

COMPLETE POSITIONING SYSTEMS

Is Your Referral Pipeline Leaking?

*What happens between a referral and a booking — and how to close the
gap.*

FLAVIA FARCAS
FLAVIAFARCAS.COM

Why I wrote this

Over the past few years, I noticed the same pattern repeating across my work and the people I spoke to.

Established experts in your field — fifteen years of real practice, a method that works, results they were proud of — were slowly losing their best potential clients to someone less qualified. Not because the other person did better work. Because the other person's online presence did a better job of making the right client feel confident before the first conversation.

So I went looking for what was actually causing it. I read the research. I studied the websites that convert at 21% versus the ones that convert at 3%. I tested what worked across different fields, different audiences, different price points. And I built a system from what I found.

This guide is the result. It's the same framework I now use with every client — distilled into something you can read in an evening and execute on your own if you choose to.

Not to sell you anything. To show you what's actually happening between someone discovering you and someone booking you, with the research to back every claim, and a framework you can put into practice yourself.

If you recognise yourself in the next 50 pages, you're in the right place. If you don't, share this with someone who needs it.

— Flavia

Who this is for

THIS IS FOR YOU IF

You've been in practice for 10+ years

You work in health, wellness, or aesthetics — nutrition, therapy, psychology, aesthetic care, physiotherapy, or similar

You get most of your clients through referrals and word of mouth

You know your work is good, but your online presence doesn't reflect it

You've been meaning to fix it for months, probably years

You're skeptical of anything that sounds like marketing, and you should be

THIS IS NOT FOR YOU IF

You're just starting out — this guide assumes an established practice

You're looking for tactics to drive more traffic — this is about converting what you already get

You want quick fixes or hacks — this guide is about structural change

You want to be sold a package — this is a resource designed to be useful to you, with practical advice you can put into action.

You have several options for how to do that, and I am just one of them

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read Part 1 in order. It builds an argument, and each chapter rests on the one before it.

Come back to Part 2 when you're ready to honestly assess your current online presence. Bring a pen.

Use Part 3 as a reference, not a race. It contains actual templates and executable work — things you can do yourself in the next 90 days if you choose to.

The research sources are at the back. Check my work if you want. I've cited everything.

PART ONE

*Why your referrals
are leaking*

Five chapters. Each one anchored to research. Read them in order.

The Referral Leak

77% of the people referred to you search for you online before they book. Your website decides whether they follow through — or choose someone else. Most established experts in your field don't know this is happening. It's the single biggest silent loss in their practice.

WHAT A REFERRAL ACTUALLY IS

Most established experts in your field think of a referral as a two-step process: someone recommends you, the person contacts you. Clean. Simple. Reliable.

That hasn't been true for years.

The modern referral is a three-step process. Someone recommends you. The person looks you up online. Then — based on what they find there — they either contact you or they don't.

The middle step is invisible to you. You never see it. You only see the people who made it through to the other side.

THE NUMBER YOU NEED TO SEE

In 2025, a patient behaviour research group called rater8 surveyed how people choose healthcare providers. They asked a simple question: if someone is referred to you by a friend, a doctor, or another trusted source, do you still look the provider up online before booking?

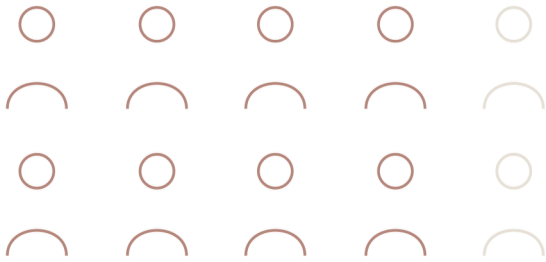
77%

of patients search for a practitioner online before booking — even when they were referred by someone they trust.

SOURCE · RATER8 PATIENT CHOICE REPORT 2025

Not 30%. Not 50%. Seventy-seven percent.

This means that out of every ten people someone sends you, eight of them stop at your website before they pick up the phone. What they find there determines whether they become your clients — or someone else's.



77%
*of preferred clients search you
online before booking.*

Source · rater8 2025

WHAT HAPPENS IN THOSE 30 SECONDS

The research paints a consistent picture of what people actually do when they arrive at a practitioner's website from a referral. They do four things, and they do them fast.

First, they look at the bio and the photo. 92% of patients read the provider's bio before booking (Healthgrades 2024). They're not reading for credentials. They're reading for fit — for some sense of whether this person understands people like them.

Second, they scan for real photos. Practitioners with four or more real photos on their site get 5.8 times more bookings than those with one or two stock-heavy images. Stock photography, the research shows, actively damages trust.

Third, they look for evidence of your method — some sense of how you actually work, not just what services you offer.

Fourth, they decide.

All four steps happen in one session. Usually 30 to 60 minutes. Usually on a phone. They rarely come back.

WHY EVEN STRONG REFERRALS LEAK

Here's the part most established experts in your field miss entirely: the strength of the referral doesn't protect you from a weak online presence.

A friend can tell your ideal client, **"You have to see her, she's incredible."** The right client will still open the browser, type your name, and evaluate what they find for themselves. If what they find is a generic services page, a stock photo, and no real sense of who you are, they'll still leave.

They won't tell the friend. They won't tell you. They'll just book someone whose website felt clearer, and move on.

THE LOSS YOU NEVER SEE

This is what makes the referral leak the most dangerous problem in your practice: you don't see it happening.

