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TODAY

TURNING CLICKS INTO CONSULTATIONS



Advanced Internet marketing consists of more than just a pretty page.

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Turning Clicks Into Consultations

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BY ROCHELLE NATALONI, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

"You are not your customer." This statement has formed the basis of much of my writing, speaking, and working with physicians during the past 25 years. Elective medicine can be more broadly described as lifestyle health care, an environment in which doctors need to treat their customers as well as they treat their patients. Prior to someone's becoming your patient he or she is in fact your customer (or prospective one). Virtually all of them spend part of their day on the Internet, searching for answers and solutions to their questions and issues. This month's column focuses on rethinking your approach to Internet marketing. I had the fortune of meeting plastic surgeon Grant Stevens recently. Here, he shares the reasons why surgeons' practices are largely missing the mark in their current approaches to how to interact online. I have also long held the idea that absent of other stimuli, price is a cue for quality. On the Internet, the currency is not money but rather Google search rankings—the higher up you are, the better quality care you are perceived as offering. Perception may not be reality in your mind, but it is in that of your customer. Take heed, take note, and take action to make your Internet presence more effective and more valuable to your practice and your customers, lest they become somebody else's!

—Section Editor Shareef Mahdavi

It takes more than a passing acquaintance with Internet marketing strategies to thrive in today's competitive refractive cataract surgery market. Even if you have a tech-savvy staff or consultants dedicated to your practice's electronic marketing initiatives, it still helps to have an appreciation of search engine optimization, Google+, and call-to-action terms.

BECOME AN EXPERT

When it comes to Internet marketing, practice owners and administrators range from neophytes to aficionados, according to Internet marketing pundit and plastic surgeon, Grant Stevens, MD. "Unfortunately, confusion and misconceptions are widespread," he says. Dr. Stevens is the director of Marina Plastic Surgery Associates (📍 www.marinaplasticsurgery.com) in Marina del Rey, California, and a clinical professor of surgery at the University of Southern California. He attempts to

change that problem via his course, "Advanced Internet Marketing: Turning Clicks Into Cash," which Dr. Stevens and a diverse contingent of medical and marketing professionals present at medical meetings across the country to help attendees prioritize their Internet-earmarked dollars, among other things.

"Internet marketing is not a 'set-it-and-forget-it' proposition," he explains. "People need to be cognizant of their return on investment and build in methods to monitor metrics to verify that what they are doing makes sense." The ultimate aim of the course, Dr. Stevens says, is to make Internet marketing a value-added part of one's practice, rather than something that has to be done simply because the competition is doing it.

According to Dr. Stevens, two of the biggest mistakes that practice owners make when developing a website is focusing on themselves and thinking that, if they throw as much money as possible at the site's design, they will

be successful. “When one builds a website, it should not be physician-centric,” he says. “All the studies that we’ve done and that we’ve seen have confirmed that, when consumers peruse [medical] websites, the number one thing they look at is [procedure-related] photographs, the number two thing they look at is information about the procedure, and the number three thing they look at is cost or financing information. Information about the physician tends to be the fourth or fifth thing they look at, yet when you look at most website designs, they represent a physician-centric or egocentric point of view. There’s nothing wrong with including a picture of yourself or the other doctors in your practice, but be aware that, if consumers have the option of clicking on a picture of a doctor or clicking on information about a procedure or information about procedure outcomes, they will almost always click on the procedure-related link. Consumers eventually want to find out about the doctor, but it’s not the most important thing to them. In my specialty, plastic surgery, the consumer spends 70% to 80% of their time viewing photographs of results. In [refractive cataract surgery] they’re probably most interested in reading testimonials.”

MORE THAN A PRETTY PAGE

When you spend money on website design, it is easy to get excited about a site that portrays a beautiful, bustling, successful practice. The look of the website is quite insignificant to the overall success of your electronic marketing strategy, however, according to Dr. Stevens. “If you only have \$100 to spend, you should spend \$20 on website design and \$80 on getting found by consumers,” he says. “Unfortunately, most people do just the opposite. Think of it this way: spending tons of time and money building the Taj Mahal of websites is useless if no one can find it.”

Being ranked high on search engine sites—particularly Google—is among the most important ways of being found. Regardless of recent changes in Google’s algorithm (see *What’s up With Google?*), Dr. Stevens notes that what remains the same is that your site has to revolve around the consumers’ needs and has to be appealing to search engines, because if it is popular with search engines, then your practice will be found.

