



Growing Your Ophthalmology Practice Online

An Ophthalmology Marketing E-Book by

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*A resource for ophthalmology practices to evaluate
and improve their website and Internet marketing*

Ophthalmology Marketing E-Book

Introduction

There was a time when your expectations of your ophthalmology website were simply to look attractive and serve as an online brochure. Today, ophthalmology websites must do much more:

- Provide quality information
- Develop a credible, professional, yet personable image
- Motivate visitors to interact
- Start initiating the relationship-building process with new potential patients
- Secure top listings on Google and other search engines
- Generate quality leads and new patients

And, as Internet technologies develop (ex. mobile web, video, interactive communication, etc.) and online users continue to evolve (spending more time, going to more places, doing different things, interacting more, and growing expectations), it will be increasingly important for your practice to stay on top of emerging opportunities and competitor threats as they arise in the web media.

However, this is NOT intended as a do-it-yourself resource.

We do not expect you to become a website marketing expert after reading this ophthalmology marketing e-book. You are a doctor, or office manager. This e-book is intended to be your quick, easy to understand resource for fundamental Internet marketing elements and strategies. It is a reference tool with worksheets to help you make more informed decisions, choose the right website marketing partner, and work more effectively with your current webmaster to ensure he/she is successfully addressing key issues.

This resource will address fundamental questions and provide worksheets to help you:

- a. Determine if now is the time to consider upgrading your website.
- b. Form decisions that need to be made in order to develop your new website.
- c. Choose the right agency to build and market your website.
- d. Develop the most effective website content, using tips to proofread your content.
- e. Identify key website design elements.
- f. Market your practice more effectively through SEO, Google+, PPC, and social media.

Tip: Print and complete the worksheets and start putting this information to use for your practice.

Evaluating My Website

As the Internet continues to dominate more and more of the ophthalmology advertising and marketing arena, the importance of your website becomes clear. Where your website was once a footnote to all your marketing, it has now become the focus. Regardless of what marketing or advertising you do, your website now needs to be the focus of all your promotional efforts. It is the hub that connects all the other spokes of your marketing wheel.

Should I Consider Developing A New Website?

There was a time when you built your ophthalmology website and did not make any changes to it, or consider a new website for 3-5+ years. Back then, ophthalmology websites served more as online brochures for patients and prospective patients.

Today, things change much more quickly on the web, and so should your website. You should revisit your website and consider a redesign, or making significant updates, at least every 12-18 months. But how do you decide when the time is right to make a change? It depends largely on the performance of your website and how competitive it is with other top-performing websites in your market area. Use the following website evaluation worksheet to see if you need to start considering your website design/update options.

Worksheet - Evaluating My Website



print this page

If you are unsure if now is the right time to consider a new website, or a website redesign, complete the below worksheet. It will provide insight on areas you need to consider when evaluating your website and online marketing opportunities.

Do I Need New Website Or Update My Current Website? Items to Consider:



(check if applicable)

_____ My website does not appear on 1st-page Google results, and is not competitive with other top performing websites in my market.

_____ The look and feel of my website does not project the image I need.

_____ My competitors' websites are more professional looking than mine and have more features.

_____ The layout is not effective at promoting my most important services, or driving traffic to high priority pages.

_____ The images, photos and graphics of my website fail to tell the right story or stir emotions.

_____ My website does not incorporate relationship-selling strategies/elements that initiate rapport with new visitors.

_____ I have **read** my content and realize:

- 1) My content is not current, or up-to-date.
- 2) I need more substantive information and more pages.
- 3) My copy does not engage ophthalmology visitors.
- 4) My copy is not SEO-driven and lacks target keywords on every page.

_____ My calls-to-action are not effective at generating the actions we want from visitors.

_____ My high priority practice areas have changed, but they are not reflected in my website.

_____ My website does not promote videos, reviews and rating, social media links, or any promotions.

_____ My website does not accommodate mobile browser smartphones.

_____ **My website does not deliver enough trackable leads** (phone calls, emails, instant chat leads, referrals).

_____ I recognize that some of the above items are negatively impacting my practice and new business.

If you are satisfied with your results for most of these types of questions, then you probably do not need to make any major changes in your website today. If, on the other hand, you find yourself missing the mark on some or most, then it probably is time to consider your website upgrade options.

Steps to Develop or Redesign My Website

How to Start

If you have come to the conclusion that the time has come to evaluate your website design options, congratulations! Most practices are excited to make the decision to either build a new site or upgrade their current website. Unfortunately, most become disenchanted with the website and results they eventually get, simply because they did not take time to prepare.

Unlike simply purchasing a product, your website is the creation of a collaborative effort between you and your website development partner. And there are many options and ranges of providers. So, before you go out and start calling website design firms and ask them to send samples and costs, you need to have a firm grasp of your needs, goals, and required services. Going in with a game plan will ensure you avoid being “sold” a website, or a service that fails to deliver the necessary results for your Ophthalmology practice.

