A Beginner's Guide to Online Marketing for Orthopedic Practices

p3 Practice Marketing

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Introduction

As an orthopedic or spine practice, your ultimate goal is helping patients get the care they need. However, patients need to be able to find your practice so that you can help them.

Certainly, word of mouth referrals from primary care providers and current and previous patients are a primary factor in getting new patients. However, more and more patients are going online to research those referrals before making an appointment. If your practice is not well-represented online, that can decrease the value of the referral and may dissuade the patient from choosing your practice.

According to a [2019 study by Binary Fountain](#), 60% of patients used search engines to find a doctor. If your practice isn't showing up in relevant searches by local people, you are likely missing out on new patients. This is where online marketing comes in. An effective online marketing strategy will help you connect with the patients who are seeking out the procedures and services your practice offers.

You might be thinking, "My patients are older. They're not searching online. Most of them don't even have computers." While that may have been true 10 years ago, more digitally-adept people are aging into the "elderly" population

every year, meaning the habits of your average patient are changing. And even if your patients are not directly searching online, there is a good chance their adult children or grandchildren are searching on their behalf. If you don't have an online presence, you could be missing out on those patients.

There are a lot of different components to online marketing. To effectively market your practice online, you need to understand the basics and how these components work together.

In this ebook, we will break down the basics of online marketing so that you will have the knowledge you need to market your practice online.

Chapter 1

How Do Search Engines Work?

Before we get into the components of an effective SEO campaign for your practice, we need to lay down the foundation. If you can understand how search engines provide results and determine ranking, you can better understand how all of the pieces fit together.

Google does a lot behind the scenes to provide you with search results. First, Google uses software called "web crawlers" to crawl the web, following links page by page until every page ([4.2 billion](#) and counting) has been discovered. You may recognize Googlebot, the most well-known crawler. The crawlers provide Google's servers with data about those webpages.

Google then indexes all of that information based on the content of the pages. You can think of the web as a book, and Google as the index in the back of the book that helps you to find the pages relevant to the information you want. In some cases, Google even acts similarly to dictionaries and encyclopedias, including the answers to some search queries directly in search results through "Knowledge Boxes." Google has programs that determine which sites to crawl, and how often. Crawlers pay attention to new sites and pages, as well as changes to existing pages.
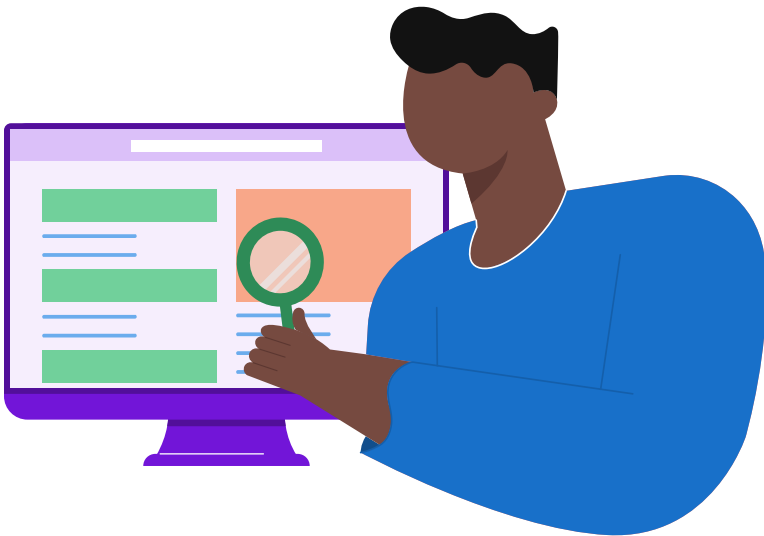
From the Index to Search Results (In Less Than a Second!)

Let's say our patient Mr. Brown is searching for information about a partial knee replacement. He types in "partial knee replacement" on Google and immediately gets results. But how do all of those results pop up so quickly? The answer is the algorithm.

The algorithm is a set of programs and formulas that look for signals in the index to find content relevant to your search query. Currently, there are at least 200 of these signals, called ranking factors, that the algorithm looks for to determine what results to show. So, every time you search for something on Google, the algorithm looks for these 200 signals to provide you with results. Amazingly enough, the algorithm can do all of that within ⅛ of a second!

The main purpose of the algorithm is to provide the most useful results. This is why good quality content is important. Because of the way the algorithm is set up, you can't expect to rank by simply filling up a webpage with keywords without providing content that is actually useful.

The algorithm is constantly being updated to ensure that you get the most relevant results every time. Let's go back to our example search for knee replacements.

Our fictitious Mr. Brown is interested in information about partial knee replacements, and would also like to know if any local doctors perform this procedure. The algorithm will look through the index for these clues related to this search query and provide the most relevant information, based partly on how often the information has been cited or linked to from other websites. The algorithm is even set up to look for geographic clues, so Mr. Brown will find information about partial knee replacements from nearby orthopedic practices whenever possible.

