

The Changing SEO Paradigm for Your Dermatology Website

The SEO approach to marketing is rapidly undergoing a paradigm shift. Are you geared up for the change?

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Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is undoubtedly one of the most cost-effective strategies to promote your dermatology practice locally. It begins with the design and development of a comprehensive, user-friendly website, which must then be optimized to achieve high search engine rankings. Your website must rank among the top three or four search results for the maximum number of local keywords that your potential patients are likely to be searching for.

Internet marketing and SEO experts have traditionally employed a number of techniques to help a website achieve high page rankings for the largest number of targeted keywords. However, with the recent algorithmic changes such as Panda and Penguin that have been implemented by Google and followed by other leading search engines, the SEO approach to marketing is rapidly undergoing a paradigm shift. Unless you are geared up to adapt your website to this shift, you are likely to be left behind in the all-important race to the top of page rankings on major search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo!.

INTERNAL VS. EXTERNAL SEO

The traditional approach to search engine optimization has been to put maximum emphasis on external SEO, while internal SEO receives minimal attention. By some estimates, internal SEO usually makes up only 20 percent of the whole process, while external SEO constitutes the remaining 80 percent. Internal SEO refers to efficient website designing and smooth navigation and high-quality, original website content.

External SEO, on the other hand, refers to the process of generating buzz about the website on the Internet through

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SEO techniques such as pushing for a lot of backlinks, submitting articles to directories with backlinks, distributing press releases online, blogging and extensive social networking. While the importance of external SEO efforts cannot be undermined, there has been a clear shift in the approach of Google and other search engines in favor of internal SEO.

Smart Internet marketing and SEO firms have been agile enough to notice this shift, and are refocusing their SEO campaigns to match the expectations of search engines. The new ratio between internal and external SEO may stand at 50:50, and over a period of time, it is possible that all that a website may be required to focus on is the internal SEO, while the external part will take care of itself automatically.

As search technology advances and search engine algorithms become more “intelligent” with the passage of time, the need for external SEO will continue to diminish, while the emphasis on internal SEO will continue to grow. Dermatology website marketers who are sensitive to this rapidly changing SEO environment will be able to adapt

and adjust their strategies in order to stay on top of search rankings, and will not get thrown out of the reckoning.

BLACK HAT SEO IS A STRICT NO-NO

Many old school SEO experts have always believed in the power of “black hat” SEO techniques. These techniques yielded great results while search engine technology was still in its early stages of evolution. While the search algorithms are still far from perfect but they have still come a long way. Google and other search engines are catching up fast with black hat SEO techniques such as creating a large number of low quality backlinks, extensive keyword optimization without real content, aggressive article marketing, forum marketing and press release circulation.

The search engines have evolved their technology enough to identify websites that are rampantly indulging in such unfair SEO practices. Such websites are experiencing a sudden shock of lost rankings for almost all the keywords for which they were originally ranking near the top of page one of search results. Many websites have been penalized or black listed by popular search engines for engaging in black hat SEO activity. It is no longer easy and simple to “trick” Google and other search engines into believing that your website is the best one to address a searcher’s query, when it actually disappoints the searcher and fails to answer the query satisfactorily.

CONTENT IS KING

The primary goal of Google and other leading search engines is to provide the best possible answers to the queries of the searchers who are looking for information. Therefore, the search engine would ideally rank a website that provides the best information for a reader’s query on top of the search results. Search engine spiders are not looking for websites with the best SEO techniques, but websites with the best and most relevant content that addresses a searcher’s query.

Google’s recent updates such as Panda and Penguin have been aimed at weeding out websites that operate with the singular objective of “gaming” the search engine spiders, rather than focusing on providing good and original content. Google has also made its search algorithm more comprehensive by adding more weight to social media activity and high quality one-way back links that a website generates. It is difficult for online marketers to ‘game’ such parameters, and it helps the search engine identify the best websites and put them on top of search results.

GOOD OLD PR IS BACK

Facebook and other social media networks are proactive in banning fake accounts that are designed to mislead search engines. Large online article directories have been dealt a

severe blow in search engine rankings, which has blunted the impact of article marketing activity from an SEO perspective. However, the decline of such popular SEO techniques has been followed by the rise of the good old public relations strategies to promote a website.

Genuine social networking, blogging, press releases, active presence on respected online discussion forums, and mentions and links in print, electronic and digital media are the new game changers as far as SEO is concerned. A media-savvy dermatologist who receives periodic mentions in various media channels apart from having an excellent online reputation is likely to reap SEO benefits for his or her website over a period of time. Search engine spiders now love websites that receive frequent mentions and links on a variety of online platforms and command a large community following on the Internet.

HIRE A PATH-BREAKING SEO EXPERT

In a challenging market environment where many practising dermatologists are aggressively pursuing professional Internet marketing and SEO strategies, it is never going to be easy to put your website on top of local search results in your area. It requires out-of-the-box thinking and path-breaking SEO strategies to compete in an overcrowded but highly lucrative online space.

One of the best options in this situation for a dermatologist would be to choose an SEO services provider that is constantly re-adapting and reinventing itself to come with innovative SEO and Internet marketing solutions to outperform the competitors and achieve sustainable high search engine rankings for your dermatology website. If you manage to hire the right SEO expertise, it may well turn out to be smartest marketing move you ever made for your practice. ■

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