Take the time to clearly determine specific objectives and elements your website needs to achieve and provide. Take the time to complete the following **Website Planning Questionnaire** and use it to guide your conversations and discussions when considering your website marketing partner.

Worksheet – Website Planning Questionnaire



print this page

Prior to calling and requesting pricing or proposals from website marketing firms, you need to be comfortable and confident in some of the details of what you want out of your website.

The following questionnaire will help you think through some of the considerations you may not have thought to share with your website marketing firm, or they may have failed to ask. In order for you to accurately compare website design providers, complete the following planning questionnaire first, and arm yourself with a firm understanding of what you want out of your website and marketing.

1-What is the PRIMARY objective of my website? (Example: Image/branding? Provide support resource for existing patients? New patient lead generation, etc.?)

2-What type of visitor am I trying to drive to our website? (Example: Existing patients, referral prospects, search engine-driven prospects, etc.)

3-How am I planning to drive them to my website? (Hint: Search engine optimization, pay-per-click ads, other media advertising, email marketing, social media, etc.)

4-What is my budget range for designing or updating the website? What is my monthly budget for marketing the website after it is completed?

5-What are my top 3 services/treatments that I would like my website to promote:

6-How many monthly visitors come to my website, and how many on average, turn into leads? (Hint: Use Google Analytics and lead tracking data to determine an average visitor-to-lead conversion ratio. This is essential to determine my website's effectiveness at lead conversion.)

7-What percentage of leads actually turns into consultations and new patients for the practice? (Hint: Need to know our ability and salesmanship to turn leads into new patients and revenue.)

8-What are my monthly goals for leads, consultations and patients?

9-What market area(s) is the website going to complete? (Hint: Large metro markets will require a more substantive and competitive website. Multiple markets may require multiple websites.)

10-Are there specific website elements you need to include? (Ex. Video, animation, blogs, forums, new gallery, instant chat service, special graphics, new promotion ideas, social media elements, etc.?)

Use the completed questionnaire during your conversations with prospective website marketing providers. Ensure your prospective provider can adequately respond and/or provide proofs.

Choosing a Website Design and Marketing Agency

Again, this e-book is not intended to be a do-it-yourself resource. We realize you probably are not the one to develop your website or market it. Thus, the e-book is designed to help you make decisions, including choosing the right partner, which is a critical part of your long-term website marketing success.

Now that you have established some of your goals and objectives, you will need to consider some options to accomplish them. The following addresses some common issues when considering your options.

Local Website Marketing Firm vs. National Ophthalmology Website Marketing Agency

One of the most common dilemmas facing ophthalmologists is choosing between a local designer and a national ophthalmology specialty web marketing agency. Although there is no right answer for every situation, these are some considerations when selecting your website marketing partner.

Local Website Designer – Typically, you can find a less expensive local website designer to build a custom website for your ophthalmology practice. They offer the convenience and comfort of occasionally meeting face-to-face with you in your office. Many may come to you as a referral from friends, relatives, or other business associates.

Positives: Most local web designers can be lower in cost, and are able to offer more personal interaction.

Negatives: Very few local web designers understand marketing ophthalmology services, the latest ophthalmology technology, what makes you different or, significantly, the ophthalmology patient (demographics, motivations, online habits, etc.). They will rely on you to guide the process, select images and, most importantly, write the content.

National Ophthalmology Website Marketing Agency – Most website design firms that specialize in ophthalmology have a greater understanding of your practice, services, priorities and, most importantly, your target audience. They have also developed specialized resources for ophthalmology website marketing, and most are able to tackle the crucial job of developing your website copy.

Positives: A specialized ophthalmology website provider can more likely provide leadership and guidance in developing your custom website. This can shorten the website development process, and allow your website to leverage strategies that are proven to work in other ophthalmology offices.

Negatives: Higher-end agencies that specialize in ophthalmology may cost more than a local website designer. Since they are national, you have very little opportunity to meet them in person. In some cases, national ophthalmology website marketing agencies may work with lots of other ophthalmologists in your market. And some competitively-priced, national agencies offer websites that you may not own.

Focused And Concise – Some practices try to save money by limiting the number of pages. Consequently, they try to cram as much content and as many related topics as they can on each page. Unfortunately, they unknowingly handcuff their website and lose credibility with their visitors. Make sure you have enough pages to cover all the areas you need, and that your copy is highly focused on a given topic, and written in a concise, direct manner. More comprehensive procedure pages can range from 300-500+ words.

Readability – Not only does the content of your website need to be substantive and focused, it also needs to be presented in an easy-to-read format for today’s convenience-driven online user.



1. Sentences are as concise as possible, and don’t require a lot of punctuation.
2. Avoid long paragraphs with lots of sentences – break them up.
3. Use bullet points.
4. Create visual signposts with headings and subheadings.
5. Use layman’s terms and avoid Ophthalmology jargon or technical words.
6. Avoid using reversed, high-contrast copy (Ex. White copy on a black background) – Study shows reader participants are 26% less accurate when reading high-contrast copy!*

In addition, some studies have shown that 8th-9th grade level writing is the most readable for online users.

