

Tips for Building a Search Engine-Friendly Website

The application of responsive site design can help you achieve search engine optimization for your website.

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Many dermatologists prefer to optimize their existing website for search engine rankings with the use of search engine optimization (SEO) techniques. However, the ideal way to achieve best results is through incorporation of the required SEO components into the website architecture and design from the very beginning. In either case, it is important to understand the basics of a search engine friendly website. Here are seven tips that you can use to make your website more effective for readers and properly optimized for targeted local traffic and search engine visibility.

EFFICIENT URL STRUCTURE

A good URL should directly indicate the main theme or subject of the web page. Once you have ensured this, you can determine the right URL structure. The URLs should be descriptive as well as static. They should include relevant keywords, which will enable both the readers and search engine crawlers to have an idea of the content of the web page.

If the URLs are composed of multiple words, Google recommends using dashes rather than underscores, which has become an industry norm. As far as possible, avoid the use of irrelevant, convoluted, or numerical characters in the URLs. Simple, concise URLs are easy to remember and your visitors will appreciate them.

SEAMLESS AND INTUITIVE NAVIGATION

Navigation structure that's seamless, intuitive, and simple will encourage the site visitors to explore your website further. At the same time, efficient navigation will make it easier for search engine crawlers to go through every web page. Several usability studies have indicated that a navigation menu placed across the top of the page or vertically down the left side of the screen is the optimal position.

Dropdown navigation menus may be potentially more

difficult for some of your readers as well as for the search engine robots to navigate. Thus, we recommend using them judiciously, with no more than seven or eight menu items. Do not overwhelm your readers with too many menu options and structure them appropriately.

MOBILE DEVICE COMPATIBILITY

Internet users increasingly prefer to view websites via mobile devices so it should be completely compatible with smartphones and tablets of various screen sizes. A responsive website design can achieve this. (Google also recommends this option.) With responsive web design, you will also manage to steer clear of sticky problems such as content duplication and maintaining two separate websites for the same purpose.

INTEGRATION WITH SOCIAL NETWORKS

While it is true that Google is currently not applying social signals from YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and other social networks as part of their search algorithm, the indirect advantages of social media integration still remain in place. By its very nature of sharing, social networking can help your content to travel across the Web, receiving wider exposure, and greater engagement and response.

A higher number of comments, likes, retweets, and shares can improve the authority of your content, making it rank higher in the search engine results. Over time, it will improve the reach, credibility, and online reputation for your practice. Also make sure that your website includes social media share icons prominently on the home page, procedure or product pages, as well as blogs for easy sharing by readers.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZED IMAGES

It is important to achieve a careful balance between the image size and clarity or resolution in order to provide the

optimal viewing experience to your readers. Search engine crawlers will find it easier to navigate such pages that include efficient and quickly downloadable images. The images should ideally be resized to the size of your choice, rather than shrinking them in source code, which can hamper page download speed.

Any text that is required to accompany the image should include appropriate keywords for search engine optimization. The search engine crawlers will not identify any text included within the image. Therefore, keywords should be part of a text that is outside the image.

KEYWORD PLANNING AND RESEARCH

Search algorithms of sites like Google, Bing, and other search engines have evolved substantially in recent years, but keywords continue to remain an important factor in identifying relevant content to address the search queries of users. Make sure that keyword planning and research is carried out from the very beginning of your website development project.

Make use of the Google Keyword Planner to research important words and phrases related to dermatology and the specific theme of a web page. Localize the keywords by including names of the nearby locations from where your practice receives patients.

COMPREHENSIVE SITEMAP

Google recommends that every website should include a proper sitemap for maximum SEO benefits and convenience for new visitors to the site. You should include an XML sitemap for the search engines as well as an HTML sitemap for your site visitors. The map will enable your readers to locate the precise pages that contain information they are looking for. It will also ensure efficient and comprehensive indexation of every web page by the search engines.

CONCLUSION

When you follow SEO best practices regarding content, link profile, social network integration, and other aspects, you can expect higher search rankings for a variety of important keywords. ■

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