What if he misspelled the search query? No problem! Google's algorithm is set up to identify misspellings and correct them.

Squashing Spam

In addition to indexing the web and creating algorithms to provide you with relevant search results, Google also works to fight spam. Spam sites will attempt to get to the top of search results by using tactics such as repeating keywords in the content or creating loads of low-quality links to the site from directories

or forums. As a result, legitimate websites get buried and become harder to find.

Google's algorithms can detect most forms of spam, and automatically remove those sites from search results. Google also has a team that manually reviews sites for spam not caught by the algorithm. In those cases, Google will notify the website owners so that they can take steps to remove spam from their websites.

For something that seems like such a quick and simple process for the patient, there is a lot going on behind the scenes to provide you with search results. Google's crawlers crawl the web and index the content. When you search for something, the algorithm searches for clues in the indexed content to provide you with the information you're looking for. The algorithm changes frequently, but understanding how it works can help you stay on top of things.

Now that you understand how search engines work, we'll get into some of the strategies you can use to improve your SEO—and which strategies you should avoid.

Chapter 2

6 Reasons Your Site Isn't Appearing in Google

Let's start with the kinds of tactics your practice's website should avoid.

There are several reasons why your site might not show up in search results. These are some of the most common.

1. You have poor quality, or not enough, content.

Google's algorithm is intelligent enough to understand the content on your site, and ranks sites based on the quality and relevancy of your content. If your competitors' websites have more or better content, they are more likely to outrank you. The key here is not to create

content for search engines, but rather to create content that is actually helpful to your patients. This way, it's a win-win—your patients are happy because they get the information they need, and search engines will likely give you better ranking because of it.

2. You have duplicate content on your site.

Does your site have content that can be found on other sites, or do you have the same content on multiple pages on your site? If so, that could be the [reason](#) why you aren't ranking. Although the content may be informative for patients, it isn't original and doesn't explain what makes your practice unique. Search engines can recognize when content shows up on multiple sites, and these sites may get bumped down in rankings in favor of sites with original content.

3. You're using "shortcut" SEO tactics.

Some website owners used to (and still do) try to cheat their way to better ranking using [shortcut tactics](#) like keyword stuffing, hidden links, and comment spam. However, updates to Google's algorithm have allowed it to recognize these tactics, and sites that use them are being penalized and losing out on search ranking. If you are using any of these tactics, that is

something you'll want to fix right away if you want to improve your ranking.

> Be sure to check out our glossary of marketing terms at the end of this eBook!

4. You haven't worked on local SEO.

If you're not doing any type of local search engine optimization, you could be missing out in ranking for geographically relevant search terms. We'll cover this concept in more detail in the next chapter.

5. Your site is difficult to navigate.

If your website isn't user-friendly, you may find that you lose out in ranking. If your site is difficult to read or difficult to navigate, you could lose out in ranking. Your patients need to be able to find and read the information they need, and they shouldn't have to search several pages before they finally find what they were looking for. Try to combine smaller pages whenever possible to make your site more user-friendly. If your site is really old, you may also benefit from a redesign.

6. Your site isn't mobile-friendly.

Your website needs to be user-friendly on desktop computers, but it's just as important that sites be user- friendly on mobile devices. Google is beginning to place more importance on mobile-friendly sites as more and more people view websites on their mobile devices. In fact, Google has even begun rolling out mobile-first indexing for websites that provide a good mobile experience, so that both mobile and desktop rankings are based on the mobile version of the website. If your website isn't easy to navigate on a mobile device (i.e., small buttons, small text, and non- responsive), you could lose out in ranking for searches on mobile devices. The best fix for this is to get a new website with a responsive design. Responsively-designed websites adjust to fit any screen size, from a large desktop monitor to your mobile phone.
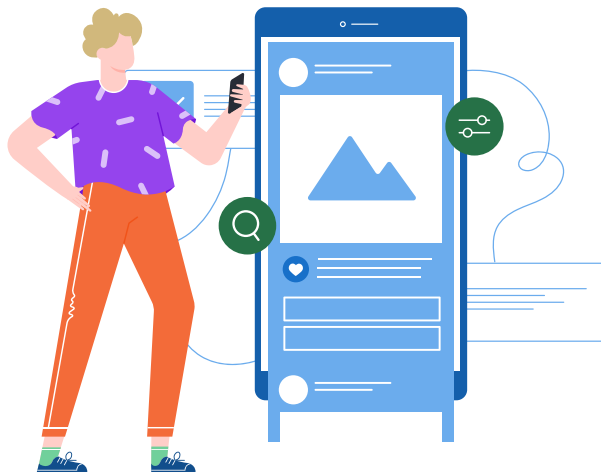
The best thing that you can do to improve your site's rankings is to focus on the user experience. Does your website have the information that patients want to know, and can they easily find this information, no matter what type of device they're using? When you can answer "yes" to these questions, you're on the right track.

