

Five Effective Strategies to Promote Your Eye Care Practice Online

By Naren Arulrajah with Vikas Vij

According to Pew Internet Survey, 8 in 10 health-related queries in 2013 began in an online search engine, and 72% of Internet users reported in that survey that they searched online for health-related information in the past year. These figures are an indicator of the growing power of Internet marketing for medical professionals. The question, then, is how can an eye care practice leverage this online power to its marketing advantage?

Nearly every eye care practitioner has an independent website to promote his or her practice. However, having a website by itself is not enough in a crowded cyberspace. It is important to implement appropriate and effective online marketing strategies to achieve greater localized exposure and improve revenues. Here are 5 effective strategies that an eye care practice should adopt to stay ahead in a competitive market.

1. Invest Your Efforts in High-Quality Website Content.

Over the past year, Google and other search engines have stepped up efforts to identify websites that carry original, relevant, and high-quality content that addresses the queries of online searchers most adequately. If your content is strong from the perspective of your target readers, chances are that your website will start climbing up the page rankings on Google for several important keywords.

The content must be updated regularly to ensure that your readers receive the latest and most accurate information. High visibility on search engines will mean higher localized traffic on your website, which may eventually translate into growth in actual revenues for your eye care practice.

2. Launch a Cohesive Social Media Campaign.

Medical practice marketers can no longer afford to ignore the power of social media to reach out to potential patients and create a meaningful engagement. Facebook continues to grow in numbers and reach, with highly effective features such as Timeline and Graph Search. Twitter is another time-tested social network for professionals and small businesses to disseminate useful information, make announcements, and provide updates with short messages that are 140 characters or less.

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LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, and Google+ are some of the other key social networks that can be a part of a systematic and focused social media campaign to improve your online reputation and patient engagement levels.

3. Write Blogs and Publish in Syndicated Columns.

Eye care is an extensive field with new developments taking place in various areas of specialization. Eye care professionals can improve the brand equity of their practice by writing original, compelling blogs, articles, and columns, and publishing them in multiple online channels. The doctor can write periodically for his or her own website and create a dedicated blog section that will gradually find its own loyal readership.

Writing articles and columns for online magazines, respected blogs and websites, and other industry publications is an excellent way to boost visibility for the eye care website, promote online reputation, and gain valuable back links to improve the search engine rankings of the doctor's website.

4. Focus on Video Marketing.

Online videos have become a powerful marketing resource with hundreds of millions of people who prefer watching online videos to receive new information. YouTube is an undisputed leader in the category of online video marketing. Eye care professionals can create informative and interesting videos on YouTube and attract the attention of their target audiences.

The videos should include localized keywords, compelling headlines and content, contact details of the practice,

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and probably a call to action. Instagram has also launched a unique video service that allows users to share 15-second videos providing sharp, concise messages in the busy Internet age. YouTube and Instagram video links should also be shared on the practice website and social media accounts for maximum exposure.

5. Create an Opt-In E-mail Newsletter.

Innovative e-mail newsletters to willing recipients provide a more direct reach and achieve a strong, personalized impact for an eye care practice. It is important to make the newsletter unique, relevant, and engaging, while keeping the average profile of the recipients in perspective. Frequency of the newsletter should be consistent, and the focus should be on educating and informing the readers rather than indulging in blatant marketing.

Whenever the doctor publishes a new blog, adds a new piece of content to the website, makes an interesting post on social media, posts a video on YouTube, or publishes an article or e-Book, it is a good idea to share the content in the newsletter. And don't forget: Making the newsletter recipients feel privileged with special offers and previews is another way to build loyalty. ■

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