

# **Internet Advertising - Surf the Newest Wave!**

By William J. Denton

## **Abstract:**

*After much research and experience on the World Wide Web, a Michigan College of Optometry web page was created by Jeff Becraft (class of 1999), Bill Denton (class of 2000), and Jason Whitman (class of 2001). The previous project essentially presents the school to prospective students and allows present students and faculty to look up valuable information. The second part of this project will accent the Michigan College of Optometry Clinic. It will present the clinic to potential and established patients.. Web pages are one of the newest ways of marketing businesses, in this case an optometric practice. Having the ability to make one's own web page is a skill which could prove to be valuable in the future.*

## **Introduction**

With the ever increasing popularity of the World Wide Web, it is no wonder that new web-based businesses are increasing exponentially every week. Optometry is one profession which could benefit from the realm of the Internet. This paper will introduce some Internet statistics and terminology, demonstrate how any optometric practice could use the Internet for advertising, and show what it takes to construct a Website.

## **Web Demographics**

The World Wide Web sprawls from an estimated 1.4 billion pages today, and will expand to an estimated 7.7 billion in the year 2002, claims the investment group Warburg Dillon Read.<sup>1</sup> Before fully understanding what the Internet has to offer an optometry clinic, some research must be conducted concerning exactly who uses the Internet and to whom the clinic is targeting their advertising.

### **Age:**

Twenty-eight percent of the surfers on the Internet are 17 years old and younger, 29% are ages 18-34, 31% are ages 35-54, and 12% are at the age of 55 and older.

### **Ethnicity:**

The largest ethnic class are Asians, providing 39% of all surfers, 32% are Caucasian, 22% are Hispanic, 20% are Afro-American. Twenty-seven percent make up a population other than what is listed.

### **Economics:**

One may assume that only people with financial means surf the Net. On the

contrary, the largest group of surfers are people that make less than \$50k per year. The next level of economic means are citizens with incomes between \$50k-\$75k annually. These make up the next largest percentage, with 27%. We find 20% of people with an annual income of over \$100,000 per year are on the Internet. Those earning \$75k- \$100k a year represent 17% of the Internet users.

Education:

Post grads comprise 17% of all people on-line. College grads comprise 26% of the people. The largest group (43%) is people currently in college. Those who have some college training make up 36% of the Internet users. A mere 17% have a high school education, and only 4% are people without a high school diploma.<sup>2</sup>

“I view the Internet, and the interactive form of education it engenders, to be amongst the most powerful and flexible tools available for patient education,” says Michael L. Gilbert, MD, Eyecare Technology Medical Editor. “The options are endless, from online informed consent materials to patient support groups. We hope to expose new patients to our excellent services and resources, as well as to extend the awareness of our current patient base.”

**Why Optometry is Not on the Web...Yet!**

World Wide Web's powerful search capabilities can deliver interested people directly to the information. It will be the primary source for patients to search for health care information and news. Up to this point, optometry has been only slightly involved in Internet advertising. There are three primary causes of this lack of optometric participation, which will yield to solutions in the coming years.

First, there are only roughly 46 million households and 6.3 million businesses in the United States currently connected to the Web.<sup>3</sup> Are there enough people online to spend money on a Webpage for a specific regional eye-care business? The answer is “yes.” By 2004 the number of US households with Internet access will nearly double to 90 million and business connections will increase to 8.3 million. A combined total of business and household access will reach 171 million by 2004. A total of 69% of all adults use a computer at home, work or some other location (a 19% increase from 1995). Moreover, 81% of computer users go online, that is a 54% increase over three years ago.

“With free services, broadband access, multimedia content, and access appliances the Internet is a more powerful experience every day,” said John Zahurancik, Vice President-Broadband Research for The Strategis Group. This statement brings another issue to the forefront. That is the issue of cost of Internet use. The average price of Internet access was \$17.94 in 1999.<sup>4</sup> With NetZero.com introducing free Internet access throughout the United States, this precedent will continue and result in the average Internet price to decreasing significantly. NetZero.com uses other companies'



advertising dollars in order to provide this free access. The user receives this free access to the Internet in exchange for viewing banner advertisements on NetZero.com's browser.