To see how much of an impact a modern, streamlined website can have on your number of patient appointments, see our case study in the Case Studies section.

Chapter 3

Local SEO

Local SEO is yet one more buzz-phrase to throw around when it comes to online marketing, so let's go ahead and clarify so that we can all be on the same page.

Local SEO is the type of search engine optimization that businesses with brick-and-mortar locations should be using. Local SEO is specifically targeted at getting your practice to show up for geographically relevant keywords like "orthopedic surgeon Detroit" or "spine surgeon Albany." There are a number of tactics involved, but the big picture involves using those geographic terms on your website in a way that makes sense.

Don't go spamming people. If you're throwing in phrases like "St. Louis spine surgeon that serves St. Louis patients," then site visitors and search engines will run away from you like the plague.

First, create relevant content on your site that corresponds to your location, and secondly, ensure that your location information is consistent in as many places as possible.

Take a minute to go and do a quick search for your practice name right now. Just open a new tab and type in "[Practice Name] [Your city]". How many different types of listings do you see? You likely have a mix of results like Yelp, Google map listings, Healthgrades, and a score of other map and review listing sites. Is your practice name consistent across all of those sites? How about your phone number and address? For listings that offer patient reviews, what do your average ratings look like? Those three questions form the baseline that you need to establish in order to start seeing positive results in local search. Abbreviated as the "NAP" (name, address, phone number), consistent information, along with positive reviews, provides two major wins for your practice:

1. Patients can find you.

This cannot be overstated. We rely on GPS systems and phone directories to help automate the more mundane tasks of our lives. When your listing info is incorrect, then patients have to decide whether it's worth their time to continue to pursue the communication. If they are simply researching specialists, then they're not going to bother. They can just go on to the next candidate. The same often is true of your reviews–if you have no reviews or bad reviews, many patients will skip over your practice and move on to the next one.

2. Search engines "understand" your location & expertise better.

If you have an old listing in another city that is still online, then search engines cannot know for certain whether your practice is still there or not. There has to be a certain threshold of consistency for the algorithm to determine that your old info is an outlier that should be disregarded instead of a relevant point of data. When search engines understand your location, they are able to see a higher relevance between your usage of the phrase "spine surgeon Albany" and your map listing located in Albany. This means a higher likelihood of showing up in search results—not only for people searching for "spine surgeon Albany," but also for people who are located in the Albany area and simply type in the phrase "spine surgeon."

Likewise, building up more positive online reviews helps search engines learn more about your expertise because it signals that your patients are happy. As online reviews become more and more prominent in search results, we have seen many practices improve their search ranking after building up more positive reviews over time.

Higher ranking leads to higher traffic, which leads to a substantially higher percentage of getting those patients into your practice.

Does That Mean You Don't Have to Deal with the Rest of SEO?

Once you have good content and good listings, will you automatically dominate search results?

Not necessarily.

When it comes to marketing, there are very few "automatic" results. That's simply because you're ultimately dealing with responses from real people, and people—though they often show behavioral patterns—are still impossible to predict at 100% certainty.
Our discussion is not about saying what will definitely happen but about increasing our chances so that we can see the results we want.

For local SEO, we take care of tasks specifically dedicated to this type of marketing while still employing best practices from the rest of SEO. We still want good relevant title tags, clean code, pages that load quickly, and the list goes on. Basically, local SEO is not a shortcut so that we can do less, but it's a crucial bit of extra effort that helps the sum of our work become even more effective.

When we build a website for a practice, we include some local SEO to help practices get

found. After all, why build a website if people can't find it?

You'll want to start checking your listings on Google My Business (those are the map results in Google) and on Bing Local (Bing's maps). Make sure that your NAP is correct. Add photos and / or videos if you have them, and fill out the information as fully as you can. Add your website link. On listings that offer reviews, like Google and Healthgrades, you can also focus on collecting reviews from patients to boost your ratings.

Simply put, look for any and every way to help a potential patient contact you.

Chapter 4

How to Create Content That Helps Patients *and* SEO

We've talked a lot about creating great content for your patients, and how that content can ultimately help your search engine ranking. Your content should guide patients to the information they need, thereby establishing trust in the process.

If you have looked into online marketing for your practice recently, you've probably heard the phrase "Content is king." Don't blow this off as just a fad, though; quality content has been a primary ranking factor in Google for many years now. So, what does all of this mean for you and your website?

Simply put, you need to have content on your website that your patients would find useful.

These days, more and more people tune out advertising like banner ads, once considered the gold standard for online marketing. Your content needs to be informative. If it sounds more like a sales pitch than an informative article, search engines, and more importantly, potential patients, will skip right over you.

How can you create useful and effective content for your practice? Here are some pointers to consider when adding content to your website.

