

# Integrating Public Relations and SEO to Promote Your Practice

Dermatologists can reap the benefits of creating an integrated online marketing campaign that combines the strengths of PR and SEO.

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**W**hile almost every Internet marketer understands the value of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to improve the search rankings of a website, many are still in the dark regarding the growing role of public relations to promote a website. In the wake of recent Google algorithmic updates such as Panda and Penguin, which are helping search engines apply more comprehensive parameters to determine the page rank of a website, an integrated strategy incorporating PR and SEO has become all the more important.

Experienced Internet marketers with a sharp foresight are convinced that the new SEO strategies cannot succeed unless they go hand-in-hand with a well-defined PR strategy. In fact, both SEO and PR professionals are realizing new potential synergies. If on one hand PR can provide SEO with superior back links and high-quality exposure, on the other hand SEO can ensure that the targeted audience in large numbers receives press releases, articles, columns, and blogs by media journalists. Thus, if your practice can receive good coverage in both traditional and online media, it can substantially add to your credibility and image as a dermatologist.

## **SEO AND PR COMING CLOSER**

For many years, a common refrain among PR professionals and SEO experts used to be that PR is from Mars and SEO is from Venus. Although both PR and SEO have shared the same ultimate goal of improving visibility, they have remained polarized for years. However, the borderlines between the two continue to blur at a rapid pace. A large

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part of traditional media has gone online, which effectively means there is a new mutual ground between PR and SEO that can be used to the benefit of both.

Internet searching continues to evolve, with an increased value attributed to social networking, online ratings and reviews, press mentions, news and links, blogs, images, and videos. Directionless online distribution of press releases is now being replaced with cohesive strategies to integrate SEO with public relations. PR professionals are also realizing the importance of relevant and authentic link building aimed at promoting engagement and reaching out to the target audiences more effectively.

If at one end PR professionals need SEO for effective link-building, SEO experts can also make use of the unique content generation and storytelling skills of public relations professionals. Readers at large are increasingly looking for valuable information delivered in an interesting manner, and search engine algorithms are consistently aiming to identify sites that excel in this goal. Similarly, online media is more successful when it goes beyond the basic reporting to also



provide useful links that deliver enhanced value to the readers. Keyword-optimized news stories and press releases continue to produce relevant search engine traffic long after the story has been published online.

### MEETING TOUGH MEDIA DEADLINES

A successful PR strategy can help achieve very high-quality back links for the practice website. Just a handful of top quality editorial back links are equivalent to many thousands of conventional links. Winning these top-quality links is never easy because every single placement in the mainstream media must be earned with a lot of hard work and relationship building with key journalists in the business. However, the rewards in terms of search engine rankings for the dermatology website will make the entire effort very worthwhile.

One of the important parts of media engagement for an SEO professional is to adapt to the tight deadlines within which the media publications operate. The Internet marketing team must be swift and highly responsive to the deadlines of a media reporter. News and editorial opportunities are usually extremely time sensitive and require quick action. If you've hired an Internet marketing company for the job of promoting the website, it may be necessary to give them the authority to engage with the media on your behalf. Alternatively, dermatologists should be available to respond on priority, or designate a person with the authority to do so.

### HOW CAN SEO EXPERTS HONE THEIR PR SKILLS?

One of the good qualities about PR skills is that they are generally learned easily. Just the way an SEO expert knows about online link building, PR is all about building links or relationships in real life. It helps to engage with PR professionals and pick up useful tips along the way. You can then creatively employ these tips to boost the search rankings of your website. It is important to understand the complete PR process, which can be learned by partnering with a good PR professional. A number of SEO experts are already teaming up with PR firms or independent PR consultants to pitch their services together.

For an SEO expert, it is important to understand the value of long-term relationships and how they can be nurtured over a period of time. When this relationship-building process is applied to engage with specific media outlets, it can result in excellent PR opportunities. The benefits of SEO and PR coming together are mutual, and both entities can achieve better exposure than they could have done individually. While SEO represents the more technical side of a publicity strategy, PR is the more social and human side.

### ONLINE NEWSROOM

Innovative Internet marketers are encouraging their clients to build an "online newsroom," which is essentially a website or a section of a website that contains aggregated information to promote public relations. The online newsroom of a practice website can include press releases and kits for media persons, images, videos, executive biographies, information on awards and recognitions, news of recent events and programs, community support, and contact information. If the dermatologist has an active social media presence, it can also be integrated with the online newsroom.

From a public relations point of view, an online newsroom can prove to be very effective for the dermatologist. The 2013 Newsroom Report titled "How the world's top 100 brands are using online newsrooms" reveals that 65 of these 100 brands are linked directly from their homepage to their newsrooms. About half of the brands use images and one-third also use videos to enhance their news releases. These data are indicative of the growing trend to use online newsrooms effectively to leverage public relations and at the same time improve the SEO value of the website.

Both can do wonders when they walk hand-in-hand.

Dermatology Internet marketers are typically experts at building and coding search engine-friendly and keyword-optimized websites to drive targeted traffic to the site. However, they can achieve superior quality back links and leave a significant footprint on traditional and social media when they combine their SEO expertise and PR skills. Internet marketers can devise creative ways to promote a dermatology practice if they know and understand the practice intimately and engage with the dermatologist closely for exciting news and stories with potential to grab media attention.

In the end, sustained efforts at media relationship-building and creative storytelling are the keys to achieving a successful combination of SEO and PR that will yield powerful results for any practice website. ■

*Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company, which focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dermatologists. With a team of 130+ full-time marketers, Ekwa.com helps one doctor in an area dominate their market and grow their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call Naren direct at 877-249-9666.*

