8m 56s):

One of the things that you're going to want to make sure of is that your website is mobile friendly. People spend so much time on their mobile devices. You want to make sure that your site is easy to navigate and that it looks right when somebody looks at it on their phone or their tablet. The other thing you need to know is that Google has been issuing warnings to sites that aren't mobile friendly saying that their sites are not going to rank as well in search results. I'll talk about dealing with Google and their search results here in a minute. But the simple fact that they're sending out warnings to sites that are not mobile friendly, tell you a lot. Now let's talk about what information your website needs to provide your homepage needs to state who you are and what you do by the time I'm done looking at your homepage.

0 (9m 46s):

I should know what type of practices is. Do you and or your practice have a special niche? What diagnoses do you treat? What's your practice philosophy? For example, if you're a pain doctor, maybe you have only an interventional practice, or maybe you do only medication management, or maybe you take a multi-modality approach. Perhaps you're a female urologist who does general urology, or maybe you do only female urology. I need to understand what forms of payment you take. Are you in network with any insurance companies? Are you out of network? Do you take only cash?

0 (10m 28s):

Is your practice a concierge practice, or maybe you do DPC. Your homepage should provide crystal clear information on how to contact you, including your phone number, your fax number and your physical address. And of course, how someone can make an appointment to see you. Is it by referral only? Or can they schedule an appointment themselves? And if they can schedule themselves, make sure you have a readily apparent link to your portal or scheduling platform. When people struggle to find the information that I just described to you, they may just navigate away and choose to go somewhere else. The other possibility is that they'll call your office and ask questions, needless to say, you need to have staff available to answer these questions.

0 (11m 17s):

So if you can get your website to do the work, it'll make you much more efficient. And yeah, we provide better customer service and a hugely improved first impression. I know you may be thinking, I just contradicted myself. These are the things that your homepage needs. Once you have this information, your website is a living document. That's going to evolve. If you create the website, when you're an employed physician and your website is informational and promoting you and not your practice or your employer, then your homepage is not going to have of this information. But then as your circumstances change, you come back and update the website to reflect what I told you needs to be on the homepage.

0 (12m 5s):

And here in lies, the reason you want to make sure that you can make modifications to your own website without always having to go back to the website designer, to get your website seen, you'll have to play what I would describe to you as the search engine game and to play the ever-changing game. You need to follow the best practices for search engine optimization. Otherwise known as SEO. You've probably heard about SEO and how hard it is to master and how much it costs. If you want to hire somebody to help before you get all stressed out over this, I'm going to go over there. Some simple things that you can do to help yourself without spending a fortune.

0 (12m 48s):

One of those things is to create quality custom content for your website. Now, actually, this should be the super easy part because you need this information anyway, in order to attract your patients by content. I mean, telling them about you, your qualifications, and what services and procedures you offer, your content

shows that you're knowledgeable and it's going to help establish you as an expert. In addition, providing content helps you with your search engine ranking. For example, a page that explains her expertise in let's say total joint replacement and addresses common patient questions is going to improve your chances of showing up in a search.

0 (13m 32s):

When a local patient is searching for an orthopedic surgeon. I want to pause here for a second to stress the importance of what I just said, local patients. Sure. Some may find you on the internet and may be willing to travel to see you, or maybe you're going to provide telemedicine services to some extent, but in reality, the majority of your patients are going to be local to that end. Once a patient has decided to schedule an appointment with you, they need to know where to find you. This is where the local listings come in. If you claim and verify your local listings in search engines like Google, Bing, and Yahoo, the search engines will display the information to patients in your area.

0 (14m 20s):

If you've ever noticed, if you Google orthopedic surgeons in, let's say Baton Rouge, you don't actually see listings for people in Topeka, Kansas. Now, this is something that you can do for yourself. Most of these listing services are easy to update and they're free, but you're going to, I want to make sure that the information you provide is accurate. If your listing doesn't show up or the information is incorrect, your new patients are not to be able to find you. And given the world of immediate gratification that we currently live in, people get easily frustrated. And so then they just go away.

0 (15m 2s):

You don't want to lose business because of something silly. Once your listing is claimed and verified, you'll need to fill out as much information as possible to make your listing stand out. By doing this, you improve your chances of showing up in search results. For example, currently Google only shows three map listings on the first page of search results. So it's important to optimize your listing, to get that prime placement in the map result. Remember how I was describing gaming, the yellow pages listings in order to be seen, this is the modern version of it. You need to add photos of your practice, fill out the hours that you're open address specialty and a short description about your practice.

0 (15m 50s):

The more information you list, the better it's essentially free advertising. Also Google my business is constantly rolling out new features and active participation definitely helps your rankings. You can set up a Google business page simply by signing into your Google account. It takes about five minutes. It's easy to do and free. So this is a complete no brainer. One thing you have to do is keep your website regularly updated people, go to the website to get the latest information about your practice. If the information is outdated or it's wrong, people get frustrated and they move on.

0 (16m 32s):

Remember your website is basically the first impression of you and your practice that a potential patient is going to get. You can use your website to communicate information like for example, your Covid policy, or when we would post an announcement that our office was going to be closed because there was an impending hurricane. Again, I want to stress to you, the importance of being able to make simple changes to your website. I'm not telling you that you have to take on website design. In addition to everything else there is to do. My practice website was professionally done because honestly, on balance, it wasn't worth my time and effort that said it was easily modifiable.

0 (17m 20s):

I keep reiterating this to you because you don't want to have to pay a web designer every time you want to make a minor change. And I promise you, there will be changes that need to be made. Having a blog on your website is another way to provide information to your patients. Blog posts are a great way to share health tips or answer frequently asked questions. Look, I'm sure like me, you found yourself answering the same questions over and over. By putting the answer in a blog post, you can make your visits more efficient while providing patients with an additional resource. Your blog posts should contain different information than the patient could find elsewhere on your website.

0 (18m 6s):

To be clear, you may have a page about what services or procedures you offer, but then you may have a blog post about some specific aspect of how a particular procedure works. And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that a blog is going to help your SEO. Once you have your website up and running, you're going to want to tell everyone about it. No one is going to know where to look for you. If they don't know that you're out there. One of the easiest things that a lot of people forget about is putting a sign up in your office that says visit our website and including the website name. Now at the risk of stating the obvious simply saying, visit our website is insufficient.

0 (18m 49s):

Especially if your website domain name is not the same as your business name. And when I say put it in your office, I mean, in your waiting room at the front desk, in each exam room and any other place where somebody is going to see it now, as an aside, you can get inexpensive acrylic frames and stands at places like office Depot. Patients need something to look at while they're hanging out in the exam room, waiting for you. Putting these in your exam rooms helps you promote your website, new services and products, and it helps distract people. As I told you, at the beginning of this episode, your website is prime real estate, but I want you to realize that it can be an incredible free marketing tool that is so much more useful than the old yellow page ads.

0 (19m 43s):

Thanks for joining me. Be sure to sign up for my newsletter below, and I'll be sending you tips on how to

start your practice best run your practice, grow the practice, and then ultimately be able to leverage your medical practice into multiple other businesses. I hope to see you soon.