Create content for people, not search engines.

Think less about trying to get as many keywords in as possible, and more about what information your patients might want. When people search for something online, they are looking for information on a particular subject, not schemes and advertisements.

If you want to rank for a particular service, add content explaining it.

Let's say you want to attract more patients who want hip replacements, or herniated disc surgery. The best way to start is to add content

to your website that details the procedure and answers common patient questions.

"But I already have patient education on my website," you say. Unfortunately, that isn't going to cut it here.

While patient education links are still very useful, other doctors have access to the same information, so it ends up being duplicated on several websites. If you rely solely on that content, you won't get the ranking you want. This brings us to our next point…

Make it original.

You need to have your own, original content, rather than content that could be found on other practices' websites. This gives you the opportunity to provide more detail on how your practice performs a particular procedure or treats a certain condition. You can also showcase what makes you stand out from other practices. Are you the only doctor in the area who performs a certain procedure? Does your practice have a state-of-the-art physical therapy center on site? Say so!

Tailor the content to your audience.

Creating original content gives you the opportunity to cater to your target audience and "speak their language." For example, if you are a sports medicine doctor whose practice is located in an area where skiing and other winter sports are popular, you can write content about common skiing injuries. With spine surgery, consider how patients search for procedures—they are more likely to search for something like "herniated disc surgery" than "microdiscectomy." You might also want to consider using the spelling "orthopedic" rather than "orthopaedic" in your website content— your patients are less likely to use the latter spelling.

Write content that the average person could easily understand.

Orthopedic and spine terminology can seem quite complicated and confusing to most people, so you have to be able to take these complex ideas and simplify them. According to a fact sheet by the Center for Health Care Strategies, Inc., the average person reads at a 5th grade level, but healthcare materials

tend to be written at about a 10th-grade level. Keep that in mind when writing your content. Anything written above that average reading level could compromise your patients' level of understanding.

Get ideas from your patients — what do they want to know?

Are there certain procedures that patients inquire about more than others? If so, that would be a great place to start planning your content. Frequently Asked Questions, or FAQs, are a great way to add content to your website, while also answering common patient questions.

The more content, the better.

You want to establish yourself as an expert in your field. The best way to do that is to add good content and keep it updated. The more quality information you can give your patients, the better. Make sure your content is robust and unique—don't keep repeating the same content over and over, as you will only create competition against yourself that way. For a great example of in-depth, unique content, look at the website for the Cleveland Clinic. They

cover a wide range of conditions and treatment options, and each article is unique.

Consider starting a blog to expand outward.

Once you've covered all of your specialties, a blog can be a great way to keep putting content out on a regular basis. With a blog, you can cover a wide range of topics outside of your primary offerings. Your primary content should cover the procedures and services you offer, but blog posts can cover other related areas that your patients might be interested in, like injury prevention, pre-workout stretches, or diet. Also, if you have social media pages for your practice, a blog gives you content to share there.
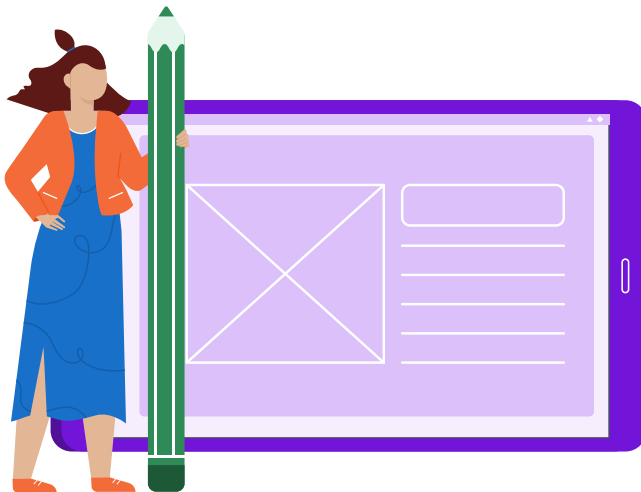
Don't limit yourself to just text.

While we often use the word "content" to refer to text (and text is the most critical aspect of your content), don't feel like you have to limit yourself to just that. If you think that something would be better explained with visuals, try adding a video or an infographic to supplement the text on the page. An infographic combines images and text, allowing you to explain a topic at a glance, without a lot of reading. Videos can also be a way to engage with patients, giving the content a more personal touch, while still allowing you to explain a topic and provide images if needed.

These are just some guidelines to get you started. When it comes to content, the bottom line is to keep your patients in mind. Put yourself in their shoes: if you were a patient, or researching to find a new doctor, what would you want to see? If you create content with that mindset, you should see positive results.

Of course, content is just one way that you can help to drive traffic to your website. Online ads are another effective way of driving traffic to your practice's website, and they can work very well if you already have great content in place. But where should you focus your efforts--online

ads or SEO? In the next chapter, we'll weigh out the advantages and disadvantages of each.