*“This supports the fact that the average adult reads at the 9th-grade level. It also shows that, for recreation, people read texts that are two grades below their actual reading level.”***

TIP: Here is a link to one of many online readability testing tools:

<http://www.readability.info>

Interactive Content – Unlike books, newspapers, magazines, and other printed forms of content, digital copy is consumed very differently. People read websites with their mouse as much as they do with their eyes. Strategic website copy uses text links to relevant support pages, engages your visitors and funnels them to target destinations of your website. In some cases, people use text links more often to get deeper into your site than navigation buttons.

Search Engine Optimized Copy – Your website copy must also address the needs of another visitor: search engines. In order to get high listings on Google and other search engines, it is important that your content also be strategically written with target keywords and phrases. However, it is important to use them within the scope of readability so they do not detract from your visitors, or appear as “spam” to search engines. Ideally, an exact match of your target keyword phrase should be located in the first or second paragraph, and occasionally throughout the page. This includes any city, town, county, etc. that you are targeting.

*Bauer, D., & Cavonius, C., R. (1980). Improving the legibility of visual display units through contrast reversal. In E. Grandjean, E. Vigliani (Eds.), *Ergonomic Aspects of Visual Display Terminals*.

**-Klare, G. R. and B. Buck, 1954. *Know Your Reader: The scientific approach to readability*. New York: Heritage House.

Template/Duplicate Copy vs. Original Content - As mentioned earlier, some website template options offer a library of general content for your website. If you do not need your website to serve as a lead generating resource for your medical practice, using template website copy can be an affordable alternative.

However, if your content needs to communicate your practice's unique advantages, differences, passion, and get high organic search engine listings, you probably need to consider developing original website copy.

Search engines, like Google, index billions of pages of content and can immediately recognize when pages, paragraphs, or even sentences with identical copy are found on multiple websites. Since Google wants to deliver its users the best, most accurate information and results, it does not see the value in your content if it is also found on a lot of other websites. In addition, most template content does not include SEO keyword strategies that are unique to your market and campaign.



**Unique
Content**



If you have existing copy that you are considering including in your website, but do not know its origin, you can use any number of online plagiarism checking websites, like www.duplichecker.com.

IMPORTANT PROOF READING TIPS FOR OPHTHALMOLOGISTS:

Developing ophthalmology website content that is original and unique to your practice is essential, but can be very challenging. When you and your website marketing partner start developing the content for your website, it will be important to have a strategy for you to review and approve the content they provide. The following are three quick and easy tips:

- 1- When evaluating your website copy, resist the temptation to print it. If possible, read it in the form that your visitors will read it – digitally.
- 2- Try to read your content like an average consumer would. “Put down the pen” and remove the intent of an editor. Avoid turning this process into a literary competition.
- 3- Most importantly, read the copy straight through and avoid going back and re-reading each sentence. Your visitors won't! If the copy is easy to read, understandable, personable, organized and accomplishes all the above objectives, then your content is ready to go live.

Types of Website Programming

Another consideration when choosing a website marketing partner is to determine **how** they intend to build your website. There are basically three different platforms to develop your website design: 1) HTML, 2) *open-source* content management system (CMS), and 3) *custom* CMS platform.

HTML – This is the oldest form of website design, and is done by creating actual “static” pages of your website. Although it is still functional on the Web, HTML is limited in its flexibility, and does not allow you to make your own edits to the website without special programming training. It is also limiting when continually adding more pages or content to your website, or when you want to update your website with a new design at a later time.

Open-Source CMS Websites – Unlike HTML websites, these websites are developed using a database that manages and dynamically publishes the content and pages of your website. CMS websites offer convenience in doing updates by allowing your practice to make direct updates without special programming or going through your webmaster. “Open-Source” refers to a type of CMS program that is developed and continually upgraded in an open environment by a community of programmers. Websites built in an open source CMS are the most common today, and include platforms such as WordPress, Drupal, Joomla and others. Unless there are extenuating needs, open-source CMS websites are recommended for most ophthalmology practices.

Custom CMS Websites – Like open source CMS websites, custom CMS websites use a database to manage and dynamically produce pages of your website. They also can allow you to easily make direct changes yourself. The difference with custom CMS websites is that they are developed using custom proprietary programming. The challenge with custom programming is that your developer is likely the only one that can manage and typically host your website. If you decide to change website providers at a later time, custom CMS websites are significantly more difficult for other firms to take over, and will require significant costs to convert.

Website Design

After you determine the platform to develop your website, we finally come to design. Developing the right type of design is a critical junction in the decision process, so invest the necessary time. The one that is best for your practice will depend on your needs, budget,



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market, competition and expectations.

Website Template Design vs. Custom Website Design

Regardless of what programming (HTML, CMS) you decide is best for your practice, you will need to determine what type of design makes the most sense. Although there may be variations, you will need to choose between a website that is designed A) using a template, or B) fully custom. Like the programming, neither option is best for every situation. You and your web marketing partner need to determine which best fits your needs, goals, expectations, and budget.

The following will provide some basic information along with the good and bad of each.

