

Gippsland Footclinic

www.footclinic.com.au

March 2003

Gippsland Foot Clinic is a Podiatry practice committed to providing a health service to the community of Gippsland, particularly those who suffer or have the potential to suffer foot, leg, knee, or health problems related to their feet. There are 10 clinics, which make up this successful business.

These clinics are located in Foster, Leongatha, Maffra (2), Morwell, Pakenham, Sale, Traralgon, Warragul and Yarram. To supplement their footcare services, they also offer specialist footwear for purchase at both Traralgon and Warragul clinics.

The professional and customer focused team includes, highly qualified Podiatrists who are all members of the Australian Podiatry Association, podiatry assistants, expert shoe fitting specialists, a podiatry foot and ankle Surgeon. There are 20 part-time and full-time employees in this business which has been operating since 1994.

We spoke with Aaron Bryce, the owner/podiatrist of Gippsland Foot Clinic, at the Traralgon Clinic, one of the 2 Head Offices - the second being located in Warragul. Traralgon is located in the Latrobe Valley of Gippsland, Victoria.

Who are your customers?

The general public seeking foot care. We are also the suppliers of specialist shoes for the area.

Do you have an established customer base?

Yes.

Are you trying to attract new customers?

Yes, always.

Who are your competitors?

Other health practitioners in the area and some local generalist shoe stores.

How have you been successful?

Our marketing and exposure is very effective. We are able to outreach our clients in this entire region so we have established a solid reputation.

How do you use digital technology in your organisation?

We have nine ISD networked desktop computers in the offices. These are interconnected with all clinics. We use Microsoft Office.

We provide EFTPOS for patients' payments. We also use e-mail regularly to correspond with staff, especially between this Head Office here in Traralgon and our other one in Warragul. We are now easily able to communicate with the Management Team in Warragul, which is a bonus for us since the office opened only 12 months ago.

As well as for accounts and other essential administrative needs, we use the computers to make patients' appointments using an industry-specific software package called "Footware". This also enables us to set up 'follow-up appointments.'

We are not yet on ADSL as we have not found the need. We may use it in the near future.

We also do all our banking on-line. Initially we were wary of conducting this for security reasons, but now find it easy and efficient. We also make use of the Internet frequently and effectively. And of course, we have a Web site.

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Do you use e-mail?

Yes. As previously described, e-mail is used extensively in communicating with other clinics and Head Office. We do have some e-mail communication with customers and suppliers.

Do you use a regular e-mail newsletter?

Yes. It comes out quarterly.

Have you ever had problems with viruses?

No, nothing major.

What measures do you take?

We have the essential anti-virus package.

How often do you back up your files?

Weekly. We save files to discs and burn CDs.

Any other equipment?

We have a fax and a scanner and CD burner.

Do you have a Web site?

Yes.

Do you have or are you connected to an Intranet?

Yes, for all our branches.

Do you use an Extranet?

No

What is your Web site for?

Primarily for promotion and providing information about our clinics, staff and foot care in general.

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

We have had our site for 3 years now.

Do you have an on-line audience?

No. We are not set up for purchases on-line.

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 contents of your site?

We have outside consultants do this for us under instruction.

How do you promote your site?

Through our regular Newsletter, stationery, letterheads, invoices etc.

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How much does it cost to promote your site?

The cost is factored into our overall marketing budget. So far it is negligible.

Do you ask customers how to improve your site?

Not directly. But we do seek their opinions sometimes in our newsletter.

Do you have an existing customer database?

Yes.

Does your Web site capture new customer information?

No, but we may look into doing this in the future as it seems like a good idea.

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

As mentioned earlier, promotion on Newsletters, stationery, etc. We also have links to other Web-sites, eg the footwear products we sell with links to the specific brand name sites. Also, we have links to the Australian Podiatry Association and links to general foot conditions, eg "bunions".

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

Our site is very user-friendly with interesting information, which is easy to access and read. We list all the podiatrists' qualifications on our site and we have found that anyone from anywhere in the world who is interested in employment in this particular field will contact us.

How many versions?

We are on the third version.

Did you write a project plan before you started?

No.

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

Initially, the project was very time-consuming taking us three months all up.

Where did you go for advice?

We spoke to a local group of computer consultants. And researched the Web.

Did you do the work yourself or use outside contractors?

We used Internet Australis to design the site. They are a local firm.

Were you happy with the work and help given?

Yes.

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

We discovered early on that printing the surnames of our staff on the Web page became somewhat of an issue due to the possible privacy invasions. We have attended to that now. Generally, we feel we are continually evolving in the area of technology.

What advice would you give someone else?

Plan carefully and look at other Web pages. If contracting, be specific about what you want. Use links and photos to add interest.

What were the barriers within your business to your digital project?

None.

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Did everyone in your business support the enterprise?

Yes.

Do you know what technology is used in your company?

Yes.

Do you understand what it does?

Yes.

Where can people find useful advice about the subject?

Local computer contractors. Your Internet provider. The Web.

What are the business benefits you are hoping for?

Efficiency, accuracy, accountability, especially with e-mails – they act as records of communication now. And computers assist us in getting ideas “out of the head and in print”, they help store thoughts and highlight actions required.

The main thing is that I can now manage Head Office in Warragul from my desk here Traralgon.

Are staff happy with what you have done?

Yes.

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

How valuable e-mail is and how useful it can be.

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

Yes.

What are you planning to do next?

We plan to purchase and network more powerful computers. Eventually we want to go “paperless” with all patient records being computer-based. We hope this will all help to continue to grow the business successfully.