To see how much of an impact content can have on a site's traffic and ultimately, your number of patient appointments, see our case study on content marketing in the Case Studies section.

Chapter 5

Advertising vs. SEO

You need to boost traffic to your website and get more appointments from patients, but do you focus on online ads or search engine optimization (SEO)? What is the difference, and which is better? We'll break it down for you so that you can make the best decision for your practice.

Online Ads

With online ads, you have a few different options. You can pay for ads to run on search engine results pages, or you can run ads on social media.

Paid search ads are the ads you see along the top of search results pages on search engines like Google. Your ads target specific keywords related to your practice that your target audience would use when searching for your services. The ads link to your website, and you are only charged when someone clicks on your ad. When setting up a paid search campaign, like Google Ads, you place bids on the keywords you want to target. You can set your budget, and set the amount of money you are willing to bid on a single click for a particular keyword.
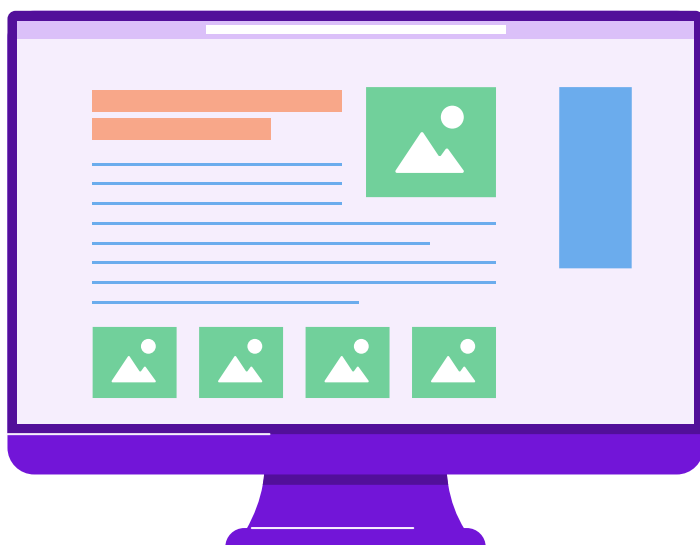
Social media ads are similar, but they run in the news feeds of social networks like Facebook and Instagram. They look very much like a regular social media post. Like paid search ads, you only pay when someone clicks on a link to your site or takes another desired action. Unlike paid search ads, though, they aren't dependent on searches. Instead, you target people based on certain attributes, like location, age, interests, etc. This can be great for building awareness if you opened a new location or added a new procedure or service.

Advantages

- Online ads are a quick way to drive traffic to your website. This is great for brand-new websites to help get exposure, or if you want to start getting patients in the door for a particular procedure right away.

- You can set your ads so that you only pay if a person clicks on it. (Facebook also has an option to pay per impression--i.e., paying every time a user sees your ad--but we do not recommend this option if the goal is to get patients to your website.)

- If your marketing budget is at least $1000 per month, you can get a strong return on your investment. (This amount will vary

depending on your market, but prepare a decent budget in order to see results.)

- You have the ability to target your ads to your intended audience. This helps ensure that your ads reach the right people. You can also target specific locations and schedule ads for specific days and times.

- The data from your ad campaigns can be very useful for your marketing efforts. You can quickly and easily test and make changes to your campaigns, messaging, website content, etc.

Disadvantages

- If you don't have a high enough budget, your ad campaigns may not yield the results you want.

- Not every person who clicks on your ad will become a new patient. Some will click through to your site, then navigate away.

- There is a learning curve. You may need to test out different things and tweak the campaign along the way until you find what works for your practice.

- Some locations and keywords (for paid search ads) can be very competitive, which

can drive up the cost per click. For example, if your practice is located in a large city like New York, you are likely to have more competition and may need to have a higher budget to get the visibility you want.

- Once you end your ad campaign, the traffic that you were getting will stop.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

The goal of SEO is to boost your website's rankings in organic search results, rather than paying for ads. For an orthopedic or spine practice, that means creating custom content for your website based on keywords you want to target. Essentially, you need to be able to explain the services you provide and the procedures you perform in a way that your patients can easily understand. Not only are you demonstrating what sets you apart from your competitors, you are providing useful information that allows potential patients to make an informed decision about their care.

Advantages

- Unlike advertising, SEO doesn't have to be an ongoing process. While you should revisit your SEO efforts periodically to

make sure you are keeping up with the constant changes of search engines, you don't necessarily have to consistently pay for SEO year-round to see a return on your investment.

- SEO has longer-lasting results than online ads. Because the custom content stays on your website, you can continue to reap the benefits long after you initially put it up.

- Patients may be more likely to click organic search results, rather than ads. Patients want to find the information they need without feeling like you are trying to sell them on something.

- SEO is often more cost-effective in the long-run than advertising.