Website Template Designs - Website templates are pre-designed and programmed websites that can be easily customized for your practice by changing colors, adding your branded logo, updating your contact information and including your practice information and photos. Templates are a quick and affordable option to develop your website. There are templates built specifically for ophthalmology practices and others that are non-industry specific.

Positives: The primary advantage for template designs is they are significantly less expensive than custom websites. They can also save you a lot of time and energy compared to developing one from scratch. Most template website platforms are now programmed using self-editing content management system (CMS), so that you can make changes directly. They come preset with navigation buttons, layout, banner, forms and other design elements.

Negatives: The biggest limitation to template websites is their ability to really be built around your practice. You are also limited to the design templates they offer, and they typically have no capability to make changes in your layout, organization, and structure. Some offer existing content but template copy will hurt your SEO results. Also, most template designs have limited SEO capabilities. One major issue with template designs is that most platforms do not allow you to actually own the website, which is why they can keep the cost low. If you decide to go to another provider, you may lose your website and likely the equity it has built over time.

Custom Website Designs – Fully custom website designs are like building a custom home that is built to your specifications. All layout, dimensions, animation, navigation, shading/shadows, texture, are designed with your practice in mind. Thus, they are significantly more expensive than template websites. However, as the web marketplace continues to increase in competition, more practices are committing to compete and build custom websites.

Positives: The primary benefit to a custom website is that your website is built to address your specific needs and objectives, and perform on the latest browsers and Internet technology. Custom designs can be more branded to your practice and more capable at quickly developing relationship, rapport and credibility with your new visitors. Custom websites

can create a much more distinguishing image than template website designs and can be built with specific SEO programming to maximize your Google listings.

Negatives: There are really only two detractors for ophthalmologists building a custom website. The first is cost. Custom websites can be more than double to cost of leasing a website template. The second is time. Custom website design takes more thought, creative energy and time. It is not unusual for a fully custom website with 50 pages of original copywriting to take up to three months to complete.

In the end, there isn't one best solution for all ophthalmology practices. If your market, competition, marketing strategy, budget and goals do not require you invest in a custom website, then a template website may be right for you and your practice. However, if you are in a moderate to highly competitive market and have expectations to generate a higher level of new, fee-for-service patients, then you may need to look into a custom option.

Website Design Tips

If you decide that a custom website is the right option for your ophthalmology practice, there are a number of options and strategies that can help clarify the process and help you produce a winning website.

The Whole is Greater Than the Sum of its Parts

Most ophthalmologists focus solely on building a website first, without any regard for how they will market it. It is also why most ophthalmology websites do not generate a high return on investment. Only after the site is finished do they begin contemplating how they will market it. Unfortunately, they realize that their website wasn't built in the manner necessary to perform well and needs expensive, major updates.

Like quality comprehensive eye treatments, effective website marketing is more than just cosmetic. It takes planning and experience to get great results.

Start with Keyword Phrases

Before you start looking at designs, picking images and colors you like, your website development needs to start with your target audience. What are they looking for? How are they searching and finding it? This means researching and identifying a written list of search engine keyword phrases that consumers use to find you, and your services. One good place to start is Google AdWord's Keyword Tool (Simply search "Google AdWords Keyword Tool" to locate it).

Once you identify a comprehensive list (75-125 target phrases), you can now plan to build all your content and website pages around these important keyword phrases.

Design – First Impressions Are Lasting

After you have developed your target list of keyword phrases and an outline of pages to build around them, you need to consider your design and the elements that make that all-important first impression.

Visitors to your website take very little time in forming a first impression. In fact, one Missouri University study showed it takes users less than two-tenths of a second to begin to form a first impression (right)! And it only takes about 2.6 seconds for their eyes to land on the area of your website that most influences their first impression.*

Key Impression Elements

Colors – The look of your website has a big impact on forming that first impression. And color sets the tone for the look of your website. Choosing the right combination of colors and their use throughout the page can make all the difference.

Logo/branding – Most practices have devoted time, thought and money into developing their logo and brand. Your logo is an important impression element to your website and should influence the overall look and feel of your website. In most cases, it can and should be more than just a corner stamp on the home page.

Banner Images – The banner images and copy are one of the dominant elements that influence first impressions of your website. Selecting the right photo and text will make all the difference. Also be cautious of banners that are too large. This can hinder both usability and even SEO results.

Layout – The website's layout is vital to ensure your high-priority design elements catch the eye of your visitors. Driving visitors to target destinations of your website is the goal of your layout. All the key impression elements listed need to be orchestrated into a harmonious design that not only looks pretty, but gets visitors to interact. And because visitors are quick to make decisions, it is essential to look at the elements that appear "above the fold" (visible portion on the screen before you have to scroll down). Hubspot research indicates only 50 percent will see elements below the fold. **



* **Eyes don't lie: understanding users' first impressions on website design using eye tracking**, Dahal, Sirjana, Missouri University of Science and Technology, 2010

** **The 30 Greatest Lead Generation Tips, Tricks & Ideas**, Hubspot, 2013

Ease of Navigation/Organization – Navigating your site should be like driving a car - intuitive. Your designer needs to know your audience and anticipate their habits, interests and combine that with knowledge of your practice and its goals. Effective designs place elements where visitors expect to find them. Organize your menu logically (relevant and prioritized is more valuable than alphabetical), and use descriptions that don't make them think.

