

# IS YOUR PRACTICE READY VIRTUALLY, DIGITALLY AND IS IT SECURE?

by Tim Keohane, Vice President of Sales & Marketing, AM Bickford

2020 has called upon all of us to adapt. It is amazing to think of how we answered the call. We went digital and virtual in a blink of an eye. Veterinary clinics had to create new ways to reach and support patients. In short order, curb side service, Zoom meetings and Facetime consultations have all become vital for day to day business.

Today, and we all know things can change rapidly. States are going through "phases" to open slowly. We need to stay vigilant and maintain policies and procedures to keep our family, employees, and customers safe and healthy. This is a good time to take a deep breath, take a step back, evaluate our businesses and think about what can be improved. When we reach the other side of this current crisis, what do we want our customers to remember about our service? Ask yourself these questions, Can I protect my business better? How do I serve my customers better? How do I communicate to my customers better? What is needed to adjust to the new normal? How do I grow my business?

At AM Bickford we have been asking ourselves the same questions. The marketing and Information Technology (IT) companies I partnered with have become my trusted advisors. I depend on both companies for suggestions and support. Scott Fierle has been in marketing for over 20 years and is the Vice President of Marketing at his firm.

Todd Miller is an IT expert and the CEO of his IT firm. Here is their perspectives: "People think that losing all their data or getting hacked will never happen to them," Todd started out. "BUT IT DOES! One megabyte is like 30 hours of work. If it is not backed up correctly or if your system crashes the data could be gone forever," Todd said.

Todd is a Value Added Reseller (VAR). VAR plays a prominent role in the IT industry, providing additional hardware, installation services, consulting, troubleshooting, and other related products and services.

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**- TODD MILLER**

"First and foremost, I sell peace of mind. If my customers have IT problems they know they have someone to call. Data like financial records, employee records and customer records are all saved to a server, in the cloud and is protected," he continues.

Todd admits that he never thought about veterinary clinics and all the data that could be on site. "Think about when you set up a

password. To reset your password or identify yourself you are asked a series of questions and one of them is "What's my pet's first name?" Someone can hack into a veterinary clinic's database and steal name, address, phone, email and pets name. Potentially that is enough to cause someone trouble."

That leads to Todd's next point, "Since the pandemic we are blocking a record amount of viruses and spam. Security Software is a good step but the best is layers of security including firewalls and quarantine suspicious emails. Todd suggests reviewing your entire IT system and updating hardware every three to four years. Be sure to set computers to automatically update weekly.

As the Vice President of Marketing in his firm, Scott supports a variety of businesses. Just like Todd, he never thought about veterinary clinics but see tremendous opportunity to grow and create brand awareness.

"It's marketing 101. How is your customers contact information stored? Is it updated? That's where it starts. Email addresses, contact names, phone numbers and mailing addresses are all vital and important information to communicate to customers." Scott says.

"The goal with marketing is to be consistent. Unfortunately, many businesses create social media

accounts and then they go dormant," he said. "People start out updating and posting information but stop. Potential customers see those outdated pages and move on. New content must be published twice a week." He suggests scheduling posts and linking Facebook and Instagram accounts together. "Instagram is used more by millennials while Facebook is used by older generations. You have to target them both".

"Evaluating your website is a continuous process. Contact information easy to find and posts relevant and helpful to your customers" he said.

Scott suggests a simple website upgrade is a Secure Socket Layer (SSL) Certificate. SSL is a secure protocol developed for sending information safely over the

Internet. In a quick search, it took Scott less than a minute to find multiple local veterinary websites without an SSL Certificate.

"The SSL Certificate is highly recommend. It will improve your Search Engine Optimization and Google rankings. Google will list websites that have SSL Certificate over the ones that do not. Instead of being in the top 10 results, your website might be on the second search page. Generally, people don't even look at the second page on Google."

Scott's final suggestions, create a Google business account. This will list your business on Google search maps. Post and review content on other social media websites where people are asking for suggestions for local businesses like nextdoor.com.

Updating our IT and marketing has been essential and made all the difference during the pandemic. The layers IT security has blocked over 100,000 suspicious emails this year alone. A.M. Bickford has more brand awareness than ever before. My last suggestion is an investment in your own development. Two books have made a huge difference: Fanatical Prospecting, by Jeb Blount provides a process to reach out to customers. The War of Art, by Steven Pressfield provides guidance to get work done. If you liked this article email me [timk@ambickford.com](mailto:timk@ambickford.com).

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References: \*Scott Fierle: Vice President  
Manzella Marketing \*Todd Miller: CEO  
DataSol, Inc.

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