

New Link-Building Trends to Enhance Your Eye Care Practice Search Rankings

Old link-building practices can cause your website's search rankings to plummet.

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When the history of Internet search is written, the years 2012 and 2013 will be marked as the watershed years that changed link building forever. For several years, Google and other search engines had been hinting at countering questionable link-building practices, but the real action came in 2012 and 2013. Websites that engaged in such practices and dominated search engine rankings for years dropped out of Google's favor. Dubious link networks were identified and devalued, causing a hit to the rankings of websites across the spectrum. Smart Internet marketers and search engine optimization (SEO) experts have learned their lesson and adapted to the new link-building environment that encourages organic or natural link-building activity.

If your eye care website has suffered in terms of search rankings during the past 2 years, it could be because of old link-building practices that your SEO team may have unwittingly followed. It is possible, however, to develop new and organic link networks and follow the current direction in SEO and link building to crawl back to the top of search engine rankings. It is important for your SEO and link-building team to know the latest trends. If they are able to understand and follow today's practices for link building, it is easier than before to build powerful links for deserving content.

LINK NETWORKS ARE OUT

Many website marketers still go "link shopping," hoping it will catapult their website to the top of page rankings. This is now a risky practice, considering how

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hard Google and other search engines have been coming down on those who engage in bulk link purchases, link exchanges, or other such schemes. It is important to understand what a link network is and whether the easy links it offers are too good to be true. A link network is essentially a group of websites that are connected to each other. These sites could be owned by a single person or different people and are carefully camouflaged to escape being identified by a search engine.

With Google's Panda and Penguin algorithmic updates, websites involved with dubious link networks—wittingly or unwittingly—can expect to be punished severely in terms of their search rankings. Search engines are likely to de-index dubious networks, and the cascade effect can spoil the rankings of the websites that have based their link building off those networks. Link networks indulge in duplication in terms of content and social signals and make rampant use of cross-linking between sites. Google's Webmaster Guidelines clearly warn against the use of automated programs or services to generate links to a website.

IDEAL LINKS FOR AN EYE CARE WEBSITE

In the new SEO environment, the most important goal for an eye care website is to create “linkable assets,” which are outstanding and compelling. Unless the website offers real value in terms of content and presentation, it will be difficult to win useful links organically. It is also important to reach out to key influencers and convince them to link with the website. The following are some of the ideal links that an eye care website should aim for.

Links for Authoritative Sources

Authoritative sources from a search engine’s perspective are websites that rank high in terms of site and page rank, enjoy strong traffic, and are linked widely. When an eye care professional’s website is linked with a high-ranking web page, it adds excellent SEO value to the site. The trustworthiness and credibility of a website can go up simply because it is linked to reputable websites.

Links That Generate Targeted Traffic

Relevant and logical links that can help an eye care website achieve higher local traffic of potential patients continue to remain the most important. It is immaterial whether such links are powerful from Google’s perspective or not. As long as they lead to greater business for the eye care practice, they should be pursued vigorously.

Forum and Social Media Links

Natural links from respected online discussion forums continue to remain important even today. Links from social networks such as Facebook and Twitter are also valuable from an SEO perspective. Search engines have recognized the massive reach and power of social media and are willing to acknowledge websites that enjoy significant social network activity and social media links.

Links Through Column Writing and Blogging

One of the most effective ways for an eye care professional to achieve high-quality links is to engage with reputed online publications and top blogs for guest writing. Columns, articles, and blogs published on leading websites can yield superior links for the eye care professional’s website and help build excellent SEO value over a period of time.

LINK-BUILDING TRENDS TO WATCH FOR

Although it is futile to indulge in old strategies such as purchasing ready-made link-building packages or working with link directories, there are new trends that can strengthen organic link building.

Infographics

Accurate, creative, and unique infographics can add substantial value to the link-building efforts of an eye care practice. It is not necessary to create complicated and jargon-filled infographics. The goal must be to deliver relevant information to the target audience in a highly efficient and attractive manner.

Videos

A growing number of readers prefer to view a brief video as opposed to reading reams of text. Video links have a better chance to go viral and produce many back links for the website. The focus should be on creating high-quality, original videos that provide exclusive value to the target audience.

Specialist Directories

The day of the generic directory created solely for the purpose of link building is over. This, however, does not signal the end of the genuine, specialist directory that is topical, curated, and purposeful. Directories that do not indulge in any manipulative tactics to outwit search engine algorithms should be valued for link building. Eye care professionals can look for such specialist directories and websites to generate good links.

Links in the Media

One of the biggest trends in link building in 2014 is going to be the integration between public relations and SEO. Eye care marketers who can successfully engage with print, electronic, and digital media journalists may end up achieving links through their publications. Such links can prove to be very powerful and continue to yield value for a long time to come.

CONCLUSION

The new Internet search paradigm is less about links and SEO and more about creating value for the readers. Eye care professionals should identify and recognize the innovative ways in which their practice, services, knowledge, and ideas can be discovered, shared, and linked on the Internet for maximum effect. The Internet marketers who focus on linking wisely rather than linking recklessly will be well positioned to achieve remarkable results for their eye care professional clients in 2014 and beyond. ■

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