

Use Your Web Site to Get More Patients

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Growing a chiropractic practice depends on comprehensive, integrative and varied marketing efforts. Like many practitioners, you may be experiencing a decrease in business for your practice that could be causing some economic difficulties. However, now is not the time to decrease or eliminate your marketing budget. In fact, when the down economy hits your practice the hardest, it's a vital to place more emphasis on your marketing efforts to reach new patients and grow referrals to your practice.

The Internet gives today's chiropractors a dynamic way to reach a vast audience. The key to any successful Internet strategy starts with a professional practice Web site and a local Internet marketing plan. An attractive, functional Web site can be inexpensive (less than \$1,000), and when designed and built properly, can offer you a better return-on-investment than almost any other form of marketing available today. Your site should include basic information about your practice, including doctor bios, services, patient-education materials and the ability to request an appointment online. It should also encompass a call to action on every page so you can capture new visitor information.

Building a Web site without a local search-engine marketing strategy is like building a car without an engine. You need to drive online users to your site if you want to attract new patients. The Internet is one of the first places patients turn to find medical information. You can benefit from this trend by developing a professional Web site with a targeted search-engine marketing campaign that will attract new patients in your area. How does search marketing work? There are three techniques that will get your ad a top-of-page position in search engines:

First, no matter how much time and energy you dedicate to designing and building your site, you must implement advanced Search Engine Optimization (SEO) techniques if you want to get noticed by major Internet search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing. Without SEO, your Web site will be hard to find locally when relevant search terms are entered into the search engines, resulting in little to no Web exposure for your practice. SEO methods like keyword analysis, copywriting, title tags, meta tags and link-building will augment your Web site's performance and allow you to retain a high position in the major search-engine results pages.

A focused pay-per-click (PPC) strategy is another key component of search-engine marketing. It allows you to specifically target your advertisements to prospective patients at the exact moment they search for keywords that you identify as relevant, such as *chiropractor* or *back pain*. You only pay when a patient clicks on your ad. Measuring your return on investment is simple using either automated e-mail or phone-tracking mechanisms. A local pay-per-click strategy can significantly increase traffic to your Web site in a short period of time and, when your campaign is well-constructed, it will convert those visitors into new patients

Finally, as more and more people are searching for local businesses online, obtaining a listing in the Local Business Center (LBC) or Google Maps for your practice can be a powerful new tool for driving prospective patients to your Web site. Online services are available for submitting and verifying your practice information to Google, Yahoo and major directories, such as InfoUSA. While

you have little control over the order of the listings, auditing your practice information throughout the Web, combined with additional profile pages and patient reviews, will increase your likelihood of ranking higher in the listings.

During an economic downturn, your practice can flourish with a dedicated Internet marketing plan aimed at advancing and optimizing your Web site. Patients are online. In fact, last month alone in Google the search volume for the word *chiropractor* and its different variations exceeded three million hits. These results provide further testament that with a professionally designed Web site and focused local search-marketing strategies, you can undoubtedly increase your online visibility and drive new patients to your practice.