

THE HUMMINGBIRD ADVANTAGE

AN INVITATION TO GREATER ONLINE EXPOSURE



BY NAREN ARULRAJAH AND VIKAS VIJ

Last year Google announced the release of the Hummingbird update. It was met with apprehension—a collective reaction from marketers and content producers alike: “Oh no...Google has gone and done it again!” However, unlike Google’s past updates, which left a number of websites bruised and battered, the changes that Hummingbird ushered have been far more subtle.

It’s code named the Hummingbird for the simple reason that Google’s semantic search based algorithm has been designed to provide precise and faster search results. Key areas of focus for Hummingbird are user intent, long tail keywords, and conversational search. In short, a search engine algorithm that can analyze the intent behind user queries and deliver on those queries.

So where is Google taking us? How has Hummingbird impacted your cosmetic surgery practice to date? Are you going to win or are you going to lose with this update? These are just some of the questions that you need to have answers to if you want to continue ranking high in search results.

HUMMINGBIRD, SEO, AND CONTENT – ALL TIED UP NEATLY

First things first: Regardless of what you might have heard, SEO is not dead, not by a long shot anyway! It is simply in a state of evolution. Algorithm updates such as Panda, Penguin, and of course the Hummingbird are all Google’s response to the need for improved search results.

One of the most significant and surprising changes that Hummingbird introduced was to make SEO about reaching out to a wider audience as opposed to simply being a factor for making search engines happy. So while the Panda update was all about providing unique content, Hummingbird has highlighted the importance of generating content that is useful to readers.

FIVE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR COSMETIC SURGERY PRACTICES

- ▶ **Content** – Original, highly relevant, and unique
- ▶ **Long tail keywords** – Optimize for these and everyone benefits
- ▶ **Useful information** – Answer questions, cover a wide array of topics, generate more content than before
- ▶ **Increased Entrance Portals** - Populate your website with more pages, add more content, and more links which lead up to these pages
- ▶ **Continued SEO** – Don’t stop optimizing your cosmetic surgery practice; SEO focus is as it should be.



REAPING HUMMINGBIRD BENEFITS

Hummingbird can present your cosmetic surgery practice with fantastic opportunities that make it easy for search engines to find you. Expand your horizons and start looking at how best your content can win you a wider audience. Focus on entrance pages that provide answers to questions that are specific to your niche. Again, populate your entrance pages with much original content and you will make it easy for Hummingbird to find you. Keep the following in mind:

- ▶ Add pages with original content that address search engine queries
- ▶ Expand your topics of coverage within your area of expertise
- ▶ Start adding more long tail keywords within your content
- ▶ Keep yourself updated on what's new and trending in your area of expertise and write about it – new and original stories are a winner
- ▶ Videos are hot marketing assets so use them – a number of visitors want answers to questions, just not in text form
- ▶ Incorporate other visual elements such as infographics or slideshare presentations to attract your audience while also providing them with useful and relevant information in a creative manner.

THE HUMMINGBIRD CHECKLIST

If you want to abide by the rules of “New SEO” as defined by Hummingbird, you need to have an in-depth understanding of your target audience. Now that the focus has shifted from appealing to search engines to pleasing your readers first, you need to start incorporating content that is based on “user intent.” Redefine your SEO strategy to answer more questions; Hummingbird should be an afterthought. Here are three tips on how you can do this;



YOUR TARGET AUDIENCE CONSISTS OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF READERS...

Each searching for answers to different questions and queries. To understand how best you can improve their search experience, you need to analyze what value your readers are currently getting from content and find ways to further supplement that value.



IT IS BEST TO POPULATE YOUR SITE WITH A VARIETY OF DIFFERENT PAGES...

Each with information that addresses the needs of each type of reader. You can do this by researching the different kinds of keywords that different readers use for searching common topics.



COLLECT QUALITATIVE DATA ON THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF READERS THAT MAKE UP YOUR AUDIENCE...

via surveys or simply by talking to your existing patients. Don't leave out social media conversations and other online activities that your target audience is a part of; use this information to fine tune your content.



FUTURE-PROOF YOUR WEBSITE

While the following items can firmly put your cosmetic surgery practice on Google's Hummingbird map, each of these items are hot marketing assets that can deliver fantastic online and social exposure.

- ▶ A Comprehensive FAQ page
- ▶ Include content that answers the “Where, Why, and What” of a given topic
- ▶ How-to articles and posts (moderate their use)
- ▶ Interviews of Industry drivers and experts and debates
- ▶ A Q&A blog category
- ▶ Research – White papers, Surveys among other such items
- ▶ Consolidate your position as an expert by including a section called - Ask the expert (Google loves things like this)

CONCLUSION

What the future of online marketing will be like even a few months down the line is open to a variety of interpretations. However, what is clear is that Google is heralding in a change towards an improved web experience. The time to adapt, prepare, and future-proof your website and other online real-estate is already here. So start now! ■



Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa.com. Ekwa Marketing is a complete Internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media marketing, and the online reputations of dermatologists and plastic surgeons in the US, Canada, and the UK. Visit them online at www.ekwa.com.

RESOURCES

1. <http://moz.com/google-algorithm-change>
2. <http://searchengineland.com/google-hummingbird-172816>
3. <http://moz.com/blog/hummingbird-unleashed>