REDESIGN YOUR PRACTICE WEBSITE WITHOUT DESTROYING YOUR SEO

By Naren Arulrajah

T echnology and web design trends evolve rapidly, and people will notice if your practice's website doesn't keep up. Outdated graphic styles, lack of modern features, errors, and incompatibility with modern devices are telltale signs of aging for a website..

A redesign is the digital equivalent of a facelift or Botox treatment. If done properly, it will make your website better than ever. However, without careful planning and essential precautions, it can harm the health of your SEO (search engine optimization).

Google loves fresh content and user-friendly designs. You might expect an update or redesign to improve SEO. Often, it does–in the long term. However, search engine rankings will probably get worse before they get better. It takes time for Google to re-index and re-analyze the revised pages. Additionally, if the redesign is not well planned and carefully implemented, search performance may not get better.

UPDATING CONTENT AND DESIGN

In the business of aesthetic medicine, image is important. The appearance of your website should reflect your specialty and your brand identity. Fortunately, visual elements are the simplest updates in terms of SEO. Changing images, colors, and page layout should have little, if any, impact. Search engines read text, metadata, and code. If these things are unaltered, your ranking will likely be unaffected.

Text content is at the other end of the spectrum. This is what Google indexes. There will be an impact on search ranking if you remove, replace, or significantly alter copy. Before you replace text, analyze the site to determine which pages perform best, and which keywords generate the most traffic on each page. When rewriting content, be sure to optimize it for those keywords. Avoid removing high ranking pages.

One final, often overlooked aspect of updating content is removing outdated information. Have your office hours changed? Are former staff members still listed? Do articles refer to machines that you no longer use? These small updates shouldn't affect SEO, but they will dramatically improve the user's experience. People go to your website for information, they expect it to be accurate and current

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS

When you decided to redesign, you were probably thinking about the way that your website looks. However, in SEO, what you don't see can be more important than what you do. In fact, technical missteps are the most common causes of redesign disasters. How can you avoid them?

- If your redesign includes site restructuring or other URL changes, every page will need a 301 redirect. However, inbound links to redirected pages are less powerful in establishing page authority. As much as possible, contact webmasters of any sites hosting links, and request that they update the listing to your new URLs.

- Ask about optimization. Verify that all keywords, metadata, titles, alt text tags, and other SEO elements are included, and configured correctly. Also, make sure your site is being designed in compliance with the latest web standards.

- Request a responsive design. Mobile friendly sites are more important than ever. Responsive layouts adjust to the device, so your site always looks great.

SEO is not something that can be added after the design is finalized. Instead, every crucial decision should be made with optimization in mind. The time and effort that you spend planning will be richly rewarded with a high-performance website and improved Google ranking.

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