Disadvantages

- SEO is a long-term investment—you won't get the instant results that you would with an ad campaign. It will take time to get search engines to recognize your content and build your rankings.

- Search engines are often changing their algorithms, which can affect your rankings. You'll need to revisit and adjust your SEO efforts periodically and stay on top of

algorithm changes to make sure you don't lose out on ranking.

- In highly competitive areas, it may be difficult to gain ranking in organic search.

- Search engine results pages have evolved considerably over the years, and continue to do so. There are a lot more elements to pay attention to than there used to be. With ads, map listings, and other "knowledge boxes" taking up the top section of the page, users have to scroll down to see the regular search results.

Why Not Have Both? (If Your Budget Allows)

Online ads and SEO each have advantages and disadvantages, but by combining the two, you can get the best of both worlds. Ads are a great way to quickly and easily bring in traffic and get the ball rolling. It may take a bit of testing to figure out what works for your practice, but you can easily make adjustments to your campaign as needed. On the other hand, SEO can deliver more long-lasting results and qualified leads. These two marketing techniques can compliment each other when used simultaneously.

However, budgetary limitations can sometimes make it impossible to do both online ads and SEO at the same time. In that case, weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each in relation to your practice's needs. With that said, ad campaigns tend to be more successful when you have the right content in place. If your website is lacking on the content front, we'd recommend starting there, even if it's just creating a landing page for your ad campaign.

Now that you have a better understanding of some of the ways you can market your practice, we'll show you how to determine which methods work the best for you.

Chapter 6

Measure Your Results

For the data hungry among us, knowing the key metrics we need to measure is crucial to the decision-making process. Unfortunately, focusing on the wrong metrics can wreak havoc with your marketing effectiveness.

In marketing / business terms, we're looking for our key performance indicator (KPI).

So, is search engine ranking or website traffic the true KPI?

Neither.

The fact is that we in the marketing industry have touted these metrics because they're so easy to obtain. The factors that an orthopedic

or spine practice needs to measure most include the number of patients and overall patient satisfaction. The number of procedures or the number of referrals from primary care physicians might also factor in.

Website analytics and search engine optimization (SEO) software are unable to deliver those metrics, so marketers pull out the numbers they have in order to show progress.

As the person responsible for growing your practice, you need to remember that these numbers fit in a larger context that must ultimately tie into your objectives. If those metrics don't relate, then you need to get rid of them.

Let's talk about how ranking and traffic should fit into your marketing strategy.

Search Engine Ranking

Getting your website to rank for terms that are highly relevant to your practice is a valuable way of attracting attention from the right patients. (We're classifying the "right patients" as the patients that are a good fit for your practice's specialties.) By providing information that answers your patients' most common questions, you'll be well on your way to content that search engines love to prominently display.

Your work will both educate patients and help them in the decision-making process.

Here's the drawback of search engine ranking and why you need to press your marketing group a bit more for the context of your ranking. If you rank #1 for a keyword that no one uses in search engines, then you're not actually improving your practice.

This is especially problematic in healthcare or any other highly technical field with complex terminology. For example, patients are not as likely to search for the term *anterior cruciate ligament surgery* as they are *ACL surgery*. If you have the top-ranked site for *anterior cruciate ligament surgery* but do not rank for *ACL surgery*, then you are going to miss the opportunity for patients to contact you. This is also true of spine surgery terminology, which may be too difficult for the average person to remember.

When you see your keyword rankings, always ask yourself how likely it is for your patients to know that terminology and use it in Google.

Website Traffic

In the same way that ranking can be misleading or useless, website traffic can have the same issues. If your practice focuses on total joint

replacements, then attracting readers for an article about arthroscopic ACL repairs is worthless. More than that, off-topic content could confuse and drive away patients who are looking for a surgeon to perform a total joint replacement.

Site traffic especially becomes an issue when creating a pay-per-click (PPC) advertising campaign. In a PPC campaign, your ad targeting can be narrowly focused or can have a broad reach to help increase your branding awareness. Without close monitoring, however, a broad reach can turn into attracting the wrong site visitors entirely.

For example, if your practice treated spine injuries, and you had a term like "back brace" as a broad search term in your campaign, visitors who were looking to buy a back brace might end up on your website. That visitor is looking to make a purchase, not book an appointment.

Traffic without the right context is likely a waste of your money.

When Ranking and Traffic Work Correctly

In the right context, your website ranks for common keywords that patients associate with your practice. More specifically, pages

that answer patients' questions about the desired topic rank in search engines. When that happens, patients are able to attain the knowledge they need right away, increasing the likelihood that they will want to know more about you.

Closely related to that topic of ranking is your website traffic, which will only increase as you increase the relevancy of your content to answer patients' questions. Search engines will send you more web visitors, and—in time—so will other websites. Writers are always looking for reliable sources to refer to their readers in matters of health and exercise, and a healthcare practice ranks up there pretty quickly as a reliable source.

