

Internet Marketing: Let's Talk Strategy

Key elements of a successful online marketing presence.

By Naren Arulrajah

According to a recent Pew Internet Project survey, 81 percent of American adults use the Internet. More interestingly for the chiropractor, 72 percent of Internet users say they looked online for health information within the past year. Internet marketing has clearly seized the lead as the most effective and affordable form of marketing, particularly for small businesses and professionals, including health care service providers.

As an independent chiropractor operating in a competitive market environment, it may no longer be a prudent approach to stick to traditional forms of promoting your practice while your competitors surge ahead with smart Internet marketing strategies. Local patients in every market are highly Internet-savvy, and with each passing year they are increasingly likely to use the Internet to locate and choose a chiropractor for their health needs. Here are some basic strategies to help develop a successful online marketing presence.

Create a Search-Friendly Site

At the heart of your chiropractic Internet marketing strategy must be a well-designed website with compelling, original content that offers useful and relevant information to potential patients in your local area. If you already have an excellent website with highly focused content, it may still not mean anything if the search engines are unable to identify your website with the right keywords that local patients are searching for. To begin with, you need to ensure that your website architecture is search-engine friendly, and the website design allows for seamless page navigation for the readers.



Your chiropractic website should have a simple, elegant and unique design

that immediately grabs readers' attention on one end, and allows the search-engine spiders to search and index the website correctly on the other. Broken or outdated links, incorrect meta-tags, inconsistent design practices and poor use of keywords will prevent the search engines from identifying your website and promoting it in the appropriate search results for maximum exposure. Basic errors of omission, such as not having a site map, also may make it difficult for the search-engine spiders to have an accessible reference of various site pages in order to allow for correct indexing.

Focus on Content Quality

Google and other leading search engines have evolved over the past few years to a level that they are able to identify the sites with the most relevant and user-friendly content for those who are looking for information online. However, many SEO strategists still continue to make the cardinal mistake of creating content for the search engines, not for the readers. Google's search algorithm encompasses several signals that provide an indication about the quality of the content. Great content will encourage readers to stay on the site longer, and be more responsive and interactive with the site.

Unique and powerful content will result in natural backlinks from various respected websites, blogs and forums, as well as create a buzz on the social media networks. These are the kind of signals the search engines pick up to evaluate the quality of a website's content. It is not possible to "game" the search engines any longer, so the clear focus of your chiropractic Internet marketing strategy should be to develop compelling content that will create the marketing magic on its own.

Content must be regularly updated to ensure the latest information is provided to readers. The goal must be to achieve a loyal set of readers for your chiropractic website who love to visit the site repeatedly to find latest information and updates. The content must be carefully optimized with locally targeted keywords to ensure that whenever a local potential patient is searching for chiropractic-related information, they find your website among the top of the search results.

Build a Social Media Campaign

With more than a billion active users on Facebook alone, it is no longer a wise move to ignore social media when developing your Internet marketing strategy. You need to develop a carefully orchestrated social media campaign to maximize online exposure for your practice. Social networking not only helps generate wider online publicity across various categories of targeted consumers; it is also a strong tool to build your website's SEO value. Search engines consider it a positive signal and assign higher search rankings to websites that generate a great buzz on various social media networks.

As a chiropractor, you can view social media not merely as a marketing tool, but also as a means to get closer to potential patients in an informal setting. Facebook, Twitter, Google+, YouTube, LinkedIn, Tumblr and other social media avenues are a great way to interact with a large number of potential patients simultaneously - with minimum investment of your time. The best part is that it won't cost you a penny if you decide to run your social media campaign on your own. (You can also hire an Internet marketing and SEO expert to develop your online marketing strategy, including your social media campaign.)

Are you Ready for Internet Marketing?

From a practice perspective, one of the advantages of Internet marketing is that it does not involve the typical constraints of time and space that are inherent to the traditional marketing and advertising options. It allows you to get your message across with enriched multimedia content and disseminate useful information for the benefit of your target audience.

An effective Internet marketing and search-engine optimization can achieve maximum impact for your practice at a fraction of the cost of the traditional advertising alternatives. If you have not already invested your focus on developing a sound Internet marketing strategy for your practice, it may be time you gave it serious thought.

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