

Maleny Veterinary Services

www.malenyvet.com.au

February 2003

Maleny Veterinary Services is a privately owned veterinary practice. The business commenced in 1958 and was the first Queensland veterinary practice outside of the Brisbane metropolitan area.

It has been managed by the current owner for over 20 years. The business has four employees.

We talked to Don Lyons, owner, at the premises on Beech St, Maleny in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland, about an hour drive north of Brisbane.

Who are your customers?

Now mostly householders and some farmers but previously farmers provided the bulk of the work.

Do you have an established customer base?

Yes.

Are you trying to attract new customers?

Yes.

How will they benefit from your service?

We supply a good and reliable service.

Who are your competitors?

There are a number of veterinary practices in the local and surrounding area.

How do you use digital technology in your organisation?

I am the only mobile person in the business and I use a CDMA mobile telephone as it provides a better rural coverage compared to the normal digital mobiles, but the improvement is only minor. We have a telephone but no PABX.

We have one desktop computer running Windows NT and I have a second computer at home. We use Microsoft Office and Publisher and QuickBooks for accounts.

We have a modem connection to the Internet. I don't have enough information about broadband to make a decision to make the change. We do not use online banking facilities.

Do you use e-mail?

A reasonable amount of e-mail occurs, and it is used both with customers and suppliers.

Do you use a regular e-mail newsletter?

No.

Have you ever had problems with viruses?

Yes, all the time.

What measures do you take?

We use Norton Antivirus which appears to work OK.

How often do you back up your files?

A QuickBooks backup is burnt to CD after each session and the other files are backed up irregularly.

Any other equipment?

We have a fax machine and scanner.

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Do you have a Web site?

Yes, since about 1999.

Do you have or are you connected to an Intranet?

Yes, I have access to the Australian Veterinary Association's and a post graduate committee's Extranets.

Do you use an Extranet?

Yes. One wholesaler has provided us with an ordering program that enables us to go online and order through their Extranet.

What is your Web site for?

Promotion and advertising. More and more of the general public have computers and access to the Internet. Also there is greater population movement now than compared to the past and so whereas all long term locals would know my businesses, newcomers may not.

Is this a development of your existing business or a new venture?

It is a development of our existing business

If it is a development, how is it supposed to help?

To steer people to my normal business.

Do you have an on-line audience?

Yes, customers.

Do you host internally or externally

Externally.

Do you allow transactions on your site?

No.

Do you collect information with forms?

No.

How do you update the content of your site?

Up to now I have depended upon a contractor but I am now learning how to directly update the site myself.

How do you promote your site?

We promote the site on all printed material, my car and staff cars. Our Web site can be accessed from the online Maleny Business Directory. I believe MENA assisted the Apex Club with this online publication.

How much does it cost to promote your site?

The cost is negligible.

Do you ask customers how to improve your site?

Sometimes.

Do you have an existing customer database?

Yes, but only in QuickBooks. This is causing a problem because if we compress the QuickBooks file at the end of each year, we lose easy access to existing customers' details and previous invoices.

Case study courtesy of Digital Business Insights Pty Ltd

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Therefore we cannot compress the company file, and because of its size (approximately 30 Mbyte) it is often difficult to maintain the integrity of data in the file.

Does your Web site capture new customer information?

No, but an e-mail can be sent from the site to us.

What is the best way to get people to come to your site?

Publicity. I try and ensure the site is on as many search engines as possible.

What is the best way to get people to return to your site?

Have a good Web site with good information.

How does your site generate income?

By attracting new customers.

How many upgrades?

The Web site is still on the same basic original version.

Did you write a business plan before you started?

No.

How much time did it take to get up and running?

Eight months.

Where did you go for advice?

My daughter has Web development experience.

Did you do the work yourself or use outside contractors?

My daughter acted as our contractor for the task.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes, I believe she did an excellent job.

How much did it cost you?

The major development cost was the domain name registration.

What mistakes did you make that you wish you hadn't?

None.

What were the main risks you took?

None to my knowledge.

What advice would you give someone else?

Make sure you do not pay too much for your Web site. We were quoted about \$4,000 by one company to produce our Web site which I believe is excessive.

What were the barriers to your digital project?

None – the introduction of computers, the Internet and Web site has progressed very smoothly.

Did everyone in your business support the enterprise?

Yes, staff know how to apply themselves and they did.

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Do you know what technology is used in your company?

Mostly.

Do you understand what it does?

Yes.

Where can people find useful advice about the subject?

Local computer contractors and MENA.

How did you decide which technology to use?

Advice from my computer contractor.

Are the key managers in your business up to speed with digital technology?

Yes.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

More customers.

Are any of these benefits quantifiable?

I don't think so as it is very difficult to tell. Most new customers seem to come from personal referrals.

Are customers happy with what you have done for them?

The ones I have asked give positive feedback on the web site.

What is the most important thing you've learned in the last year?

I am learning things all the time but can recollect nothing startling.

Given what you know... would you do it again?

Yes.

What are you planning to do next?

Once I can update the Web site I intend to ensure it is updated more regularly. I would also like to purchase a digital camera. We host the RSPCA's fundraising Million Paws Walk and I would like to be able to take digital images of participants of this walk and place them on the Web site. Currently I must convert conventional photos to digital format.