

Using Pinterest to Expand the Reach of Your Eye Care Practice

Avoid sales pitches and concentrate on providing useful information.

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The social network site Pinterest was launched in 2010 to allow people to share their favorite images online. Not many knew at that time that this innovative social network would become useful to businesses and professionals in their online promotion efforts. To the surprise of most, the network quickly gained popularity worldwide, with millions of users participating actively on it. The high user engagement levels on Pinterest eventually compelled businesses to consider ramping up their presence on this platform.



Pinterest offers a great marketing opportunity to businesses and professionals. A large number of small and mid-sized businesses are already present on Pinterest with the goal of enhancing their target market's buying inspiration. Many Pinterest users are also happy to connect with businesses and professionals of their choice through the site. Eye care professionals should consider Pinterest as an effective online opportunity to reach out and socially engage with potential clients.

HOW TO BUILD A SMART PINTEREST STRATEGY

Eye care professionals should look at the Pinterest network as a means to increase exposure of their practice website to new market segments, to improve their online reputation and brand equity, and to give a boost to their website search engine optimization (SEO) rankings. A systematic approach to developing a Pinterest network can help achieve these goals.

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The following guidelines can help build an effective Pinterest strategy:

Universally Acceptable Content

Images, graphics, and informative content that are uploaded from your own database or "pinned" from other relevant Pinterest accounts, should be agreeable and universally acceptable. As far as possible, this material should be pleasing to the aesthetics or sensibilities of an average Pinterest user. It is equally important to pay attention to privacy and copyright issues. Appropriate credit for images should be given where due. The content, in general, should be in agreement with the general Pinterest guidelines for users.

Strong Appeal

Pinterest has a naturally higher visual appeal than most other social media networks. In keeping with the nature of the network, make sure that the images you pin on your boards are eye-catching and appealing. The content should be creative and compelling

in range and depth in order to grab the attention of viewers and encourage them to explore more. Other Pinterest members will repin appealing content, and this can increase your visibility exponentially.

Targeted Message

Your images, videos, graphics, and other content should revolve around a common theme that represents the core of your eye care practice. As an eye care professional, the pins that you put up on the network should have a fair amount of content that is directly relevant and useful to a potential patient. Each pin board should be aimed at carrying your brand value forward and should be meant specifically for your target audience. The pin boards should not confuse an average reader about the real message that you intend to deliver through your posts.

Educating Readers

A successful Pinterest board for an eye care practice will regularly provide new information to readers. A picture can say more than a thousand words, and effective use of pictures can make for powerful communication with existing and potential patients. Images can be used creatively to evoke desired emotions, tell a story, or communicate a strong message. Such material will usually make for great pins, with plenty of opportunity for repinning by others. If your Pinterest board can move or inspire a reader, it has achieved its goal.

Variety of Content

Variety can help ensure that target viewers keep coming back for more, and that they provide continued exposure by repinning your images. It is not necessary to have every pin direct toward educational or instructional materials about procedures, products, and technologies. Such pins can be mixed with inspirational, interesting, or engaging content in fair proportions. Some of the pins should lean toward information about new products or services that you have introduced. A few pins may be a little more promotional in nature and talk about your brand, quality, and credibility.

Boosting Business Through Information

Certain types of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized businesses engaged in retailing of goods and services, can improve their sales through use of Pinterest. These businesses can post images of innovative products and services on Pinterest boards and provide a link to their company website. This effectively serves as an e-commerce store catalog, prompting

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people to make real purchases.

Eye care professionals, however, must recognize Pinterest as a social network and treat it as such. For long-term sustainable success, instead of using a strong, direct sales and promotional pitch, a professional's Pinterest board should contribute informative and meaningful content that caters to the interests of readers. It is important to remember the cardinal rule for success in social media: It never pays to be aggressively promotional on a social network.

FITTING PINTEREST INTO YOUR ONLINE MARKETING STRATEGY

Businesses that do not have anything particularly visual to show off may find it difficult to exploit the potential of Pinterest. However, eye care practices have a reasonable amount of opportunity to display images that can be related directly to the practice brand. Right now, Pinterest is going through a phase of spectacular growth. It generates a high response rate from users in most cases.

A good approach may be to begin by creating an effective presence for your practice on this network and then track the results over the next few months. This way, you can be in a position to determine whether Pinterest will work for your practice on a sustainable level. As long as you do not become excessively promotional about your practice over the network and remain proactive about pinning, repinning, and creating new boards, your Pinterest strategy should yield handsome results. ■

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