Clarity of Purpose – Using the right words, images, and organization, your website can immediately communicate to visitors with what your website or page is about. Trying to be clever or present too many topics or points will likely confuse visitors or give them the wrong impression. Be clear, concise and upfront with the goal of the page - clarity always trumps clever.

Associations (BBB, ADA,) – Credibility is a critical element in effectively marketing service providers, like ophthalmologists. Since very few ophthalmologists are publicly recognizable and credible prior to visitors coming to your website, you must establish it as quickly as possible. Thus, leverage the credibility of other trusted organizations or entities using recognizable badges and links.

Calls-to-Action/Forms/Instant Chat – In most cases, getting website visitors to turn into leads is the main objective for most ophthalmology websites. Consequently, your primary calls-to-action, “next step” action links or contact/communication elements (forms or instant chat) need to be effectively designed and positioned.

About Instant Chat – Instant chat is a service that allows your website visitors to interact with your website much like text messaging, which is a more immediate form of digital communication. Consumers engaging in chat sessions have greater instant communication expectations than those sending an email. Chat services offer 24/7 agents to manage your chat sessions and are only paid when they can turn a session into a lead for your office. This service has shown to increase overall leads in ophthalmology practices by over 160 percent!

Beware of Negative Impressions

In addition to elements that can make a positive impact on your website, there are also items that can have a negative effect. It is important to avoid:

- Long load times
- Error messages
- Broken Links
- Advertisements
- Low quality images
- Pop-up offers
- Unprofessional items (traffic counters, cartoon animation, etc.)
- Videos or music that automatically play (with a few exceptions)



Navigation

The “usability” and navigation of your website will determine how long people stay on the site, how many pages they visit, and which pages they get to. Well-planned and intuitive organization of your website requires experience and understanding of online ophthalmology consumers. The following are tips to help you ensure visitors navigate effectively through your website:

Key Destination Pages/Sections – Not all pages of your website have the same value to you, or to your visitors. Part of strategic website design is to anticipate your visitors’ needs, interests and motivations, and then build your website around them. You should determine approximately five key pages or sections (no more than seven) that the vast majority of your visitor want and need to reach. These pages must stand out in your navigation, calls-to-action, text links, etc.

About Us – There was a time when an eye care practice put up a picture of the doctor and a CV, and that was the extent of the About Us section of the practice website. Today, your About Us section must be one of your priority destination pages. People choose a practice and provider not because they are the best, but rather because they feel like they know them better than other providers and have a connection or rapport. About Us is a principal page or section of the website that helps market relationship with your visitors. Take extra steps to personalize this section of your website. Each doctor with his/her own page, video, personalized copy, patient quotes, links to credentials, associations, reviews, etc. are all elements you need to consider.

High Priority Service Pages – Not all of your services or pages are of the same value to you, and to your patients. Pages that attract a lot of traffic and promote your most important treatments deserve additional attention and strategies to drive visitors to them.

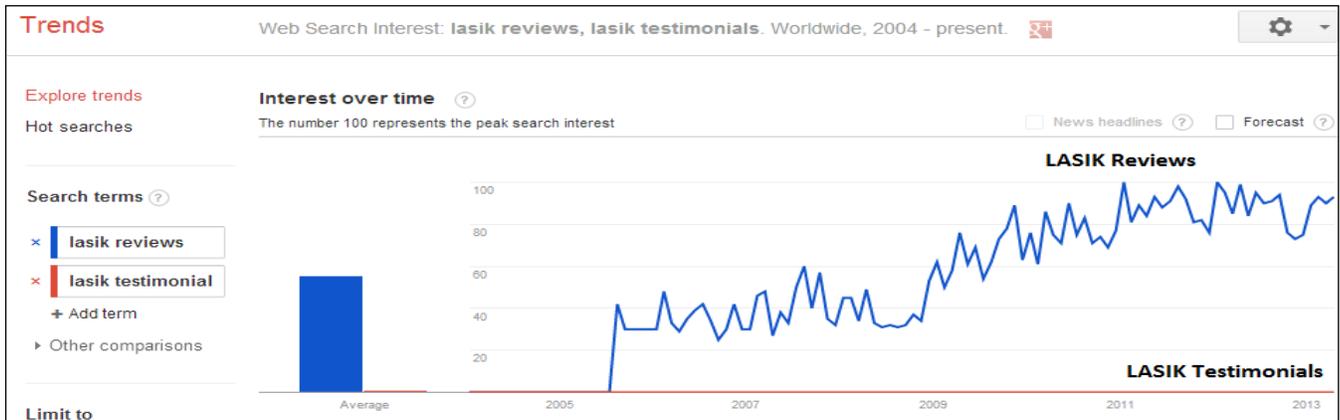
Contact Us – Your Contact Us page in many ways is the most important destination page. Developing an effective Contact Us page is important in converting visits into leads. **Focus on phone calls first**; don’t just post an email form. A/B test “required” form fields. Minimize animation that may distract, and limit links that take you away from the page.

