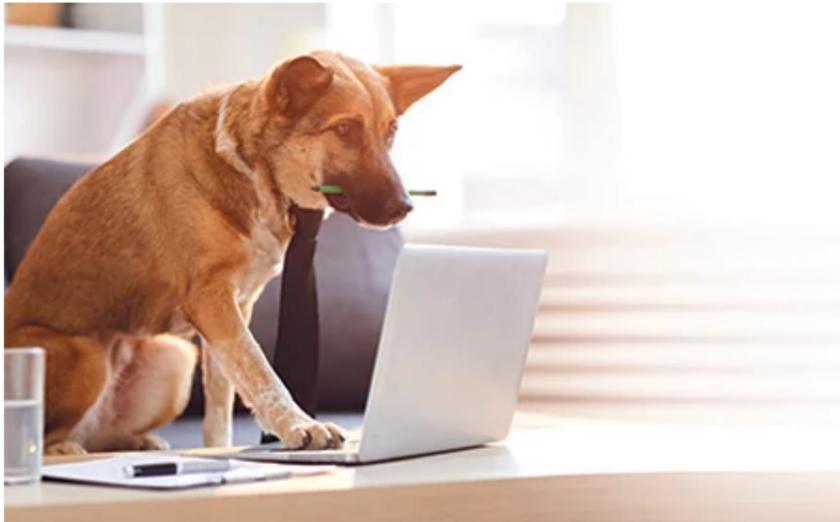


5 super-basic marketing needs for a veterinary hospital

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Want to build brand awareness and get locals searching online to see your veterinary hospital first? Want to better explain your services and inspire pet owners to get your practice doors swinging? Here are the five things you (or an affordable marketing person) can do for your clinic.



Seventyfour/stock.adobe.com Brand awareness ([Wikipedia](#)) is vital for the success for any company's marketing-including veterinary practices. But the reality is, most practice owners and managers don't find the time for them. This work all demand time, money and regular checks to make sure they're yielding positive results. Multipronged, sophisticated marketing requires a significant amount of input from the management team (always in short supply). Trying to get it all right slows down the whole process. My recommendation is, focus only on a limited number of channels. While the product or service may demand that you operate a number of online channels simultaneously, consideration must be given to the ones that complement each other and yield the best returns.

Here are what I see as the best digital marketing for your veterinary practice. Hit some aspect of these five throughout your year, and you'll be in good shape:

No. 1: Search engine marketing

Search engines decide what pet owners see when they go online to find a veterinary practice in their area. [Search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) is the most important part of that process. In competitive markets, there's a first entrant advantage that later veterinary practices that start on this later need to tactically counter.

But SEO can also cut both ways. If the tactics are appropriate and the message is appealing, you can get fantastic results in new clients. But if you're spending a lot of money in competitive environments, seeing results can be a very slow process to graduate to higher website ranking and showing up earlier in search results.

SEO should be both on-page and off-page.

On-page SEO considerations-what appears on your individual web pages-involves visually attractive quality content and ensuring your words are pithy and free of unnecessary repetition. Great care should be given to the process of tagging-meta tags that facilitate viewing for both search engines as well as pet owners and a favorable experience once someone clicks through to a particular page on your website. Every page should have both title tags (preferably under 55 characters) and a meta description (preferably under 150 characters). Structure your website and web page headings (H1) and sub-headings (H2 and so on) carefully. You don't want too many-just enough to honestly and helpfully highlight key aspects of your brand. Internal linking should be minimal (don't go crazy with hyperlinks to other pages on your own website), and the site needs to be mobile-friendly (which makes sure it looks good on any size tablet or smartphone).

Off-page SEO considerations-which includes links to and from other reputable websites-should involve plenty of backlinks, especially reputable ones such as educational and government domains. But it's better to have a few quality links to other websites than lots of low-ranking ones.

Does this all sound overly complicated? Well, somebody-you or a talented team member or an outside consultant or an outside service-needs to think about it. It's not as hard it sounds, but it also takes time to learn and understand.

No. 2: Pay-per-click advertising

This is advertising placed in search engines (whether [Google Ads](#), [Microsoft Advertising for Bing](#). Every time a viewer enters the relevant keywords or search phrases, the search engine results pages show up with your ad displayed. If the viewer clicks on your ad-moving to your website-you pay a charge. There are a number of pay-per-click options for you or your marketing person to choose from. Such paid search can yield faster results than organic search ([Wikipedia](#)). These ads are flexible and can be scheduled to be turned on and off-advertise when you want!

No. 3: Social media marketing

Social media can enhance brand awareness, but the question is, which social media platforms do you use? You need a presence on Facebook, but it could help to survey your current veterinary clients to find out where they are. Maybe they want to hear from you on Twitter. Maybe they want to see cute pet pictures (like theirs!) on a Pinterest board or on Instagram.

The great thing about social media is that these platforms have access to users' geographic location, age, gender and interests. That makes it easier for advertisers (like you) to target audiences, and those interactions on the platform can provide testimonials as well.

Remember, though, digging into social media and building a presence on any platform isn't just about throwing up some ads. At least one team member needs to be somewhat active. This takes time and effort as well as a sensitivity to the fact that social media users get irritated with pitches. Your content needs to be heavily focused on interesting facts, pictures, videos and helpful resources-distracting users from the overall pitch that you are the best veterinary hospital in the area and they've just got to swing your doors.

No. 4: Email marketing

This continues to be a useful direct strategy to address prospects and nurture existing clients. It's best to schedule promotional and educational messages with specific "calls to actions"-you need to inspire the email reader to do something after seeing your message.

Email marketing allows for specific messages for distinct categories-tailoring your pitch to different segments of your clientele or other locals, if you're paying to use someone else's email list. Emails also allows for "word-of-mail" cascade for the brand, just like word-of-mouth publicity does for you now.

No. 5: Public relations

Would it be worth it to build a multimedia public relations campaign or contract with someone to do that for you? A multimedia PR thrust under the aegis of a reputable PR organization can definitely create a high level of brand awareness.

If affordability is an issue, there are tools available that allow you to run your own in-house PR campaign, and it's likely your local competitors don't use them yet. Popular PR software tools like [PressCable](#) and [PRWeb](#). Write your press release and use these to share your news with reputable news websites, enhancing brand awareness and developing valuable back-links to your veterinary website.

As the veterinary marketplace becomes more competitive all the time, it's harder and harder to ignore marketing efforts. It's important that practice owners and practice managers learn a little about digital marketing and then decide how deep to go themselves with or [without outside help](#). But if you include the top five items in your marketing strategy over the months and years, you'll be way ahead of most of your local competitors for a good time to come.

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