Secondly, the Internet has been inherently disorganized, making it difficult for optometric practices to connect with patients in their region. With more Internet growth, a more organized application is evident in the future. In the wave of the future, all users will find an easier manner to use the respective search engines. They will also discover that when conducting a search, broad words will give numerous listings, but more specific wording will produce results more to their liking. The easiest way to locate a local business is to utilize the Internet Yellow Pages for a specific city or region. Other web sites are formed for the sole purpose of finding a regional business or clinic for the user. A good optometric example is the Low Vision Gateway ([www.lowvision.org](http://www.lowvision.org)). It is easily found using any search engine. Any user looking for low vision services could locate this Web page by typing in the address. The Low Vision Gateway allows a patient to match up with a low vision specialist's Web page in their region. A minimal cost per year of \$60.00 is charged to the clinic for this advertising. Other optometric organizations offer this service free of charge with annual dues. The Neuro-Optometric Rehabilitation Association (NORA) breaks down regions into states. A patient within a specific state can easily make contact through this referral system. Finally, insurance groups or third party payer's Web site might have additional means to provide a link to the clinic's Web site.

Thirdly, new optometric Web sites must have compelling content which bring patients back to the site or, ultimately, to the office. It is important to remember that the patient is only one click away from entering or exiting your homepage. Web-page design is departing from the era of simple "homepages" and moving toward high-impact, high-content, interactive Web sites which deliver real value to the visitor. The special or unique aspect drawing attention to a Web page will cause a patient to take interest. In the near future the majority of all patients will be searching the Web for health care answers before they enter an optometric office. The World Wide Web's powerful search capabilities can link interested people directly to the information. It will be the primary source which patients go to search for health care information and news.<sup>3</sup> A survey conducted by FIND/SVP/Cyber Dialogue reveals that 77 percent of patients *prefer* to get online health information directly from their health-care provider, but just 10 percent of doctors have a Webpage and give out their email address. It also estimated that some 70 million people searched the Web for health-care information last year.<sup>5</sup>

Each optometric practice must custom design the percentage of their income to be designated towards advertising. Most experts agree that a good range would be to spend between 4 and 8% of a clinic's gross income on advertising. Therefore, the more lucrative the practice, the greater the advertising budget. Historically, the Yellow Pages, mailings, and newspaper advertisements were among the most popular advertising



expenses.<sup>6</sup> The Internet has grown faster than radio and television and now reaches 50 million households. It took the World Wide Web less than five years to accomplish this feat, while radio and television took thirty-eight years, and thirteen years, respectively.<sup>7</sup>

### **Web Advertising 101**

In order for patients to find an optometry Web site, it is important that it be advertised. The easiest and fastest method is to submit one's page for review at each of the major search engines (see Appendix G for a listing of "Popular Search Engines"). There will be forms to complete with specific information which relates to the desired site. These words might be "optometry", "low vision", "contact lenses", or "glaucoma." The more specific the wording, the better chance there will be of attracting patients to a specific site. This process is free and may take anywhere from several days to a number of weeks.

Another method of getting the word out about a specific web page includes being listed in the Internet Yellow Pages. Many patients might look up optometrists in their region through this avenue since it will be the most up-to-date edition of The Yellow Pages available. Since Internet users are generally educated people, they will be impressed that a clinic is an internet advertiser. They may conclude that if this professional is up-to-date in one area, then the clinic may also utilize the most up-to-date methods in their practice as well.

Having the domain name advertised on all letterheads, envelopes, literature and even on telephone holding messages, will also get the word out. Sometimes creative thought must be used. As an example, if the main desire is to draw patients from across town, consideration might be given to exchanging web banners with a dentist, chiropractor, podiatrist, or endocrinologist in that area of town. No money is exchanged and both practices benefit from additional advertising. HMO's and third party payers might also be persuaded to start a referral page on their Website.

Advertising should be considered a method of attracting new patients to an office. It should be considered as a method of retaining patients as well. The manner by which this is accomplished is through email newsletters. Many clinics are already sending out hardcopy newsletters printed on their own computer. Postage, design, printing, and paper costs, can eat up a large percentage of an advertising budget. An email newsletter is just as it appears. A clinic creates an email with all the information that would normally be in the mailed newsletter, but this one has no postage, and no paper costs. If an optometrist is computer literate, he or she could easily develop this periodical. To have someone such as an office manager create it would still be a minimal cost. There may be companies willing to fund these communications in exchange for advertising space. If twelve different sponsors could sponsor once a year, funds would be covered for one email newsletter a month. This idea can be taken to a higher level by having more than

one edition available every month. Send one edition to all contact lens patients and have it focused for their needs. Another edition could be sent to all presbyopes, myopes, glaucoma, or low vision patients.<sup>3</sup> Many organizations and businesses have email newsletters available. Subscriptions can be obtained from Webpages. Others could be accessed by asking for an email address when filling out a patient or membership form.

