

Are You Google Ready?

by David Evans, OD, PhD, MBA



Answers to your most pressing questions about Internet marketing

Over the past year, Google, Bing and other search engines have launched a record-breaking number of changes to their search algorithms. Countless surgeons have come to me with questions regarding these changes. Below are answers to some of the most important questions.

Q: Why are newcomers outranking me on Google?

A: Search engines rank websites, not surgeons. Frustrating as it may be, when it comes to SEO, it doesn't matter that you are an experienced, reputable surgeon. What matters is that you follow Google's constantly changing rules; otherwise, your website won't rank well in the search results pages. A newcomer can easily outrank you if he or she has an effective, search engine-friendly website. To determine what you can do to regain your rankings, consider hiring an experienced Internet marketing firm to analyze your website and SEO strategy.

Q: What is the best way to evaluate an SEO firm?

A: Start by looking at your rankings. Go to Google and type in some keywords that pertain to your practice. Does your website appear on the first page of the search listings? If not, you have a problem. Next, take a look at your analytics program to see if your website is attracting more visitors from your target market over time. If it's not, you may need to alter your SEO strategy — and potentially the company handling it.

Q: My Website ranks well so why am I not converting Visitors to Consultations?

A: Just because your SEO firm is doing well with your SEO doesn't mean that they are good website designers. It also doesn't mean that they are capable of designing a premium eye care website that converts visitors to patients. It is very important that you keep website design and marketing in mind when selecting an Internet marketing firm.

Q: What are "Panda" and "Penguin"?

A: Panda is a change Google made to its algorithm in 2011. It was the first to affect entire websites. Panda penalized websites with too much similar or duplicate content. Penguin is a second change to Google's algorithm. Launched in 2012, this update was aimed at eradicating "over-optimization." Scores of

Q: Is my website's content important?

A: Yes, very important. In fact, it's just as important as your website design. If your website contains duplicate content or content that is too similar to content on other websites, your rankings will suffer. Duplicate content is also objectionable to website visitors and reduces the chances of them calling or emailing you. People visiting your website are looking for information that is distinctive, not information they can find anywhere. Do a test: copy a sentence from your website, paste it into the Google search box and press enter. If other websites with the same content appear, that's a problem. In addition, if you hired an Internet marketing firm to write your content, ensure you own it so that you can reuse it should you decide to switch to another firm.

About the author

David Evans, PhD, MBA, is the CEO of Ceatus Media Group, based in San Diego, California. A recognized authority on Internet medical marketing strategies, Evans has spoken at meetings of the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgeons, the American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, among others. He can be reached at dwevans@ceatus.com.