Traffic from referring websites can become a substantial part of your traffic if you are providing information on hot topics for your field.

Review your ranking and your traffic. They are both important metrics for the success of your practice, but always remember that the number and quality of patients are the true standards for your marketing success.

Taking Your Tracking to the Next Level

Conversion or goal tracking is one way to make sure that you evaluate your ranking and traffic stats in the right context. When you have data on your conversions, you can start to compare the cost of each marketing channel with the amount of procedures and appointments you got from each channel. When you can prove the ROI of your practice's marketing efforts, you'll be better equipped to help your practice spend its marketing budget wisely, and it will be easier to get practice partners to invest in marketing.

If you have goal tracking set up in your analytics account for important actions on your website, you can get a better sense of how many patients reached out to your practice after visiting your website. These actions might include:

- Phone calls from your website (more on that below)

- Appointment request form submissions

- Online appointment scheduling (if available)

- Contact form submissions

Just be sure to use a HIPAA compliant analytics tool to track these kinds of interactions. This means free tools like Google Analytics likely won't fit the bill. Historically, there hasn't been much guidance on analytics tracking for healthcare providers, but the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services issued a bulletin in December 2022 stating that tracking tools like Google Analytics are not HIPAA compliant. That said, there are some paid analytics tools out there that are compliant. Before you sign a contract with an analytics vendor, make sure they can attest to HIPAA compliance and are willing to sign a Business Associate Agreement (BAA).

Call Tracking

If you use a call tracking service like CallRail, you can even see how many patients called your practice after looking at your website and other advertising methods. Call tracking replaces your practice's actual phone number with a special tracking phone number that automatically forwards to your practice's phone line. You can use call tracking on your website, your online ads, and even print ads. By using a different tracking number for each marketing channel, you can connect those calls to actual appointments and see which marketing channels are the most effective in getting patients to call. Like your analytics tool, you'll want to make sure you are using a HIPAA compliant service.

Online Form Submissions

If you don't have appointment request forms on your website, you should. Patients have come to expect this type of service from their healthcare providers, and having this option could increase the number of patients you get from your online marketing. Your website provider should be able to help you get HIPAA-compliant forms on your website and a means of easily accessing form data. Appointment request forms not only give you another way

to book more appointments, but also give you another means of tracking conversions.

Goal Tracking

Ideally, you should be able to tie online call tracking and form data into your analytics data. Your website provider should work with you to ensure that you have all of the proper tracking codes on your site to get the data you need. If your website provider also handles your analytics, make sure that it is possible to tie in conversions from both call tracking and form submissions. This will allow you to quickly and easily see how many website visits actually resulted in appointments.

These more advanced tracking methods allow you to connect the dots so that you can get a true sense of what is working for your practice and what is not.

Conclusion

Now that you've got an understanding of the basics of online marketing, you've got a good foundation of knowledge to build an effective online marketing strategy. This will help you get the right patients in the door, whether they were referred by someone else, or have never heard of you before.

Test out different strategies to find out what works best for your practice, and keep in mind that it can take some time – and trial and error – before you get the results you want.

Some orthopedic and spine practices may be able to manage their online marketing efforts in-house, but if you need any assistance, we offer several different online marketing services to meet your practice's needs. Give us a call – we'd be happy to help!

Appendix

Resources

Glossary

These are some of the terms associated with online marketing that we've used throughout this e-book.

Comment Spam

Comment spam occurs when advertisers post unsolicited advertisements in the comment section of blog posts and other online forums. Links to a particular page are a factor in ranking in Google search, and it was thought that this tactic was a way to game the system. However, this tactic no longer works as search engines can spot comment spam. This tactic is best avoided.

Hidden Links

Hidden links are another deceptive tactic used to manipulate search rankings. Examples of hidden links include using white text on a white background, placing the linked text behind an image, positioning linked text offscreen, setting the font size to zero, or hiding the link on a small character like a punctuation mark. The link is there, but it isn't easily seen. This tactic violates Google's guidelines and can actually hurt you in the long run.

Keyword Stuffing

Keyword stuffing is adding a bunch of keywords to a webpage to try to improve site ranking. This is different from writing an around a particular topic or keyword in that keyword stuffing often happens out of context--the keywords don't appear in a way that people normally speak. This may include a list of keywords on the page or repetition of a particular phrase to the point that it becomes unnatural. This tactic is ineffective and not recommended.

Meta Tag

A meta tag is a special HTML tag that contains information about a web page and keywords that represent the page's content. Many search

engines use this information when displaying content in search results.

Pay-Per-Click (PPC)

Pay-per-Click (PPC), or paid search, encompasses the 'sponsored results' that appear both above and to the right of the 'organic results' on the search engine results page. These efforts hinge on relevancy between and organization of user search, advertiser keywords, and advertiser ad aspects.