A survey of 882 readers of the magazine *Business 2.0* shared that 43% subscribe to more than six email newsletters. They found that 28% subscribe to 3 or 4, 15% to 5 or 6, and 14% to 1 or 2.<sup>8</sup> Since more people are participating in the Internet each day, there is a better chance that a well written and attractive newsletter will be one that is received.

Unfortunately, there are standard privacy standards by which one must abide when implementing such a communication tool. Most people consider their email system as personal property. Some patients would love to receive a newsletter in the email, but other might be offended. That is why it is imperative to conduct permission marketing. It might simply be a permission statement next to their email address. "Are you willing to receive an informative email newsletter regarding updated information concerning our clinic, new products, and educational articles about common eye problems?" Another way of advertising would be to ask if they would desire an email when the clinic Website is updated. Periodic changing of a Website will help maintain patient interest in the site and avoid mundane boredom.<sup>3</sup>

The hottest item on the Internet in recent days is eCommerce. It is any financial transaction that occurs over the Internet. Optometry has its first eCommerce opportunity through E-Dr.com. It allows optometrists to order contacts, pharmaceuticals, frames, and many other items over the Internet at excellent cost reduction.<sup>9</sup> However, many other Websites have also commenced to use this form of marketing, however they send merchandise directly to the patient. 1-800 Contacts is now on the Internet, and patients feel confident knowing that they are receiving the best price possible. In the future it might be feasible for optometry clinics to offer this type of eCommerce to their patients. This idea might begin with making appointments over the Internet, then to renewing contact lens orders as long as the patient has been seen periodically. Let's face it, eCommerce is here and will most likely be the next wave for all businesses which make an appearance on the Internet.

### **Creating a Webpage**

There are two ways of creating a Web page for an eye clinic. Someone can be hired to develop it, or with training the optometrist or office manager can develop it. There are positives and negatives for each option. If someone is hired, the cost involved would be determined by their level of expertise. A sharp high school computer student would work for less money than a commercial provider (\$800-\$8,000 range). The key is to get the best Web page possible for the least amount of money. It is vital to do research



before hiring someone for this task. Samples of their work should give a clearer picture of the talent of potential Web page developers.

If the decision is to develop it in-house, there will need to be self education regarding web pages (see Appendix B-E for assistance). Browsing other ophthalmology and optometry sites would give some ideas of what is desirable for a Website blueprint (see Appendix F for an bubble chart to assist in creating a blueprint). A number of software packages will create HTML from input very similar to a word processor. Commercially, the most successful of these programs have been Microsoft Frontpage, Net Objects Fusion, and Adobe Page Mill. These programs allow the creation of Web pages without learning HTML. Pictures of the clinic and key individuals on the page will become helpful. It also puts a name with a face that will become significant for the future. A digital camera simplifies this task. If a digital camera is not available, then an alternative would be to scan a photograph into the computer.<sup>3</sup> If no scanner is available, there is one at Kinko's or any copy center.

When a page is constructed and placed on a server, the next step is to put a name with the creation. This name, or address, is called the domain. It is the address that patients will enter into a browser in order to call up the page. There is an old adage which says that there are three things which are important with business; location, location, and location. This same concept applies in this case. The name should be simple, descriptive, and easy for the patient to remember, such as "Dr-Denton.com". It does not matter if capitalized letters are used. The Internet does not utilize case sensitivity. Advertising the name with capital letters might make it easier for patients to remember. To determine if a particular name is in use, try entering it into a browser. If the response "file not found" comes on the screen, then it is available. If it turns out to a Website, then another choice must be made since no address name may be duplicated. Once a name has been determined, it can be registered at <www.internic.net>. The format of the name used can be <lowercasename.com>.<sup>3</sup> Other suffixes available are .net for computer "networks" and .org for "organizations." In the near future, a new suffix will be .mp, which will stand for "market place."<sup>10</sup> There are a total of 13,226,005 domain names registered in the world of which over 8 million use .com. Over 1 million of these are .net, and almost 800,000 are .org. There are over 5,500 which use .edu, and over 700 are .gov.<sup>11</sup> A domain name is not required but it allows one to have control of that name as long as the biannual fee renewal has been paid. It gives patients a much easier way to access an optometrist's Website. The cost for one's own domain name is about \$70 with a two-year renewal fee of \$35.