Like it or not, according to David W. Evans, PhD, CEO of Ceatus Media Group (www.ceatus.com), high Google rankings are synonymous with quality. Ceatus is a San Diego-based firm that provides integrated marketing strategies to ophthalmology, cosmetic surgery, dentistry,

CLICKS TO CONSULTATIONS TO CONVERSIONS

The five most important factors for online conversion, according to Bobby Hewitt of CreativeThirst, are analytics/testing, customer insight, usability, momentum, and trust/credibility.

Analytics/testing. Analytics and testing are the most important factors. Without knowing where you are, you can never get to where you want to be. It is vital to measure your conversion rate across not only your site as a whole, but also across each individual marketing channel.

Customer insight. A deep understanding of your specific customers and market is essential to empathizing with your users. Being sympathetic to their needs and truly understanding where they are coming from during the buying process are vital to directing your overall conversion strategy.

Usability. If you just improve the usability of your site alone, you can see a lift in overall conversion rates. Simply by removing roadblocks on your site and making it easier to use, you are allowing visitors to accomplish their tasks with less difficulty. Help your customers, and you will increase your conversion rates.

Momentum. Once your visitors start down a path, they are moving through your site and further into your conversion funnel. Each click adds velocity that builds on itself. To increase your conversion rate, you need to design for momentum through persuasive design.

Trust/credibility. Establishing trust and credibility at exactly the right points in the conversion process is essential to persuasion and conversion. If your visitor has no faith in you, why should he or she buy from you?

and bariatric surgery practices. Dr. Evans says that, when consumers search for a service in a particular location such as “cataract surgery, Atlanta,” the listings that pop up highest are viewed as the “best,” and those that do not show up until the third or fourth page are considered to be of inferior quality. He says that, even when consumers get a strong word-of-mouth referral from a friend, they tend to look online for more information about the practice. A low ranking on a Google search sends a negative message about the practice.

“The reality is that the business and the ranking of the business are totally independent,” says Dr. Evans. “Google ranks websites; it doesn’t rank quality, but being on the top of Google is associated with quality. It’s not fair, and it’s not reality. But, that’s the way people perceive it. The

WHAT'S UP WITH GOOGLE?

Page 1 Solutions (www.page1solutions.com) is a Denver-based website design, Internet marketing and search engine optimization firm dedicated to ophthalmology, plastic surgery, dentistry, and legal clients. Their recent blog post stated, "We've heard a lot about the merger between Google Places and Google+, now called Google+ Local. Whether the change brought about excitement or frustration, it's important to keep it in perspective. Claiming, optimizing, and becoming active on your Google+ Page, while important, is still just one piece of the puzzle when it comes to [search engine optimization] and optimizing for Local Search."

Many online directories offer free business local listings or citations. They often list your business information without your knowing, oftentimes with errors. Although there are new directories popping up all the time, about 10 carry more weight because of their rank and traffic. The top directories of which you should be aware are Yelp (www.yelp.com), Foursquare (<https://foursquare.com>), WhitePages (www.whitepages.com), MapQuest (www.mapquest.com), SuperPages (www.superpages.com), Citysearch (www.citysearch.com), Local.com (www.local.com), Yellowbook.com (www.yellowbook.com), Merchantcircle (www.merchantcircle.com), and Yahoo!Local (<http://local.yahoo.com>).

Following is a basic strategy for the previously mentioned directories:

- **Claim your business listing.** To do this, set up an

account on the directory so that you are in control of what appears in your listing.

- **Correct any errors.** Make sure your practice's name is spelled correctly and completely, the address is current, and the phone numbers are accurate.
- **Add** links to your website.
- **Add** your business categories.
- **Add** a description and history of your business.

If you have already completed this list, there are many more advanced activities you can complete to help boost your Google+ Local listings. One strategy is to dive deeper into optimizing your listings/citations. These are free one-page websites that you should begin optimizing, just as you would your full website. To do so, you can

- add photos
- add driving directions
- solicit reviews
- build a linking strategy

A good starting point for link building on your listings is to incorporate them in the blogs and articles you write. Treat your listings as websites. When writing a blog or article, create links within the body that are anchored by relevant keywords that direct readers to your listings page. The goal is to create traffic for your listings and, as a result, build your relevance.

Learn more by watching this video:

- www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IVLKu249xc.

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bottom line is you want to do what it takes to be easily found and you want to be perceived as a practice that provides high quality, and the end game for both of those goals is a high Google ranking."

Optimizing a site by incorporating terms that are popular with search engines is key to being seen, but that is only part of the process, he says. "Ranking high on search engine sites leads to clicks, but you don't attract business just by getting people to look at your website," Dr. Evans explains. "You've got to get them in the door. You have a healthy website if 5% of the people looking at your site contact you."