Other Design Elements

Video – Custom video, if done correctly, can be the most effective relationship and rapport building element on your website. Also, it allows you to communicate more complex concepts, and project greater conviction and passion than even the best content or pictures. Video can significantly enhance your conversion ratio. In larger, more competitive metropolitan markets, video is no longer a “nice to have” and has become more of a “must have” website element.

Blog Section – Blogging on your website is a proven SEO strategy. By adding relevant content to your website on a regular basis, Google continually re-indexes your blog and website, and finds new copy, which enhances your website’s credibility with the search engines. Statistics also find that online visitors like blogs and often, they are one of the most trafficked sections and pages of your website.

Reviews and Ratings – We all know consumers continue to gravitate to the web in order to view ratings and reviews of ophthalmologists when considering a new provider. But reviews do not need to be limited to portals or business review profile pages, like Yelp, Google+, etc. They also need to be found on your website. In fact, the most important people that need to see your positive patient reviews are visitors to your website who are already trying to learn more about you and your practice. In some cases, visitors that view reviews on your website may be satisfied with what they find that do not see the need to go to other off-site review sources.



Tip – Reviews and Ratings: Do not refer to positive comments on your website as “Testimonials,” but rather as “Reviews.” Consumers look for reviews, not for testimonials. See the Google search traffic trends for “LASIK Reviews” vs. “LASIK Testimonials.”

Website Analytics/Tracking – It is also important to set up Google Analytics on your website to provide you 24/7 access to your website statistics. It is a free application that can be easily added to the website. Review your statistics and trends every month, if possible, but at least every quarter. Changes in your website should be dictated by statistics and data, not simply by emotional whims. You can't fix it if you don't know it's broken. Also, to ensure your layout is effective, use a heat map program as seen earlier (page 13).



Mobile-compatible Websites

It is no secret that more and more traffic on the web is driven by mobile devices (smartphones and digital pads). This is also reflected in the numbers of mobile users visiting your website. By 2015, over 81 percent of US cell users will have smartphones*, and the vast majority will use their smartphones to access the Internet every day.

At the end of 2012, roughly 20 percent of all ophthalmology website visitors to our ophthalmology client websites were accessing the sites using a mobile device. In some cases, one in three visitors (over 30 percent) was a mobile device visitor. In order to get the most out of each visit, your website must be mobile compatible to accommodate this growing audience to your website. Not only does your website need to load correctly, it must be designed for smaller screens and touch-screen navigation as opposed to using a keyboard and mouse. Most importantly, your phone number must be touch-to-call.

Lead Tracking/Call Tracking – As your website and online marketing become a bigger part of your overall marketing efforts and budget, it is becoming essential that it needs to be more accountable for delivering results. In order to accurately measure the impact of your web marketing, you must track all leads that come through your website. All emails can be easily accounted and tracked. Telephone leads, however, need to be tracked through a designated call tracking number on your website. Call tracking numbers can be local or toll free. (Our statistics indicate that local numbers appear to outperform toll free numbers in terms of lead conversion on ophthalmology-related websites).

*POS Goes Digital: Evolution of the In-Store Shopping Experience, Gridley & Company, LLC , March 2012.

Search Engine Marketing Strategies

Search Engine Optimization

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a marketing strategy to get Google and other search engines to list your website or pages of your website high on target keyword searches you have identified. SEO focuses on securing listings in the organic section in the middle of the page.

Organic listings will also include the map and business listings that are occasionally merged with other traditional organic listings. Although Google business map listings are organic and not paid listings, the strategies and techniques are different than traditional SEO.

The goal of this section is to highlight key elements so you can make more informed decisions on providers, ensuring accountability, and even contribute to your SEO success.

Tip: Generally speaking, the goal of search engine optimization is not to trick or fool search engines into thinking your website is better than your competitors. The goal is to actually make it better than your competitors.

In order to develop your website into a more authority resource for search engines, you must understand two basic principles:

- 1- Search engines don't just index websites per se; they index each individual asset within the website, including individual pages, videos, graphics, photos, Google+ business pages, etc.
- 2- Search engines crawl through all these elements and combine as much information as they can acquire about them to determine how credible, accurate and valuable they are to consumer searches.

The goal of your SEO is to develop credible assets within your website that Google and other search engines find relevant to target keyword phrases that attract a volume of high quality visitors to your website.

Pages and Content

SEO starts with pages and content. These are the most valuable assets in your SEO campaign and carry the most search engine weight and credibility. The more relevant, high quality pages you develop around specific keyword phrases, the greater the likelihood Google will index one, or a couple of them, high in the search results.

The key is to make sure Google recognizes the target keywords throughout the content and aspects of the page. This includes headings, sub-headings, the main body content itself, disclaimers in the footer,

etc. It is also recommended that each page should target no more than two or three keyword phrases. For more competitive phrases, you may even want to target only one keyword phrase per page.