Once the basic site is constructed, a monthly fee is charged for the rental space to house the page, and an additional fee is charged for maintenance and updating the information. Some designer companies may offer package deals which include the construction of the site, a year of service, and a domain name. Since everything is a click away on the Internet, distance is not an issue. Having a provider half way across the

United States is common with no drawbacks. A designer who is familiar with health care, or specifically optometry, might be the best option.<sup>3</sup>

**Conclusion:**

The Internet and electronic-based technology are here to stay. It will only increase in popularity and will be streamlined in its applications. Since more businesses and health clinics are turning to the Internet for their advertising needs, it is imperative for optometry to consider this avenue when preparing their advertising budgets. It is important to keep in mind that the surfing patient is only one click away from entering or exiting a web page. Individual clinics must determine exactly what steps can be taken to keep patients returning to their page as well as attracting new patients through a webpage at the same time. Some of the answers lie in the information cited in this paper. Other information will have to be gleaned through research.

## References

1. "Smarter Returns." *Business 2.0*. August 1999:46.
2. "Who's Online." *Business 2.0*. January 2000:252.
3. Windsor RL, Windsor LK. Weave Your Web: Using the Internet to Market Your Practice. *AOA News*. November 16, 1998: 37(9): 10A, 10D-10F.
4. <http://eMarketer.com> 9 February 2000 Press Release.
5. Bernard S. "Online Outpatients." *Business 2.0*. January 2000:257.
6. Thal LS, Hisaka C. "Marketing." *Business Aspects of Optometry*. Butterworth-Heinemann, Boston: 1997. 297-299.
7. "Net by Number." *Business 2.0*. January 2000:182.
8. "Dot Comment." *Business 2.0*. March 2000:40.
9. <http://www.e-dr.com>. "E-Dr. Network Changes Face of Online Ordering." Press Release, 20 July 1998.
10. <http://www.marketplace.mp>
11. "Trade Market." *Business 2.0*. March 2000:39.
12. Shukla A. "Sticking to Basics." *Business 2.0*. March 2000:129.
13. <http://www.webopedia.com>
14. <http://searchengineshowdown.com/features>



## Glossary of Internet Terms<sup>13</sup>

The following terms have been provided as an additional resource. For more word research please see Webopedia (<http://www.webopedia.com>)

**Bandwidth:** The amount of data that can be transmitted in a fixed amount of time. For digital devices, the bandwidth is usually expressed in bits per second (bps) or bytes per second.

**Browser:** Short for Web Browser, a software application used to locate and display Web pages. The two most popular browsers are Netscape Navigator Microsoft Internet Explorer. Both of these are graphical browsers, which means that they can display graphics as well as text. In addition, most modern browsers can present multimedia information, including sound and video.

**Domain name:** A name that identifies one or more IP addresses. For example, the domain name microsoft.com represents about a dozen IP addresses. Domain names are used in URLs to identify particular Web pages. For example, the URL <http://www.microsoft.com/index.html>, the domain name is microsoft.com.

**E-mail:** Short for electronic mail, the transmission of messages over communication networks. The messages can be notes entered from the keyboard or electronic files stored on disk. Another common spelling is email.

**Extranet:** A new buzzword that refers to an intranet that is partially accessible to authorized outsiders. You can access an extranet only if you have a valid username and password, and your identity determines which parts of the extranet you can view.

**Firewall:** A system designed to prevent unauthorized access to or from a private network. For greater security, data can be encrypted.

**HTML:** Short for **H**yper**T**ext **M**arkup **L**anguage, the authoring language used to create documents on the World Wide Web. HTML defines the structure and layout of a Web document by using a variety of tags and attributes.

**HTTP:** Short for **H**yper**T**ext **T**ransfer **P**rotocol, the underlying protocol used by the World Wide Web. HTTP defines how messages are formatted and transmitted, and what actions Web servers and browsers should take in response to various commands.

**Hyperlink:** An element in an electronic document that links to another place in the same document or to an entirely different document. Typically, you click on the hyperlink to follow the link. Hyperlinks are the most essential ingredient of all hypertext systems, including the World Wide Web.

**Hypertext:** A special type of database systems, invented by Ted Nelson in the 1960s, in which objects (text, pictures, music, programs, etc.) can be creatively linked to each other. When you select an object, you can see all the other objects that are linked to it. You can move from one object to another even though they might have very different forms. The icons that you select to view associated objects are called Hypertext links or buttons.

**Internet:** A global network connecting millions of computers. Unlike online services, which are centrally controlled, the Internet is decentralized by design. Each Internet computer, called a host, is independent. Its operators can choose which Internet services to use and which local services to make available to the global Internet community. Remarkably, this anarchy by design works exceedingly well. There are a variety of ways to access the Internet. Most online services, such as American Online, offers access to some Internet services.