It comes down to the point of contact. "I have five different electronic points of contact built into each of my sites: a blog, a coupon, an e-book, a newsletter subscription form, and a consultation request form," Dr. Evans continues. "Our market research shows that 80% of con-

tacts by prospective patients are [made via] the phone even when they are looking at the website; only 20% of the website traffic reaches out [to the practice] electronically." Ceatus' market research also found that when practices do not respond to an electronic query within 24 hours, the odds of that person coming in for a consultation decreases by 50%.

"For the people who respond electronically, it is compelling that you get back to them that moment or soon thereafter; otherwise, the lead is wasted," Dr. Stevens says. "If you don't have dedicated or educated people answering the phones, all of the time and money spent on Internet marketing is useless."

POINT OF CONTACT

In the world of premium IOLs, the term *conversion* refers to the process through which a cataract patient

CASE STUDY: CALL TO ACTION

Bobby Hewitt of CreativeThirst, LLC, shared some insight with *Premium Practice Today* regarding the significance of choosing words when building a website. Did you ever consider that choosing the word *submit* instead of *click here* could make a difference in attracting new patients? According to Mr. Hewitt, "Time and time again, marketers and designers default to using the word *submit* for call-to-action buttons. Perhaps [this is] because that is the default when creating an HTML button, or perhaps it is because that is what is happening on the back end of the HTML. When a visitor clicks the submit button on a form, the information is being submitted to a database. In either case, it is the wrong choice of call to action if you want to increase your conversion rates."

According to Mr. Hewitt, data from a lead-generation study¹ clearly show the difference in conversion rates (from about 14%-17%) when a word other than submit is used for the call-to-action button. The word *submit* does not offer any value to your visitors. "The question you need to answer when writing persuasive call-to-action button copy that will get visitors to convert is, why should your visitors submit that form and click that button?" he says. "If you want to increase your conversion rates, don't use the standard submit button. Use button copy that reinforces the value of clicking that button."

Think of any online form, regardless of the business, in terms of its value for the person who has gone through the trouble of filling it out. What will he or she get out of it? It is that value that you want to connect with the call-to-action button. Mr. Hewitt says, "For instance, for a contact form, the value might be that a prospect knows how much the service is going to cost him or her. In that case, a useful call-to-action button would be 'get your free quote' or 'get a quote now.' In both of these examples, we've leaned on the value of a quote and turned up the dial by adding words like *free*, *now*, and *your*."

Being crystal clear and direct is the key to increasing online conversion rates. *Click here* may not be sophisticated, but it is explicit compared with the terms *go*, *submit*, *download*, or *register*. *Click here* tells the visitor exactly what to do. The call to action *go* is ambiguous. It does not tell the user what to do but is more like *submit*, *download*, or *register*, which are actions that the program is going to take as opposed to clear, concise directions for the visitor.

"Always think in terms of your visitors and what you want them to do, not what your website or programming will do," says Mr. Hewitt. "Your users come first when it comes to conversion."

1. HubSpot. On-demand webinar. The Science of Lead Generation. <http://www.hubspot.com/webinars/the-science-of-lead-generation>. Accessed August 1, 2012.

opts for a premium IOL instead of a conventional monofocal implant. In the Internet marketing world, the same term refers to when an online consumer makes contact with a business or practice and schedules a consultation.

Bobby Hewitt of CreativeThirst, LLC, (<http://creativethirst.com>), is an expert on the optimization of conversion rates. His blog, Marketing Conversion Rate Optimization (<http://creativethirst.com/blog>), and his professional imperative are one and the same. The firm is based in Rochelle Park, New Jersey. Its website promises to optimize your conversion rate and get measurable results with continuous improvements by combining web analytics and persuasive web design.

Like Dr. Stevens, Mr. Hewitt says it all comes down to your conversion rate. "Conversion is not just about selling," he argues. "It's about getting your visitor to take an action that is valuable to your business, and it starts with the question, what are your business goals? What do you want visitors to your site to do that supports your business revenue model? Conversions can include signing up for your newsletter, taking a survey, downloading a PDF,

watching a video, buying a product, requesting information, sharing some of your content with a friend, or any action that ties back to your business goal."

He says that—regardless of the differences in markets, products, or customers—the key to improving any site conversion rate can be clearly broken down into the following factors: analytics/testing, customer insight, usability, momentum, and trust/credibility. "By improving any one of these five factors, you will have a better website, but when all of these factors are combined and directed toward the goals of your site that are in harmony with the goals of the visitors, your conversion rate can experience massive gains," Mr. Hewitt comments. For more information, see *Clicks to Consultations to Conversion Rate*. ■

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