You see the people who booked. You see the enquiries that came through. What you never see is the people who visited your site, assessed it for 30 seconds, and closed the tab.

They were warm. They were referred. They were already halfway to becoming your clients. And then they were gone.

For someone who runs a practice on word of mouth, this is the biggest hidden cost of a weak online presence. The problem isn't that you aren't getting enough traffic. You're getting traffic. You're losing what arrives.

Once you see it, you can't unsee it. That's the point of this guide.

CHAPTER TWO

The 30-Minute Window

Your potential clients don't comparison shop for weeks. They decide in a single 30-60 minute session whether to book you or move on. Within that window, they read your bio, judge your photos, and look for evidence you understand their situation. You get one chance. And underneath it all, what they're really searching for is the feeling of being in control of what comes next.

THE MYTH OF THE CONSIDERED DECISION

If you're like most established experts in your field, you assume that when someone is choosing between you and another provider, they're thinking carefully. Comparing qualifications. Weighing approaches. Maybe revisiting your site a few times over a week or two before they decide.

That's not what happens.

The research is consistent across studies: most healthcare decisions are made in a single 30 to 60 minute session. The person opens a browser, types a name, visits a site, forms an opinion, and decides.

They rarely come back. The window is one session, and once it closes, they've moved on.

One session

The decision to book happens in a single 30-60 minute window. The person rarely returns a second time. Your website gets one chance to do its job.

SOURCE · NETONECLICK PATIENT JOURNEY REPORT 2026

WHAT PEOPLE ACTUALLY DO IN THAT 30 MINUTES

Let me walk you through what a potential client — someone who was just referred to you — actually does when they land on your website.

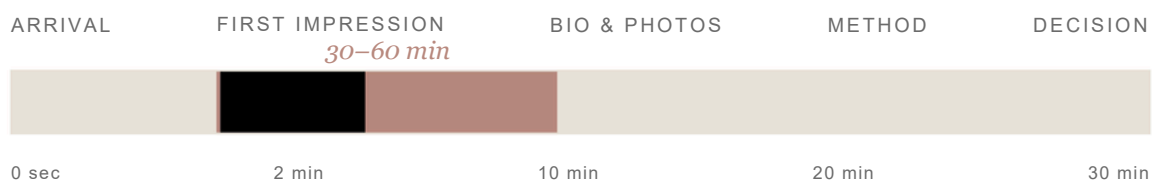
Minute one to two. They form a first impression. Within milliseconds, they're judging whether your site looks professional, organised, and trustworthy. If the design looks outdated or generic, they're already leaning away.

Minute two to five. They read your bio. 92% of patients do this before they book. They're not reading for credentials — they're reading for fit. Does this person understand someone in my situation? Does this approach sound specific or generic?

Minute five to ten. They look at your photos. If there are real images of you doing real work, trust builds. If it's stock photography or one outdated headshot, trust drops.

Minute ten to twenty. They look for your method. Not a list of services. An actual explanation of how you work. The research shows that 58% of therapy seekers specifically say the practitioner's evidence-based method matters when they choose. They want to understand what they're walking into — not just what you offer, but what the journey itself will look like.

Minute twenty to thirty. They decide. They book, or they close the tab and move on.



One session. One chance. They rarely come back.

Source · NetOneClick 2026

WHAT THEY'RE ACTUALLY SEARCHING FOR

Underneath all the surface behaviour — the bio reading, the photo scanning, the method scrolling — there's a single deeper thing your potential clients are looking for.

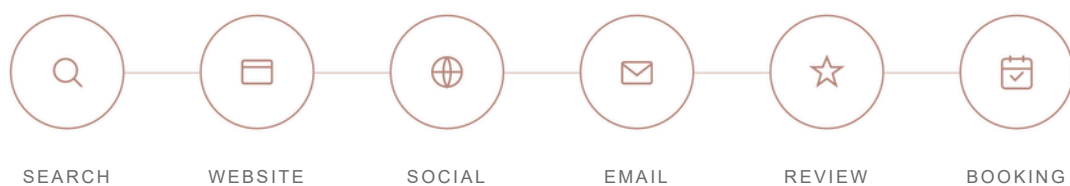
Control.

The biggest fear in any healthcare search isn't of cost. It isn't even of quality. It's of the unknown. Of walking into something and not knowing what's going to happen. Of committing to a process that might not be right and not being able to predict the steps.

The websites that convert at 21% understand this. They don't just describe services — they describe the journey. They give the visitor a complete mental picture of what working together actually looks like, before any commitment is made. They eliminate the unknown. And in doing so, they give the visitor back the one thing they were most afraid of losing: the sense of being in control of their own decision.

The websites that convert at 3% leave the visitor to imagine. And in the absence of clarity, the imagination usually fills the gap with worry. So they leave.

This is one of the most important insights in this guide, and it comes back in Chapter 9 when we talk about your method page. For now, just hold this: ***your potential clients are not afraid of you. They're afraid of not knowing what they're walking into.***



5–7 touchpoints before a booking · NetOneClick 2026

WHY THEY DON'T COME BACK

Most established experts in your field imagine their website as an asset that builds relationships over time. A place people visit, come back to, think about, return to.

It isn't.

The data is brutal. 53% of mobile visitors leave a website that takes more than three seconds to load (MedBoost 2024). Of the ones who stay, most make their decision in the first session. ***"I'll come back later"*** almost always means ***"I've moved on."***

Your website gets one window. The next chapter is about what separates the websites that make use of that window from the ones that waste it.