**Intranet:** A network based on TCP/IP protocols (an internet) belonging to an organization, usually a corporation, accessible only by the organization's members, employees, or others with authorization. An intranet's Web sites look and act just like any other Web sites, but the firewall surrounding an intranet fends off unauthorized access.

**ISDN:** Abbreviation of **integrated services digital network**, an international communications standard for sending voice, video, and data over digital telephone lines or normal telephone wires.

**ISP:** Short for **Internet Service Provider**, a company that provides access to the Internet. For a monthly fee, the service provider gives you a software package, username, password and access phone number. Equipped with a modem, you can then log on to the Internet and browse the World Wide Web, and send and receive e-mail. ISPs are also called IAPs (Internet Access Providers).

**Mailing list:** A list of e-mail addresses identified by a single name, such as mail-list@sandybay.com. When an e-mail message is sent to the mailing list name, it is automatically forwarded to all the addresses in the list. Most e-mail clients support mailing lists, which enables you to broadcast e-mail messages to groups that you define. In addition, there are mailing list servers that manage centralized mailing lists for groups of users.

**Modem:** Acronym for **modulator-demodulator**. A modem is a device or program that enables a computer to transmit data over telephone lines. Computer information is stored digitally, whereas information transmitted over telephone lines is transmitted in the form of analog waves.



**Search engine:** A program that searches documents for specified keywords and returns a list of the documents where the keywords were found. See Appendix A for some of the most commonly used search engines.

**Spam:** Electronic junk mail or junk newsgroup postings. In addition to wasting people's time with unwanted e-mail, spam also eats up a lot of network bandwidth.

**Surf:** To move from place to place on the Internet searching for topics of interest. The term surfing is generally used to describe a rather undirected type of Web browsing in which the user jumps from page to page rather whimsically, as opposed to specifically searching for specific information.

**URL:** Abbreviation of **Uniform Resource Locator**, the global address of documents and other resources on the World Wide Web. The first part of the address indicates what protocol to use, and the second part specifies the IP address or the domain name where the resource is located.

**Web banner:** A device of advertising that is posted on a webpage of another company. The surfer can click the banner and be transferred instantly, or ignore it and continue surfing.

**Webpage:** A document on the World Wide Web. Every Web page is identified by a unique URL (Uniform Resource Locator).

**Web server:** A computer that delivers Web pages. Every Web server has an IP address and possibly a domain name. For example, if you enter the URL `http://www.microsoft.com/index/html` in your browser, this sends a request to the server whose domain name is `microsoft.com`. The server then fetches the page named `index.html` and sends it to your browser.

**Website:** A site or location on the World Wide Web. Each Web site contains a home page, which is the first document users see when they enter the site. The site might also contain additional documents and files.

**World Wide Web:** A system of Internet servers that support specially formatted document. The documents are formatted in a language called HTML (HyperText Markup Language) that supports links to other documents, as well as graphics, audio, and video files. This means you can jump from one document to another simply by clicking on hot spots.

Appendix A:

**Popular Search Engines**<sup>14</sup>

The following includes a list of the most popular search engines used on the Internet. For a complete comparison between them visit The Search Engine Showdown at <http://searchengineshowdown.com/features/>

<b><u>Name:</u></b>	<b><u>Address:</u></b>
All the Web	<a href="http://www.alltheweb.com/">http://www.alltheweb.com/</a>
Lycos Advanced	<a href="http://lycospro.lycos.com/">http://lycospro.lycos.com/</a>
Northern Light	<a href="http://www.northernlight.com/">http://www.northernlight.com/</a>
AltaVista	<a href="http://www.altavista.com/">http://www.altavista.com/</a>
Google	<a href="http://www.google.com/">http://www.google.com/</a>
Excite	<a href="http://www.excite.com/">http://www.excite.com/</a>
Yahoo	<a href="http://www.yahoo.com/">http://www.yahoo.com/</a>
Infoseek	<a href="http://infoseek.go.com/">http://infoseek.go.com/</a>
HotBot	<a href="http://hotbot.lycos.com/">http://hotbot.lycos.com/</a>
Magellan	<a href="http://magellan.excite.com/">http://magellan.excite.com/</a>
WebCrawler	<a href="http://www.webcrawler.com/">http://www.webcrawler.com/</a>



Appendix B:

**Avoid These Web Design Mistakes**<sup>3</sup>

1. Don't use large, slow graphic files that take a long time to load.
2. Don't use clashing colors.
3. Don't rely on the browser's "back" button to be the only way to navigate the site.
4. Don't put endless pages of information on the site, because no one will ever read it all.
5. Don't use more than a few different fonts.
6. Don't design pages that require a lot of scrolling.
7. Don't use more than one "frame" on any page. ("Frames are multiple windows on the screen. Creating more than two windows at a time may confuse the viewer.")
8. Don't make oversized pages.
9. Don't use needless distracting animations.
10. Don't use small fonts.
11. Don't forget to design the site for visually impaired visitors as well.

