

0.00 Overview

These articles discuss the impact of the internet and its associated technologies on UK veterinary practices.

For any existing bricks and mortar business the design of a web site and the implementation of new communication channels must tie in with the way the business already interacts with the real world.

UK veterinary practices are built around a unique business model. No other businesses have the same combination of a professional service provided to such a local client base. When you develop your practice web site then unique criteria must apply.

In this document we look at the broad range of factors affecting the design and implementation of a practice web site and consider ways that new communication technologies, particularly e-mail, can be used in your practice.

Reading these articles won't turn you into an internet specialist. It will, we hope, provide you with a broad overview of the possibilities. When you come to discuss requirements with your chosen web design company then you will have a better idea of the questions to ask – and an improved chance of understanding the answers.

0.01 Declaration of interest

We must start by declaring our interest in the commercial aspects of the subject material covered in these articles. Vetlist Ltd provides a range of online packages specifically designed for UK veterinary practices – and that's all the sales pitch this document contains. In this suite of articles our aim is to provide you with useful information without specific bias towards our own products.

We do discuss the Any UK Vet web site, a service which we provide. We feel that this is valid as the site fills a specific need online not covered by any other provision.

These articles are a synopsis of our research into the relationship between UK veterinary practices and the developing new technologies. We hope that you will find our analysis a useful starting point as you look into the specific requirements of your own situation and that it will help you select the best solutions for getting your practice online.

0.02 Does your practice need to be online ?

For the moment you don't actually need to be online.

The care and treatment of animals at the core of veterinary practice doesn't translate into an internet based business in the same way as, say, the sale of books. If it did you would already be in competition with the veterinary equivalent of Amazon.com. People would be posting their Kitty to vet central, probably in Milton Keynes. Kitty would be couriered back the next day, fully serviced and minus all the reproductive bits.

Being online is peripheral to your core veterinary provision. Having a web site is part of your marketing strategy. Using e-mail provides an alternative to your phone and fax.

Why do you advertise in Yellow Pages?

Because that is where people look for you.

Why do you have a telephone?

Because that is how clients expect to contact you.

The situation is changing. More than half of your clients have internet access from home, or work, or both. They are using e-mail, in many cases more often than they use the phone. They are looking for you online. They would probably like to e-mail you rather than phone.

To remain competitive then, quite soon, your practice details will need to be easily found when clients look for your practice online. To stay in touch you will shortly need to integrate e-mail and other new means of communication into your daily routine as intimately as you currently embrace the telephone.

So. For the moment you don't need to be online. Soon though, if your clients can't find you and can't talk to you online, you will start to lose out to other practices that have adopted the new technologies more effectively.