

Integrated Search Marketing: The New Search Paradigm

One can say with a fair amount of certainty that the time of the Integrated Search Marketing (ISM) has arrived.

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With numerous algorithmic changes to raise the quality of Internet searching, Google and other leading search engines have pushed Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to a new level. Dermatology marketing experts must take note that traditional SEO techniques are rapidly giving way to a more evolved approach that can be termed as Integrated Search Marketing (ISM). In fact, SEO is no longer an isolated strategy that can help improve the search engine rankings of a website.

Search engines are increasingly attuned towards identifying websites that offer superior reader engagement levels and a greater integration with mobile, social, branding, public relations, and other marketing areas. While SEO techniques such as link building still remain relevant, ISM is well on its way to become the new search paradigm that will determine whether your dermatology website deserves a top spot in Google page rankings.

THE MARRIAGE OF SOCIAL AND SEARCH

As the power and reach of social media grows, social networks are toying with the idea of developing their own search platforms. Facebook has seized the initiative already with its own innovative search engine tool called Graph Search. At the same time, search engines such as Google and Bing continue to pick up social signals as a key factor in determining search rankings.

A dermatology website can be optimized in accordance with the new ISM paradigm with the creation of compelling content that addresses the keywords potential patients

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are searching for, and then socializing that content. Links, excerpts, and articles from the content can be promoted across various social media accounts of the dermatology practice. Social media now serves the dual purpose of enhancing search visibility while also creating a powerful channel for wider and more interactive distribution of content.

BRAND PROMOTION

Brand promotion and marketing under the new Internet search paradigm is no longer disjointed from online marketing. Search engine algorithms are increasingly factoring in a particular organization or website's brand value in determining search rankings. In other words, a greater brand reach and value is likely to result in higher search rankings. Therefore, brand development must be a part of the new Integrated Search Marketing strategy.

SEO experts should include brand promotion as one of the key goals while trying to create a search engine optimized dermatology website and employing other SEO tac-

tics. Even link building strategies should have a wider scope beyond focusing on dermatology procedures and services offered by the practice. It should include brand-oriented text to push branded traffic and inbound links. One of the key goals of ISM should be to grow the brand profile of the dermatologist and the practice, apart from other search marketing goals.

PRESS VISIBILITY

Getting published in leading industry publications, magazines, and high quality blogs is emerging as one of the powerful ways to improve the link profile of a website. Dermatologists should consider writing guest columns and blogs to disseminate useful and educational information to the readers at large. This can have significant long-term benefits in terms of higher search rankings for the dermatologist's website. Integrated Search Marketing approach cannot afford to ignore the power of print and digital publications that provide high quality content to the readers.

An alignment between the website and the content published on such publications is bound to get attention of the search engines over a period of time. Getting published in a few of the top print or online newspapers and magazines can fetch some very powerful back links for the website. Interviews, essays, opinion columns, news articles, press releases, and other forms of presence in leading media avenues are going to be a major part of ISM in the near future.

VIDEO MARKETING

Search engines have increasingly managed to integrate multiple content formats into the Search Engine Result Pages (SERPs). Google and other search engines are keen to show up multiple-format content to enhance the search experience of their users. Videos and images often tend to outrank plain text listings. That makes visual domination as a valuable SEO strategy in the new ISM environment.

A Forrester Research study found that nearly 50 percent of searches for popular keywords throw up "blended results," which means a mix of text, video, and other visual graphics.¹ Videos have a significantly greater influence on the target visitor's mind, according to some researchers. With a greater search visibility and a higher potential impact on the readers, video marketing should be pursued as a key part of the new ISM strategy.

RESPONSIVE WEBSITE DESIGN

With a wide range of mobile devices available today for Internet search, a dermatology website must be seamlessly navigable across multiple devices and platforms. This is a critical part of the new ISM strategy, and has a high rele-

vance from an SEO perspective as well. A responsive website design enables users to view the same content with equal ease on all their devices, particularly mobile devices when they are on-the-go.

A responsive website ensures continuity between multiple viewing contexts. It remains agnostic to the size of the screen, type of software platform, and nature of the device. Internet search has diversified across multiple devices and search engine optimization is no longer possible in the fullest sense without a responsive website. Businesses and professionals that fail to recognize the importance of responsive web designs may soon start losing out in terms of targeted traffic to their websites.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Comprehensive and sustainable success in terms of search rankings cannot be achieved without dynamic thought leadership and initiative in the new ISM environment. A dermatologist looking to dominate the search market should view her- or himself as a thought leader and devise innovative ideas, solutions, guidance, and inspiration for patients, peers, and other associates in the field.

Innovation in thought must be accompanied by a certain amount of persuasive zeal to popularize the idea and make it actionable. You can present and share these thoughts and ideas through seminars, webinars, conferences, meetings, online videos, eBooks, white papers, press releases, and published columns. The subtle SEO benefits that such leadership actions will bring about can push up the search rankings and prospects of your practice beyond expectation.

THE TIME OF ISM IS NOW

While SEO has paved the way for this new reality of online marketing, there is no question that ISM has established its role as the new paradigm for online marketing. If you are geared up and ready to seize the initiative, you just might find yourself near the top of page one in search engine rankings. ■

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1. http://blogs.forrester.com/interactive_marketing/2009/01/the-easiest-way.html