Appendix C:

**Tips for Designing a Great Website**<sup>3</sup>

1. Use a consistent background, graphic style, and color scheme throughout the entire site.
2. Make navigation clear, using back and home buttons, so people do not get lost within the site.
3. Design pages that are short and do not require a lot of scrolling.
4. Use customized logos or the graphics used on office literature. Don't just scan in the letterhead. Have the logo adapted by the Web designer or graphic artist.
5. Keep the page size only as wide as the screen. It should be designed for monitors set at 640 x 480 pixels. Avoid all horizontal scrolling.
6. Include small, fast-loading graphics. Graphics can be compressed and sized for speedy loading.
7. Limit color scheme to two or three colors.
8. Keep text to a minimum. People do not like to read excessive wordage..
9. Use large fonts to allow easy reading.
10. Use alternate tags, which are text descriptions of graphics for visually impaired patients who use screen readers. Screen reader software will read the text descriptions aloud. Also, consider a "sub-web" (a small page residing within the site) that presents information in large white-on-black print, with no graphics.



## Appendix D:

### **Compelling Content**<sup>3</sup>

- Basic information: A list of practitioners and staff, with office telephone numbers and addresses, and other basic information.
- Philosophy/mission statement: Use thoughts about the kind of care provided.
- Patient manual: An outline of procedures and policies used.
- Their party information: A list of insurance programs accepted. Be sure to check the rules for each plan. Some do not allow advertisement regarding a clinic's participation in the plan.
- Photos of the doctor, buildings and staff: Photographs should be used carefully. Don't use more than one or two on a page, or the loading time will be slowed.
- Practice history: Does the practice have a long or unique history in vision care? Let prospective patients and referring doctors know what the practice has done.
- Curriculum vitae: List the awards, accomplishments, publications, professional organizations, etc.
- Professional publications: Lists of published works could be highlighted to emphasize the doctor's skill in certain areas.
- Information for referring doctors: If outside referrals are received the site could allow doctors to request additional (generic) literature about the practice, e.g., practice brochure or pamphlets about eye conditions. (This does not include patient records! The security of the Web is such that we are not comfortable putting patient records on it, even within password-protected areas.)
- Clinical research: List the projects in which the optometrist has participated in and /or the results of other research.
- Staff: Consider pictures of the staff, with information on their services within the practice. However, avoid using last names for security reasons. Be sure to get real, unpressured permission from the staff, or don't use their pictures.
- The practice in the news: Present copies of newspaper articles about the practice or staff.
- Office and equipment: A picture says a thousand words, and on the Internet it means a lot more. Showcase the facility to the public. An online tour of a new facility could be provided.

- Show results of a patient satisfaction survey: If a patient satisfaction survey is done and have good results, let the world know. If 98% of the patients would rate the service outstanding, a potential patient viewing the site would be impressed. Be sure to use real statistics.
- Speaker's bureau section: Post upcoming lectures by your doctors, and a list of programs presented in the past.
- Specialty services: do you specialize? Unique services such as vision therapy, neuro-optometry, contact lenses, and low vision should be showcased.
- Patient testimonials: One powerful marketing tool for a Web site is the patient testimonial. A simple picture of a patient with his or her words discussing treatment results can be powerful. In the near future, full motion video testimonials will become common. (Be sure to get full written permission from patients before doing this.)
- New products or services: Was there a new innovative service just started or perhaps just begin fitting a new type of contact lens or a new low vision device? A picture and a few words can bring patients into the office.
- Highlights of recent scientific meetings attended: These let patients know the clinic stays on the cutting edge of the profession.
- Ocular conditions: Include a section in which is listed information about some of the ocular diseases or conditions treated. Consider adding educational demonstrations or animations.
- Urgent/emergency triage section: List the types of symptoms and signs that require immediate care and provide advice on reaching the doctor or other emergency care.
- Recommendations for frequency of eye care: When should a new baby have eye care, and what symptoms or signs indicate earlier care? How often should a glaucoma test be performed? Patients or potential patients can learn how to make better decisions on preventive health care.
- Interactive patient survey: Ask visitors questions and publish the results on the site. One might ask, "What's the worst thing about wearing eyeglasses?" When the results are published, ways to improve the problem via alternatives like laser refractive surgery or contact lenses may be offered.
- Ask the doctor: Patients can send e-mail you with their questions or a page or two can be included where answers to questions may be posed by visitors to the Website.

