

# Turning Clicks Into Consultations

by Rochelle Nataloni, Contributing Editor



## Advanced Internet marketing consists of more than just a pretty page.

It takes more than a passing acquaintance with Internet marketing strategies to thrive in today's competitive refractive cataract surgery market. Even if you have a tech-savvy staff or consultants dedicated to your practice's electronic marketing initiatives, it still helps to have an appreciation of search engine optimization, Google+, and call-to-action terms.

### BECOME AN EXPERT

When it comes to Internet marketing, practice owners and administrators range from neophytes to aficionados, according to Internet marketing pundit and plastic surgeon, Grant Stevens, MD. "Unfortunately, confusion and misconceptions are widespread," he says. Dr. Stevens is the director of Marina Plastic Surgery Associates ([www.marinaplasticsurgery.com](http://www.marinaplasticsurgery.com)) in Marina del Rey, California, and a clinical professor of surgery at the University of Southern California. He attempts to change that problem via his course, "Advanced Internet Marketing: Turning Clicks Into Cash," which Dr. Stevens and a diverse contingent of medical and marketing professionals present at medical meetings across the country to help

attendees prioritize their Internet-earmarked dollars, among other things.

"Internet marketing is not a 'set-it-and-forget-it' proposition," he explains. "People need to be cognizant of their return on investment and build in methods to monitor metrics to verify that what they are doing makes sense." The ultimate aim of the course, Dr. Stevens says, is to make Internet marketing a value-added part of one's practice, rather than something that has to be done simply because the competition is doing it.

According to Dr. Stevens, two of the biggest mistakes that practice owners make when developing a website is focusing on themselves and thinking that, if they throw as much money as possible at the site's design, they will be successful. "When one builds a website, it should not be physician-centric," he says. "All the studies that we've done and that we've seen have confirmed that, when consumers peruse [medical] websites, the number one thing they look at is [procedure-related] photographs, the number two thing they look at is information about the procedure, and the number three thing they look at is cost or financing information. Information about the physician tends to be the fourth or fifth thing they look at, yet when you look at most website designs, they represent a physician-centric or egocentric point of view. There's nothing wrong with including a picture of yourself or the other doctors in your practice, but be aware that, if consumers have the option of clicking on a picture of a doctor or clicking on information about a procedure or information about procedure outcomes, they will almost always click on the procedure-related link. Consumers eventually want to find out about the doctor,

but it's not the most important thing to them. In my specialty, plastic surgery, the consumer spends 70% to 80% of their time viewing photographs of results. In [refractive cataract surgery] they're probably most interested in reading testimonials."

### MORE THAN A PRETTY PAGE

When you spend money on website design, it is easy to get excited about a site that portrays a beautiful, bustling, successful practice. The look of the website is quite insignificant to the overall success of your electronic marketing strategy, however, according to Dr. Stevens. "If you only have \$100 to spend, you should spend \$20 on website design and \$80 on getting found by consumers," he says.

"Unfortunately, most people do just the opposite. Think of it this way: spending tons of time and money building the Taj Mahal of websites is useless if no one can find it."

Being ranked high on search engine sites—particularly Google—is among the most important ways of being found. Regardless of recent changes in Google's algorithm (see *What's up With Google?*), Dr. Stevens notes that what remains the same is that your site has to revolve around the consumers' needs and has to be appealing to search engines, because if it is popular with search engines, then your practice will be found.

Like it or not, according to David W. Evans, PhD, CEO of Ceatus Media Group ([www.ceatus.com](http://www.ceatus.com)), high Google rankings are synonymous with quality. Ceatus is a San Diego-based firm that provides integrated marketing strategies

## Turning Clicks Into Consultations (Continued)

by Rochelle Nataloni, Contributing Editor

to ophthalmology, cosmetic surgery, dentistry, and bariatric surgery practices. Dr. Evans says that, when consumers search for a service in a particular location such as “cataract surgery, Atlanta,” the listings that pop up highest are viewed as the “best,” and those that do not show up until the third or fourth page are considered to be of inferior quality. He says that, even when consumers get a strong word-of-mouth referral from a friend, they tend to look online for more information about the practice. A low ranking on a Google search sends a negative message about the practice.

“The reality is that the business and the ranking of the business are totally independent,” says Dr. Evans. “Google ranks websites; it doesn’t rank quality, but being on the top of Google is associated with quality. It’s not fair, and it’s not reality. But, that’s the way people perceive it. The bottom line is you want to do what it takes to be easily found and you want to be perceived as a practice that provides high quality, and the end game for both of those goals is a high Google ranking.”

Optimizing a site by incorporating terms that are popular with search engines is key to being seen, but that is only part of the process, he says. “Ranking high on search engine sites leads to clicks, but you don’t attract business just by getting people to look at your website,” Dr. Evans explains. “You’ve got to get them in the door. You have a healthy website if 5% of the people looking at your site contact you.”

It comes down to the point of contact. “I have five different electronic points of contact built into each of my sites: a blog, a coupon, an

e-book, a newsletter subscription form, and a consultation request form,” Dr. Evans continues. “Our market research shows that 80% of contacts by prospective patients are [made via] the phone even when they are looking at the website; only 20% of the website traffic reaches out [to the practice] electronically.” Ceatus’ market research also found that when practices do not respond to an electronic query within 24 hours, the odds of that person coming in for a consultation decreases by 50%.

“For the people who respond electronically, it is compelling that you get back to them that moment or soon thereafter; otherwise, the lead is wasted,” Dr. Stevens says. “If you don’t have dedicated or educated people answering the phones, all of the time and money spent on Internet marketing is useless.”

### POINT OF CONTACT

In the world of premium IOLs, the term conversion refers to the process through which a cataract patient opts for a premium IOL instead of a conventional monofocal implant. In the Internet marketing world, the same term refers to when an online consumer makes contact with a business or practice and schedules a consultation. Bobby Hewitt of CreativeThirst, LLC, (<http://creativethirst.com>), is an expert on the optimization of conversion rates. His blog, Marketing Conversion Rate Optimization (<http://creativethirst.com/blog>), and his professional imperative are one and the same. The firm is based in Rochelle Park, New Jersey. Its website promises to optimize your conversion rate and get measurable results with continuous improvements by combining web analytics and persuasive web design.

Like Dr. Stevens, Mr. Hewitt says it all comes down to your conversion rate. “Conversion is not just about selling,” he argues. “It’s about getting your visitor to take an action that is valuable to your business, and it starts with the question, what are your business goals? What do you want visitors to your site to do that supports your business revenue model? Conversions can include signing up for your newsletter, taking a survey, downloading a PDF, watching a video, buying a product, requesting information, sharing some of your content with a friend, or any action that ties back to your business goal.”

He says that—regardless of the differences in markets, products, or customers—the key to improving any site conversion rate can be clearly broken down into the following factors: analytics/testing, customer insight, usability, momentum, and trust/credibility. “By improving any one of these five factors, you will have a better website, but when all of these factors are combined and directed toward the goals of your site that are in harmony with the goals of the visitors, your conversion rate can experience massive gains,” Mr. Hewitt comments.

David W. Evans, PhD, MBA, is CEO of Ceatus Media Group LLC in San Diego, California. Ceatus Media Group LLC is an online health media company providing specialized information for consumers, and connecting doctors with prospective patients. Dr. Evans may be reached at (858) 454-5505; [devans@ceatus.com](mailto:devans@ceatus.com).