

Search Engine Optimization for Your Dermatology Website

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Most dermatologists today understand the importance of having a well-designed website for their dermatology practice. However, many of them are still not clear about the fact that even the most outstanding dermatology website will fade into oblivion if it has not been appropriately optimized for search engines.

A website must not be created just for the sake of having a web presence. The goal of a website for a dermatologist must be to reach out to potential patients in the targeted local area. Whenever a local patient searches the Internet for any information related to medical or cosmetic dermatology, the search engine must lead the patient to the dermatologist's website.

Achieving this goal, however, is not an easy task in an extremely competitive online marketplace with thousands of dermatology websites vying to attain the top spot in the search engine page rankings. Reaching this goal requires the fine execution of a professional search engine optimization (SEO) strategy that can literally put the dermatology practice on top in its local area.

DEVELOP EXCEPTIONAL CONTENT

Your SEO strategy for your dermatology practice begins with the creation of remarkable content. Every single word that your website contains must be chosen because it is compelling, relevant, accurate, and user-friendly. The content must focus on your target audience—the average patient who is looking for useful information provided in an easy, interesting, and compelling manner.

To dominate the search engine rankings for a dermatology website, you need to hire a top SEO services provider with a team of ace writers, contributors, and editors with experience in successfully creating content for top dermatologists. The content must include the right dynamic keywords that help drive the targeted traffic of local patients to your website.

Make sure your website contains brilliant info-graphics with relevant themes and references. Piece together an array of

interesting facts, and turn these facts into knowledge for your readers. Make effective use of pictures and videos to provide an enhanced user experience to every visitor to your website.

Keep your site dynamic, and update the content regularly. A steady stream of additions to your content will ensure that your target readers keep coming back to your website, and new dermatology patients also keep finding your website at the top of search engine results. A dynamically run website will attract high-quality links and continue to dominate search engine rankings. This ultimately translates into constantly growing popularity for your dermatology practice.

ATTRACT HIGH-QUALITY BACK LINKS

Search engines evaluate the quality of your website on various parameters while assigning rankings. One of the most important parameters is the quality and range of back links that your dermatology website attracts. When another good website creates a back link to your website, the search engines view it as a crucial endorsement of your website by others.

A smart link-building strategy must be at the core of SEO plans for your website. Many SEO service providers commit the cardinal mistake of linking a dermatology website with irrelevant websites through automated link-builder programs. This can temporarily bring high traffic to a website but will be largely irrelevant for your purpose. In the long run, irrelevant and low-quality link-building will downgrade your search engine rankings.

Search engines are impressed when an authority site links itself to your dermatology practice website. Your SEO goal must be to achieve back links from as many well-known and respected websites as possible. These websites must be relevant and connected to medical and cosmetic dermatology in some way. If your site can attract links from niche websites in the field of dermatology, it becomes a clear sign to search engines that your site is highly relevant and well-regarded in its field.

PROVIDE AN OUTSTANDING USER EXPERIENCE

Search engines have been increasingly punishing websites that offer a poor user experience. Even if you manage to attract a steady traffic of visitors to your dermatology website using smart SEO strategies, that alone is not enough to win the goodwill of search engines and award you a top rank. According to search engines, if a large number of users leave your website prematurely, it indicates a poor user experience.

The goal of a search engine is to please its search users—and that must also be the goal of a dermatologist's website. A website with a high bounce rate means that the website is failing to satisfy the search queries of users. If your website doesn't hold a visitor's attention for more than a few moments, search engines are bound to push it down in rankings just as quickly.

Your SEO service provider must periodically review the web analytics statistics of your website to identify if any web pages are receiving low page views in comparison to the number of visitors to the site. They must also look for any web pages with abnormally high bounce rates. Revising and restructuring such web pages must be an integral part of your website's SEO process to maintain its top rankings in search results.

CREATE A MOBILE-FRIENDLY WEB DESIGN

You need an SEO services provider that specializes in web designs for dermatology practices. The look, design, and overall navigation of your website make a key difference to your search engine rankings in the end. Your dermatology website must be able to offer robust customization options, particularly with reference to mobile phone web surfing.

A large part of the population is increasingly relying on smartphones to access almost every type of information, including searching for a dermatologist in their local area. Therefore, your dermatology website must be optimized to display effectively on a mobile device. The patient must also be able to obtain information about your practice on the go.

Mobile phone compatible functions such as email, mapping, click-to-call, and requests for appointments should ideally be available to patients through a mobile web page. Search engines are attaching higher weight to websites that offer value-added features such as mobile phone compatibility.

STAY CLEAR OF DUPLICATE CONTENT

As part of your site maintenance strategy, you need to periodically check your dermatology website for duplicate content and irrelevant links. A regular clean-up of the site will make sure that it does not get dragged down in search engine rankings. Sometimes a dubious website may copy your content or link with your site, and the search engines may punish your website for having suspicious connections.

Your SEO services provider should periodically check through Copyscape or other reliable software programs to

ensure your original content is not being duplicated on other sites. Reports of duplicate content can be submitted to search engines, which punish the perpetrator and ensure your website rankings remain unaffected.

A periodic "SEO audit" of your dermatology website can help make sure that you are not harming your own interests inadvertently and that nobody else is doing so either. Standing still in the dynamic world of the Internet is a major mistake and is bound to rob you of your search engine domination sooner than later. If you are standing still from an SEO or Internet marketing standpoint, remember: your competitors are not.

GO SOCIAL!

If you are dependent on your dermatology practice website as a standalone tool to drive relevant traffic from major search engines, you have a flawed SEO model. You cannot afford to ignore social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Social media brings traffic diversification to your practice, and at the same time, it improves your search engine rankings.

Search engines love websites that are highly talked about and "liked" on social networks. The interesting thing about social media promotion is that it does not cost anything to set up a Facebook fan page, a Twitter feed, a LinkedIn account, and a Google+ fan page. However, merely opening new accounts on social media is not enough. You and your SEO service provider need to make efforts to create an active and engaging network and growing fanbase over a period of time.

You can offer special rebates, coupons, and freebies once in a while to enhance your engagement levels with your fans or followers on the social networks. Make your fans feel appreciated for their involvement from time to time. More importantly, share meaningful content regularly through the latest dermatology news and updates, interesting videos such as those on DermTube.com, insightful information about new procedures, and compelling articles and posts.

In the final analysis, SEO means to your dermatology website what an engine means to a car. You can build a beautiful body, but to drive it from Point A to Point B, you need the engine. So go ahead, power your dermatology website with the horsepower of SEO and overtake your competitors by miles! ■

For more information on website setup, see the June 2012 edition of Marketing Matters in Practical Dermatology.

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