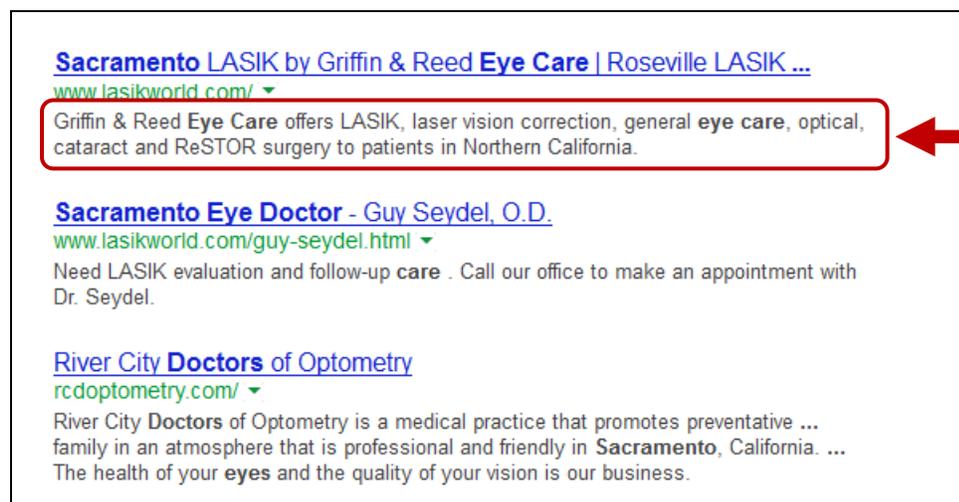
One additional consideration is to make sure that the keywords or phrases are used in a manner to minimize any impact on the readability of your copy. Your content needs to be effective for search engines and compelling to human visitors. Also, there is no hard, fast rule on how many times the keyword or phrase needs to be on a given page. Just be aware that there is a point where copy can become over-optimized and appear as spam.

Meta Tags

Meta tags are back-end programming elements of a page that provide information about the scope of the page. Meta elements can be used to specify page titles, descriptions, and relevant keywords and help search engines identify what this page is all about. The two most important meta elements are 1) the page's Title Tag (see below),



and the page's Description Tag (below).



One reason Google puts significant weight on these two elements is because they are visible to online users when they search, and actually visit the page. Google does not put nearly as much SEO weight on elements that are not visible on the site, mainly because they would otherwise be abused without affecting the design.

Tip #1: The easiest way to check your meta tags of a page: when you are on the target page, right click your mouse. In the text menu, click on the link that says “view page source.”

Tip #2: Make sure all three elements: 1) meta description, 2) page title, and 3) website page content (heading, subheading, and website copy) all promote the same high priority keyword phrase for that page. Consistency is a key to ensure Google recognizes the specific keyword phrase that the page is about.

Fresh, Original Content

Another element of a website that Google gives weight to is new and updated content and pages. The rationale is simple. Google wants to not only serve up the most relevant information to its users; it wants to deliver the most accurate information as well.

For the same reason ophthalmologists need to take continuing education courses, Google understands that websites that have more recent information, and that continually get updated are also likely to be more accurate. How frequent should you add new pages or content? It depends on the competitive level of the market. Generally speaking, we recommend updating at least monthly for moderately competitive situations.

Blogs – Blogs are another means to regularly add new content to your website. Blogs are also frequently visited by visitors and search engines. We recommend you or your web marketer blog at least four times per month.

Incoming Links

Search engines want to give the highest quality results, but unfortunately do not have human intelligence to determine the inherent quality of a page or its content. That is why they also rely on other relevant and credible websites that link to your website as a way to measure the “popularity” of that website or page. However, be aware that the goal is not just getting more incoming links than your competitors, but to get the highest quality links from the most relevant and authoritative websites and pages. There are number of free tools to check your website’s back links you can use, like www.ranksignals.com.

Local/Google+ Maps

In most cases, Google and other search engines have created a business page for your practice without you having to do anything. The important thing to be aware of is they may have not been claimed, optimized or promoted.

The first thing you need to do is locate your listings and make sure they have been claimed. The most important business profile page is your Google+ business listing page. You can find this quickly by searching for your practice name + address. Once you find it, you can start claiming it by clicking on the appropriate links when you get there. You will ultimately verify the listing after Google mails you a PIN code that is used to log into your Google+ page.



After you claim your listing, it is important that the listing information is accurate and exactly written the way you want it to appear everywhere. From this point on, all business listings, website information, directory listings, etc. need to exactly match the information on your Google+ business page. This helps Google recognize that the information on your Google+ page is accurate and you are a credible, legitimate business.

Reviews and Ratings- it is also important to get local satisfied patients to post reviews about your practice. The reason Google gives weight to reviews and ratings is because it is a way to utilize local, registered users to confirm or validate you are a credible, local business.