- Office publications: Does the practice have its own newsletters or brochures? Some of them could be put online for visitors to read and download. Offer to electronically send the newsletter to those who register through an online form.
- Online manuals: Permission can often be obtained to use online product manuals.
- Scheduling appointments: This page will include the phone and fax numbers. Also, a list of the types of insurance programs accepted and types of payments may be listed on this page. Soon many practices will routinely make appointments through e-mail.
- Map to the clinic: Make it easy for new patients to find the office. Including a map is a helpful resource for all.
- Online screening tests: Amsler Grids, color vision, and other simple screening tests can be adapted to the site.
- Downloadable pre-exam history form: Patients can download and answer key history questions before their exams and bring the forms to the examination. A lifestyle questionnaire might also be offered.
- Large-print low vision section: The site can be duplicated in a “sub-web” off of the Web site, with large white letters on a black background for low vision patients.
- Links: Use links cautiously! They send patients away from the site. You may wish to include links to some professional organization Web sites, research programs on eye disease, and other informational sites. If a link is added, be sure to provide enough explanation, so a patient doesn't have to leave the site to determine if the link would be helpful.



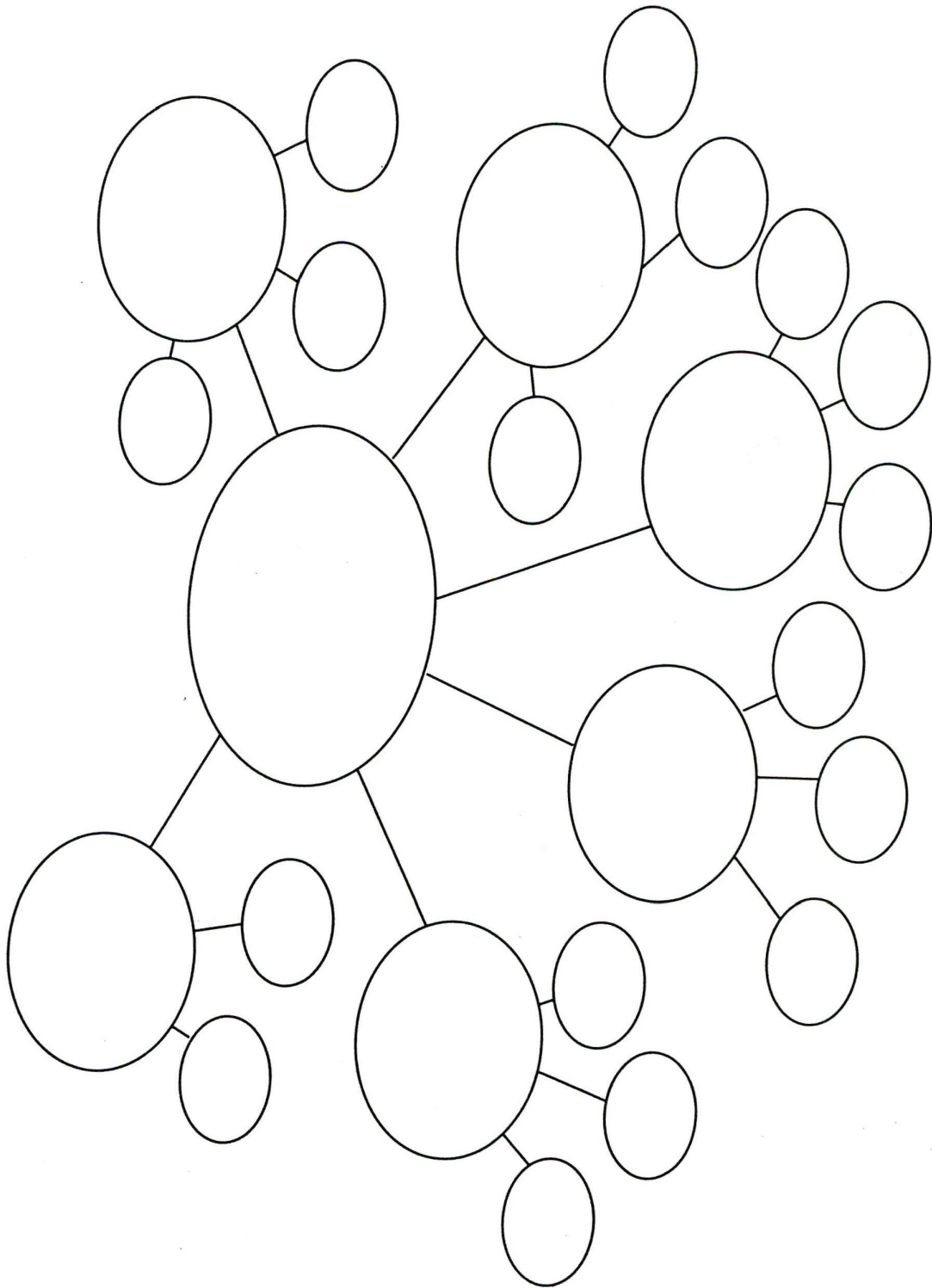
Appendix E:

