

PROMOTE YOUR EYE CARE PRACTICE WITH INTEGRATED SEARCH MARKETING

How to improve your practice's visibility.

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With numerous algorithmic changes in the past few years to raise the quality of Internet searches, Google and other leading search engines have pushed search engine optimization (SEO) to a new level. Traditional SEO techniques are rapidly giving way to a more evolved approach called *integrated search marketing* (ISM). With ISM, SEO is no longer

an isolated strategy that can help improve the search engine rankings of a website all by itself.

Search engines are increasingly identifying websites that offer superior reader engagement levels and enhanced integration with mobile, social, branding, public relations, and other areas. Although SEO techniques such as link building remain relevant, ISM is well on its way to becoming the new search paradigm that will determine whether your website deserves a top spot in Google's page rankings.

THE MARRIAGE OF SOCIAL AND SEARCH

As the power and reach of social media grow, the people behind social networks are toying with the idea of developing their own search platforms. Facebook and Twitter now offer their own search tools to identify specific posts, tweets, users, and ongoing conversations. Search engines such as Google and Bing continue to pick up social signals as a key factor in determining search rankings.

An eye care website can be optimized according to the new ISM paradigm by creating compelling content that addresses the keywords for which potential patients are searching and then socializing that content. Links, excerpts, and articles from the content can be promoted across various social media accounts of the eye care practice. Social media now serves the dual purpose of enhancing search visibility while creating a powerful channel for the wider and more interactive distribution of content.

BRAND PROMOTION

Brand promotion and marketing under the new Internet search paradigm are no longer disjointed from online marketing.



Search engine algorithms now factor in a particular organization's or website's brand value in determining search rankings. In other words, a greater brand reach and value are likely to result in higher search rankings. Brand development must therefore be a part of the new ISM strategy.

SEO experts should include brand promotion as one of the key goals while trying to create a search engine-optimized eye care website and employing other SEO tactics.

Even link-building strategies should have a scope wider than the procedures and services offered by the practice. Brand-oriented text to push branded traffic and inbound links should

also be included. One of the key goals of ISM should be to grow the brand profile of the eye care professional and the practice, apart from other search marketing goals.

PRESS VISIBILITY

Getting published in leading industry publications, magazines, and high-quality blogs is emerging as one of the powerful ways to improve the link profile of a website. Eye care professionals should consider writing guest columns and blogs to disseminate useful and educational information to the readers at large. This can have significant long-term benefits in terms of higher search rankings for the eye care professional's website. The ISM approach cannot afford to ignore the power of print and digital publications that provide high-quality content to readers.

An alignment between the eye care website and the content published in relevant publications will eventually garner the attention of search engines. Getting published in a few of the top print or online newspapers and magazines can fetch some very powerful inbound links for the website. Interviews, essays, opinion columns, news articles, press releases, and other forms of presence in leading media avenues are going to be a major part of ISM.

VIDEO MARKETING

Search engines have increasingly managed to integrate multiple content formats into the search engine result pages. Google and other search engines are keen to display content in various formats to enhance the search experience of their users. Videos and images often tend to outrank plain text listings, making visual domination a valuable SEO strategy in the new ISM environment.

Online searches for many popular keywords now yield "blended results," which means a mix of text, video, and other visual graphics. Videos have a significantly greater influence on the target visitor's mind, according to some researchers.

With a greater search visibility and a higher potential impact on readers, video marketing should be pursued as a key part of the new ISM strategy.

RESPONSIVE WEBSITE DESIGN

With a wide range of mobile devices available today for Internet search, an eye care website must be seamlessly navigable across multiple devices and platforms.

Google's recent major mobile update, popularly called "mobilegeddon," now gives preference to websites that are mobile friendly. This is a critical part of the new ISM strategy and has high relevance from an SEO perspective.

A responsive website design enables users to view the same content with equal ease on all of their devices, particularly mobile devices, when they are on the go. A responsive website ensures continuity between multiple viewing contexts. It remains agnostic to the size of the screen, type of software

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platform, and nature of the device. Internet search has diversified across multiple devices, and SEO is no longer possible in the fullest sense without a responsive website. Businesses and professionals that fail to recognize the importance of responsive web design may soon start losing out in terms of targeted traffic to their websites.

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Comprehensive and sustainable success in terms of search rankings cannot be achieved without dynamic thought leadership and initiative in the new ISM environment. Eye care professionals looking to dominate the search market should see themselves as thought leaders and come up with innovative ideas, solutions, guidance, and inspiration for the patients, peers, and other associates in the field.

Innovation in thought must be accompanied by a certain amount of persuasive zeal to popularize the idea and make it actionable. Thoughts and ideas can be presented and shared through seminars, webinars, conferences, meetings, online videos, e-books, white papers, press releases, and published columns. The subtle SEO benefits that such leadership actions will bring about can push up the search rankings and prospects of the eye care professional's practice beyond expectation.

The time to build an ISM is now. Those who are geared up and ready to seize the initiative will find their practices in the top ranks on page 1 in Google and other search engines. ■

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