There are a lot more sophisticated optimization strategies to enhance your SEO results.
However, they are beyond the scope of this E-book.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

In addition to the organic listings, there is the opportunity to purchase listings on the first page of given search phrases through pay-per-click (PPC) advertising. These listings are in the top shaded area and along the right side of given searches.

Many ophthalmologists immediately turn away from PPC advertising saying “I never click on those listings.” Unfortunately, they assume that because they don’t, nobody does. Keep in mind, PPC ads are Google’s primary revenue generator. It can and does work.

Some benefits of PPC advertising:

1. Immediacy – your listings can appear much more quickly than organic listings.
2. Geo-targeting – you can limit your exposure to geographic area, much like direct mail.
3. Budgeting – you can set a specific monthly spend budget to manage your expenses.
4. Flexibility – you can adjust to seasonal elements in your practice or market. Get more exposure when you want it, cut back on when you don’t need it.

Keys to High PPC ROI - Although some ophthalmologists do very well with PPC advertising, the majority find that they spent a lot of money and got nothing for it. Why? There are definitely strategies in PPC advertising that will enhance your ability to make PPC profitable. This includes keyword phrase selection, bidding levels, how your ads are written, and your descriptions.

Probably most important is the landing page visitors come to, after you paid for them to click on your listing. This is yet another reason you must have an effective website. **In addition, you may want to consider utilizing specialized PPC landing pages.** They have been proven to increase lead conversion.

The key is to make sure you utilize a professional, certified Google AdWords specialist, rather than trying to do this yourself.

Social Media Marketing

The growth and consumer usage of social media platforms are undeniable. By not embracing this continually growing space, you are losing ground to practices and agencies that are figuring out how to leverage the social media opportunity.

Which Platforms – There are a number of social media platforms and your practice has limited resources to manage them all. So which ones do you participate in? For varying reasons, we recommend, at minimum, Facebook and Google+, and Twitter if possible. Not only can they expose your practice to a highly qualified audience, they can positively impact your listing on the search engines. Google and other search engines are tracking more local social media consumer activities, or “social signals” to measure you and your website’s online credibility.



Do I need to manage? – In most cases, we continue to recommend the practice, or at least an assigned team member, take a leading role in their social media campaign. Social media is a participatory media and requires at least some practice participation to personalize your posts and engage your circles of friends and online contacts. We can manage your social media activities. However, to be effective, you need to participate in your social media marketing efforts.

Getting Social – So what can we do to get more from social media? 1) Continually reach out and get more and more people, particularly your satisfied patients, engaged with your activities (and liking, sharing, tweeting and otherwise promoting your web pages and social media posts), 2) promotions, contests, and creative events, 3) use photos, graphics, and videos, 4) educate, 5) relationship-building updates about the practice, 6) use humor, trivia, inspiring quotes, breaking local news, trends, etc. One suggestion is to get your patients posting on their page about you and their experience in your practice. A good way to do that is through the photos you take of/with your patients followed by emails to them with suggestions to share their successful vision treatment with their friends and family.

The key is to be consistent. An “abandoned” social media page that has no activity when a patient or prospective patient visits actually has more negative impact than if they never had found it to begin with. If you have or build a practice page on Facebook or Google+ and have enthusiastic team members, great. If not, you should retain a credible ophthalmology marketing agency to help you manage it and do most of the major work.

Worksheet – Search Engine Marketing/Social Media

Use this form quickly determine the status of you search engine marketing efforts

(check if applicable)



print this page

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

_____ Website does not show up on page 1 of Google for our most important keyword phrase.

_____ Website does not show up on page 1 for most of our important keyword phrases.

Pages and Content

_____ Need more SEO-focused pages for each procedure.

_____ Existing pages need more SEO-focused copy.

_____ Duplicate/plagiarized copy found in the website.

Meta Tags

_____ Title tags and/or Meta descriptions missing key locations.

_____ Title tags and/or Meta description missing page's main service keyword phrase.

_____ Title Tag, Meta description and copy on the page (headings and copy) are not consistently using the same keyword phrase.

Fresh Content

_____ Fail to add new SEO page to the website each month.

_____ Do not have a blog, or do not post optimized blog at least four times per month.

Incoming Links

_____ Few incoming links, or links not relevant to ophthalmology.

Google+ Listings

_____ My Google+ business page does not appear on map listings for key search results.

Reviews and Ratings

_____ Not actively soliciting patients to post reviews on Google+ or other review websites.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

_____ Need to consider Google AdWords Certified media buyer.

_____ Need to use PPC landing pages.

Social Media Marketing

_____ Not utilizing Google+, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

Conclusions

The days of just paying a few bucks to an outside web marketing person without any serious investment of time or thought, yet expecting that to be sufficient, are long gone. The Internet has become a primary means to market ophthalmology practices and more and more patients are using it to find providers and stay in touch with your practice.

This e-book is the first in a series that will be produced to help your practice take advantage of this evolving media. Good luck and contact us if you have questions or other topics you would like covered in future publications.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Fukui". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Bill Fukui
Chief Operating Officer
Page 1 Solutions