

The Three-Step Journey to Your Practice Door

Patients travel the same steps to every practice. Here's how to get them to your door.

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To achieve marketing success in the digital era, dermatology marketers need to study consumer behavior every minute of the day and proactively respond to the micro-moments when consumers need them.

As consumers move across channels, across screens and across the marketplace, the dermatology marketer should be able to become a part of their purchase journey and deliver them a consistent and connected experience wherever they roam. The larger goal behind this effort is to ensure that the consumer's purchase journey culminates at your practice door.

STEP ONE – BE SEEN

High Ranking in Search Engine Results. Visibility of your practice on the Internet is a critical pre-requisite. More importantly, the visibility must be localized and targeted to cover actual potential patients who may be residing in and around the area where your practice is located. This goal can be achieved with search engine optimization (SEO), which must be integral to your marketing strategy.

According to a Forrester Research study, 93 percent of all online experiences begin with a search engine. Clearly, you need to utilize every marketing weapon in your arsenal to ensure your website ranks on Google Page One for the largest possible number of relevant, localized keywords.

Expansive Presence on Social Media. Social media has brought about a generational change to global marketing dynamics. Facebook alone has more than 1.4 billion users today, and hundreds of millions of users are also engaged on other social networks, including Google+, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube.

The emergence of social messaging platforms such as Snapchat and WhatsApp is creating new quasi social networks. Incredibly vast reach and potential for personalized engagement make it critically important for you to leverage the power of social networking and be present where your patients are spending a lot of their online hours.

YouTube Videos on PC and Mobile. I-need-to-buy moments of consumers are increasingly preceded by I-need-to-watch moments. Brands are ramping up their video marketing strategies to make the most of this opportunity. According to Kate Stanford, director of YouTube advertiser marketing, one of the new trends is growth in the number of moms who are turning to YouTube for answers for their everyday queries.

A Mom Audience Study by Google/TNS in 2015 surveyed self-identifying moms in the age group of 18 to 54. It found that 83 percent of moms search online and of those, three in five seek answers through online videos. One of the main reasons moms use YouTube is for how-to ideas. To promote your dermatology practice, you have an excellent opportunity to be there and provide useful and patient-friendly "how-to" video content and build your brand.

STEP TWO – MAKE IT EASY TO SAY YES

In the digital age, the consumer holds more decisive power than ever before. To achieve success in your dermatology marketing goals, you must be able to combine your online presence with the 'power of now.' You have to be present in the consumer's moment of need and enable them to say 'yes' at the time and place of their own choosing. Build a patient-focused online strategy that works holistically across multiple channels, including search, social, video, forum, blog, column, newsletter and display.


Be aware that the consumer has the power to say 'yes' whether at home, at the workplace, on the go, or somewhere in between. Make it easy for them to say 'yes' at every stage. The consumer's journey from online search to purchase should be a smooth and seamless one. Empower the consumer with multiple buying options. This could mean driving them to your website to book an appointment, making a phone call at any time, sending a mobile message, or sending an email.

Make sure that your presence across the World Wide Web is NAP consistent. This means that the Name, Address


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It is time to ask yourself: "Is my practice geared up to be a part of a new, connected patient's purchase journey from the search engine or mobile to my practice door?"

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and Phone Number (NAP) of your practice should be identical everywhere. This will eliminate any chances of confusion, not just for your new patients, but also for search engines.

The core experiential elements of your "Make it Easy to Say Yes" strategy for your potential patients include the following:

Harmony: Adopt a "single brand, multiple channels" strategy. As far as the consumer is concerned, there is only one blended channel that integrates all marketing touch points needed to learn, research, discover and finally purchase your services.

Personalization: Every consumer has unique needs, and your integrative communication strategy should be designed to treat different consumers differently and offer personalized marketing experiences.

Localization: Local is increasingly becoming the norm. Geo-location technology can now be implemented to make the right offer to the right consumer at the right place and time.

STEP THREE – BUILD A ROBUST BRAND

Your brand is something that should be able to communicate in a single word everything that your practice stands for. Your dermatology brand must reflect your fundamental belief, philosophy, vision and mission behind your practice. Your practice is unique from others and brings a unique value to the patients. Your patients need to know precisely this value, which gives them a special reason to choose your services. Your brand must be able to communicate this value to your patients.

The ultimate goal of your practice brand is to enable your patients to move beyond the stage of search and comparison, and develop an emotional relationship of trust, loyalty and dependability with your practice. While most practitioners indulge in tactical marketing to promote their practice, very few pursue brand building, which is a long-term strategic approach that will produce sustainable dividends.

Identify the 'uncommon' experience that provides a distinct identity to your brand and sets you apart from others. This uncommon experience could be your superior quality of care, advanced technology, lower cost of procedures, personalized attention, or other attributes.

In an Internet-centric world, you have very little or no control over your online reputation. A strong practice brand will have a strong resilience under all types of circumstances and will mitigate the risks to your online reputation at all times. A sharp focus on generating positive patient reviews, ratings and testimonials will help you strengthen your brand as well as your online reputation in the long run. ■

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, www.ekwa.com helps doctors who know where they want to go, get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call Naren direct at 877-249-9666.

