

IN DEPTH: Follow the Leader: Lead Tracking 101

by David Evans, PhD, MBA



You have to be in it to win it, and when it comes to marketing, online is increasingly where it's at.

Business Insider recently reported that US digital advertising expenditures are exploding. While TV advertising still makes up 42% of the market, online is now inching up, at 38%. Print and other forms of media are lagging behind the fray.

So how can you tell if your online marketing strategies are producing the results you're looking for? It's all about smart lead tracking.

What Is Smart Lead Tracking?

Your online marketing efforts start with your website. Make sure you're using Google Analytics software to track all relevant metrics. The good news is that it's free!

But there's more to lead tracking than looking at the individual metrics from Google Analytics. Yes, this tool provides statistics for an array of factors—including visitors, clicks, and referrers—but each must be kept in perspective to provide any real value.

For example, many practices focus on statistics for website visitors, but visitors are not all created equal. Facebook is notorious for sending a ton of visitors to your website, but they don't stay long enough to really matter. As Business Insider puts it:

"Advertising on Google is like advertising in a store: Potential customers tell you what they want to buy, and you then show them ads to help them narrow down their choice and buy it. Advertising on Facebook, meanwhile, is like advertising at a party. You might reach the right people, but they may not be in the mood to even think about buying."

So when analyzing website visitors, pay close attention to where they're coming from so you can get a better idea about where you are at.

Also consider how long your visitors hang out on your site and how many pages they view. The longer a visitor stays, the more likely he or she is to become a customer (or in this case, a patient).

If You Lead Them, They Will Come

Many practices ask new patients, "How did you hear about us?" Patients often respond with something like, "Jane referred me." Practices mark this down as a simple word-of-mouth referral, but it isn't that simple. Your patient probably received referrals to other surgeons from other friends, too. How did she decide where to schedule a consultation? Most likely, she started by Googling you and other surgeons, and found your websites. But she probably also found a number of educational websites, society websites, directories, and even doctor review sites. If she saw you on any or all of these sites, this likely made an impression. The more places someone sees your practice's name online, the more likely he or she will be to come in for a consultation.

Don't Take "Jane" for an Answer

Ask the patient a few extra, more

pointed questions, such as:

Did you see our website?
Did you review other information online?
Which other websites did you visit?

Identifying which Internet sources were used, in conjunction with the statistics information from your website, creates a much clearer picture of how, or if, your online marketing dollars are working.

Tracking Numbers

There are also other ways to track leads. Call tracking numbers can be game-changers. These numbers tell you precisely how many calls you received from a given online advertising source. More is not merrier. The volume of calls is not as important as their quality. So record your calls. Then, listen to the calls to determine which ones are actual leads. For example, a caller who schedules a consultation is different from one who only asks about the price of a procedure. The former is a solid lead; the latter has potential, but for the time being is just a phone call. If you don't listen to your calls, you might come to the mistaken conclusion that both calls were solid leads. Data from Ceatus Media Group shows only about 20% to 30% of calls are actual leads.

Tracking Websites/Landing Pages

A tracking website or landing page is similar to a tracking phone number. These are pages that track people entering your website from online ads. They allow you to pinpoint where e-mails and calls originate from (ads, directories, etc).

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If all of your ads send people to your website (ie, not to a tracking website or landing page), it can be hard to track your leads. If you do use a tracking website or landing page, be sure that neither of them has the same content as other pages you have placed online (ie, pages on your existing website). If you're not careful about using "unique" content, Google may penalize your site(s), as it only wants to return unique results to searchers. If there are multiple copies of the same content online, Google could simply prevent some or all of them from showing up in the search results.

Knowing where your leads are coming from (and where they are not coming from) will allow you to refocus your Internet marketing efforts and maximize the return on your investment.

David Evans, PhD, MBA, is the CEO of Ceatus Media Group, based in San Diego. A recognized authority on Internet medical marketing strategies, Evans has spoken at meetings of the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, the European Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery, and the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, among others. He can be reached via PSPeditor@allied360.com.