**Just a Click Away**<sup>12</sup>

The following are some points to assist in improving the chances of keeping surfers.

1. Know the target customer- Know the Web's demographics and which type of patient the webpage is intended to attract.
2. Make the Webpage desirable for that target patient - After knowing who is targeted, develop a webpage for that patient in mind.
3. Get information from the target customer through research and surveys from the Website - If they are visiting the Website, they must be interested in what is being offered. Take advantage of this situation and get them to answer some quick questions providing some valuable statistics for the future of the Website.
4. Be consistent with Webpage updates and email newsletters - Consistency make things look sharp.
5. Conduct permission marketing - This is for the patient that might get offended by anything sent over email. The goal is not to decrease the patient base by advertising the wrong way.
6. Personalization helps to create a family or community atmosphere - Names on emails and email newsletters might mean a lot to people. It will give them the right idea about the practice.
7. Become interactive - It is important that the patient feels they can ask anything over the Website. Whether an email response is given, or a phone call, is up to the individual.
8. Conduct continuous relationship marketing: Have repeated interaction with patients through a variety of channels - the Web, email, phone, and fax.
9. Use the community concept - Create chat rooms, special-interest email newsletters, and other community activities that will drive purchasing behavior.

Appendix F:







[Welcome](#)

[About Optometry](#)

[Admissions](#)

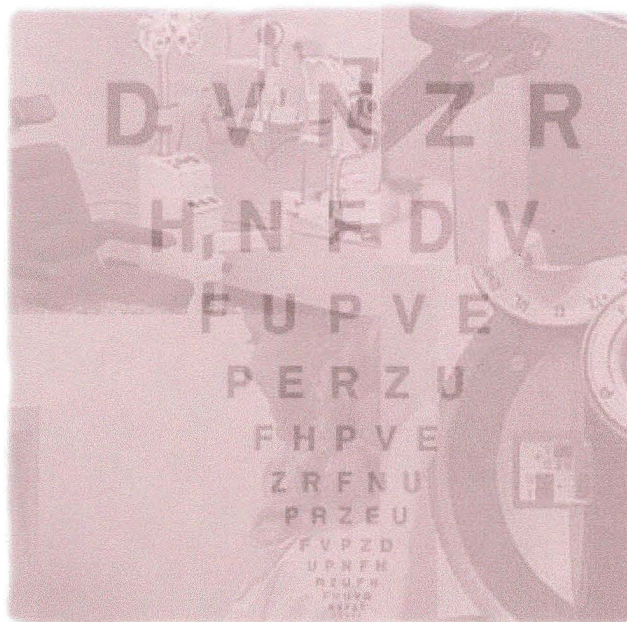
[Patients](#)

[Students & Faculty](#)

[Home](#)

Patients - Please click on "Patients" above in order to find out about all of the eye care services provided by the Michigan College of Optometry, and to find out how to schedule an appointment.

Applicants will find all necessary application information and forms under "Admissions"



---

**Design Team:**

Design and Graphics by Jason Whitman - Third Year Student  
Information by Jeff Becraft, Bill Denton, Jason Whitman, Mark Swan O.D.

---

**Mailing Address:**

Michigan College of Optometry  
401 Pennock Hall  
Big Rapids, MI 49307

---

**A Note to Our Users:**

Please be sure to upgrade your browser  
to Internet Explorer 4 or Netscape Communicator 4