

The Long and Short of It Long-tail Searches Cast a Small, but Tight Net

By David Evans, PhD, MBA



You would think we would be used to it by now, but Google and other search engines have pulled the carpet out from under us yet again. In the past, expanding your online footprint was as easy as repurposing an article written for your website and posting it on your blog, as a press release, and on all of your social media feeds.

This approach doesn't fly anymore. Even pages that have similar topics may get your site penalized. Today, all content needs to have a unique angle. This makes sense. Why bore prospective patients with the same content everywhere they look?

GO LONG

A long-tail search strategy is based on creating a range of articles about topics that your current and future patients find interesting, not just specific procedure information—aka short-tail searches. Your main

website should provide details of the procedure along with candidacy, recovery, and cost information. These evergreen articles target consumer searches related to one- or two-word search terms such as “facelift,” “rhinoplasty cost,” or “mommy makeover.”

The long-tail strategies, however, incorporate three-, four-, or more-word search phrases. These types of phrases are very specific. Each long-tail phrase has very little search volume on its own, but in the aggregate, they comprise more than 70% of the searches about a topic area, according to SEOmoz.

And, they are the most powerful when it comes to conversion. A consumer who performs a very detailed search—say, “indoor cycling after breast augmentation” or “do breast implants obscure mammogram findings?”—is a lot further along in the deliberation process than someone searching “breast augmentation.”

Here is an example:

Rhinoplasty – short tail

Open Rhinoplasty New Jersey – mid tail

The Benefits of Open Versus Closed Rhinoplasty – long tail

How Long After Rhinoplasty Can I Play Basketball? – long tail

The short- and mid-tail types of articles should appear on your website. This is information that consumers need, but they should not be used on blogs, vlogs, or other mediums. Long-tail topics make for engaging and lively reads and can be more fun to write as well. The specific nature of the topics also makes duplicate content a lot less likely, and we know how search engines feel about duplicate content.

Social media content should also focus on long-tail topics, mixed with fresh information about your practice, such as a picture of your staff at the holiday party, a post about a recent speaking engagement, or a daily deal or promotion. The goal is to get your fans, friends, or followers to hit, share, or retweet the posts.

The easiest way to develop strategies for long-tail search is to listen to your patients. What types of questions do they ask when getting closer to making a decision about cosmetic surgery?

And that's the short of long-tail searching.

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