Search Engine Marketing (SEM)

Search Engine Marketing (SEM) refers to a set of online tactics utilized to increase the amount of search engine-generated website traffic. SEM consists of two collaborative tactics: Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Pay-per-Click (PPC), which focus on relevant website links and advertisements respectively.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) involves the execution of website modifications to promote higher search engine result rankings. Implementation involves three primary areas: on-page content, back-end structure, and off-site link building. SEO is a continual process

with direct value placed on both site updates and competitive considerations.

Case Studies

Streamlined site design leads to big wins for children's practice

● Pre Website Redesign   ● Post Website Redesign

↑ 162%

250
200
150
100
0

Jan   Feb   Mar   Apr   May
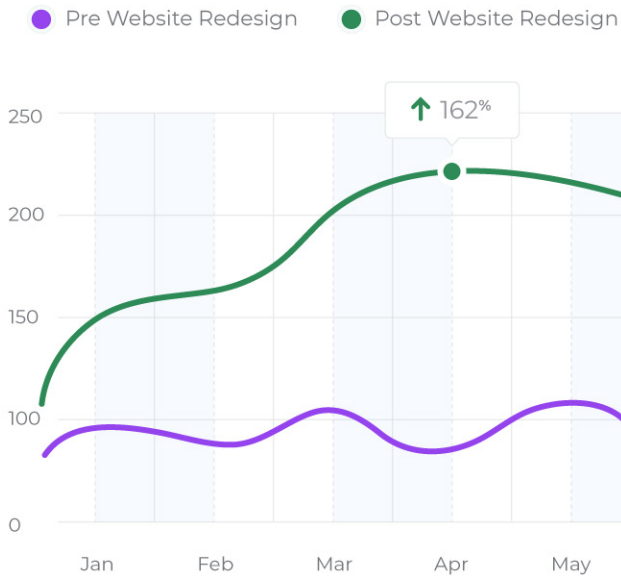
Our client, a multidisciplinary orthopedic practice treating children, adolescents, and young adults, needed to make their website more productive and functional for patients and their families.

Our team built a responsive website on our P3 Publish platform and included an Appointment Request button in a prominent location in the header of the website, making it available on every page.

Since the new website has gone live, our client has nearly doubled the monthly appointment requests on their website while maintaining relatively similar amounts of traffic. This means the site is now twice as efficient in obtaining patient appointment requests.

Content marketing leads to increased online appointments
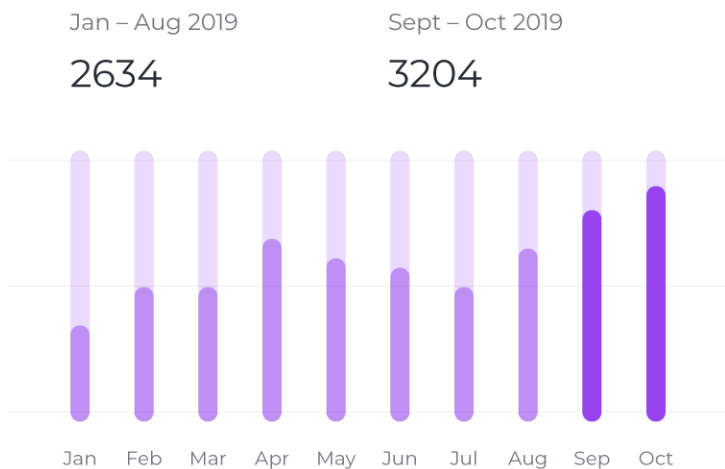
Jan – Aug 2019

2634

Sept – Oct 2019

3204

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct

Website Traffic Increased by ↑ **20**%

Our client, a large multispecialty orthopedic practice in the Augusta area, wanted to improve their website's search engine optimization and increase the number of patients visiting their new website.

Our team created unique content about their specialties to add to the website. Our goal was to educate patients and highlight the expertise of the practice's physicians, while significantly improving their search engine optimization.

In about 6 months, traffic to the practice's website increased by 20%, and the number of new patient appointments requested through their website doubled. This indicates that the content on their site is attracting more qualified patients who are ready to make appointments.

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Chapter 4

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

About P3

The P3 Practice Marketing team has worked with orthopedic, neurology, and spine practices since 1998. We understand the business of running a medical and surgical practice. We know the pressures CMS regulations and payers place on you, and we understand the need to balance managing a business with providing the very best patient care.

That is why we offer more than typical marketing agencies. We know that for you to thrive, your patients need to be able to find you online, tell their friends about you, and learn about you from referring physicians. Our specialty is providing the tools and expertise you need to make that happen.

When you talk to the folks at P3, you can rest assured that we understand you. We can focus on solving your marketing and business challenges, rather than taking the time to understand the procedures your practice offers. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions via our website, p3practicemarketing.com or by giving us a call at 504-581-4636.