



YOUR PRACTICE ONLINE STRATEGY KEY POINTS AND STRATEGIC ELEMENTS

Prepared For

Development Manager Program
Abbott Medical Optics Inc.

By

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Why is Google Important?

Whether valid or not, consumers associate quality with visibility on Google. If you or your practice information is not easily available to consumers when they search online, it can negatively impact your practice image *even* for those consumers who have had a word-of-mouth referral.

This is a True Story

Several months ago, I was on my way to Boston and a friend recommended an Italian restaurant in the Back Bay area. I didn't write down the name because I figured I would "Google" it when I arrived.

And I tried. Unfortunately, it wasn't so straightforward. I searched "Italian restaurants in Boston." Nothing jogged my memory. I continued with other search terms including "top restaurants in Boston", "Italian restaurants in the Back Bay," and "Top Italian restaurants in the Back Bay."



Still nothing.

So how good could this restaurant really be? Other restaurants appeared – they must be better...

I had fallen into a classic and all too common trap. I am in the Internet marketing business, and I **know** that the quality of the food in a top Italian restaurant in Boston has zero relationship to where the restaurant's website appears in Google's search results.

And yet, high visibility on Google communicates quality to the consumer — even to an informed, Internet savvy one like me.

Restaurant information is one thing, however, the impact of this mindset is even greater for consumers searching for health information online - and this includes eye surgery procedures.

Did You Know that...

Fully 84 percent of Internet users have sought health care information online during the last year. Fifty-two percent are not only looking for themselves, but also for health information for others.

Google commands 70 percent of the search market share, making it ***the most important*** search engine for eye surgeon practice marketing.

Google is a noun, a verb and really, a cultural phenomenon. And if you are not paying attention to your rankings on Google, prospective patients may not pay any attention to you or your practice.

Your Website is Your First Impression

Your Website is often the first impression a prospective patient has of you and your practice. Although there are many interrelating factors that give a website synergy, the website of a premium practice must first and foremost be visually attractive. It should contain content that is highly educational and provide an effective avenue for converting patients with a prominent call to action. The website design and programming code must make it easy for prospective patients to contact the practice. A common mistake is putting the practice's contact information and phone number in only one place (i.e. on the contact page), when it should be prominently presented around the site.



Clean Marketing Message

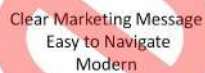
The website's marketing message should be clean and clear. What is vision correction really about? Independence from glasses and contact lenses means an enhanced lifestyle. Enhanced vision is about being able to ski without glasses or play tennis at night. Often practices decide to feature the doctor or its technology on the web site, but this information does not resonate as deeply with patients. Patients want to know "How does this eye surgery benefit me?" While it is important that the doctor is highly educated, it should not be the focus. A well written and executed marketing message captures the patient's interest and then clearly provides the reasons why they should choose you.

Easy to Navigate

Websites should also be easy to navigate and while this seems like a simple task, practices lose prospective patients all the time by having a website that does not easily allow the patient to seek the information they need, and quickly. An analysis of your Google analytics can help determine if your prospective patients are finding your site difficult to navigate. Other features that can be

Other Factors to Consider

Before



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Clean Marketing Message
Easy to Navigate
Modern

The key is to present all components of the website in a unified and streamlined, yet attractive, package. To be effective, the website must create a positive impression for the practice *and* help to convert website visitors to consultations and surgery. A website that generates interest in a procedure, but does not effectively convert the visitors to consultations, is essentially building patient volume for your competitors.

Promoting the Website

A number of different methods exist to promote the website online. It does no good to have a great website that prospective patients can't easily find and never see. The most common ways to promote the website are Search Engine Optimization, Pay Per Click Advertising and Eye Surgeon Directories.

Search Engine Optimization

Search engine optimization (SEO) has become the key means of Internet Marketing Visibility. An entire industry has developed around the study of how to achieve high rankings on the search engines. Theoretically it is a simple thing: the practice website must be made compatible with a search engine's algorithm so that the practice's website appears highly ranked in the search results.

However, search engines use unique and highly confidential algorithms to rank websites. Something called "crawlers" or "spiders" review websites and score the websites based on a number of variables. When a user searches for a keyword (eg "LASIK"), the search engine runs the query through its algorithm and creates a list of relevant websites based on the algorithm.



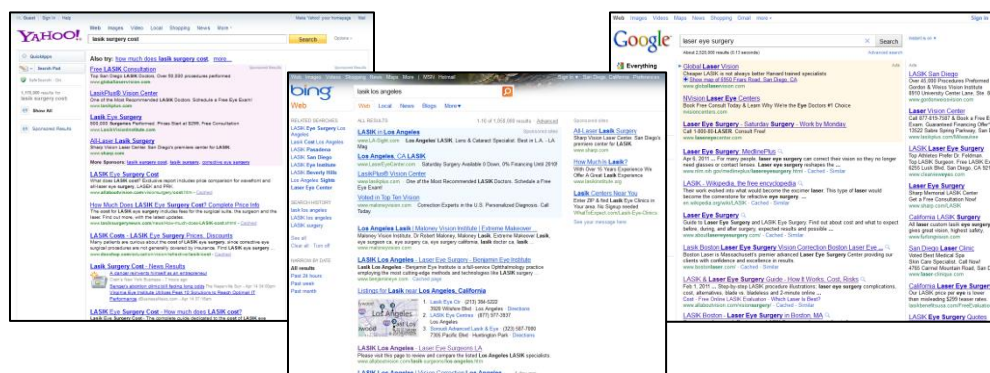
A select number of results that come up as a result of this type of search are referred to as *organic*. Six out of seven Internet users click on these organic listings according to Jupiter Research, which are perceived by consumers as highly credible. These searches drive substantial traffic to websites and provide long-term visibility for the websites that rank for these terms.

Take the SEO Visibility Test

To evaluate the SEO of your website, act as if you are a consumer trying to learn more about LASIK or premium cataract surgery and do some searches on Google. If you cannot easily find information about you and your practice, then neither can prospective patients and you may need an SEO boost!!

Optimizing By Search Terms

In order to implement an effective optimization strategy, the practice must establish the key word focus of the strategy. First, the practice should be optimized by its name and appear in the search results in response to a search for the doctor name or practice name. This type of optimization is very important to support word-of-mouth referrals. Second, for consumers who are not familiar with the practice, but are in the same area, the site should appear in the search results for terms (e.g., LASIK Los Angeles, Cataract Surgery in Des Moines) that include location. A search engine optimization strategy that is best for the practice should focus on more specific localized search terms, i.e., procedure and market.



When a consumer searches a generic term, such as “LASIK Surgery,” numerous large sites will appear in the results, such as Wikipedia, FDA, All About Vision, Refractive Surgery News, etc. It is difficult for a practice to compete with the credibility of these large sites. Since late 2010, Google’s algorithm ranks one or two local doctors on the first page for a generic search term. However, it is extremely difficult to obtain this result and is not a good idea to pursue this type of ranking as a primary strategy. The practice’s website should focus its visibility strategy for the local search terms.

Note that search engine optimization is complicated, and some companies that provide the service might not be experts. It is possible for a website to be damaged if the process is done incorrectly. Google can penalize a website if it believes that there is undue manipulation taking place with the SEO activities, such as duplicate content about the practice on multiple websites.

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

“Pay-per-click” ads also appear when generic and local terms are searched. This is the other side of search engine optimization. If the practice website doesn’t appear on the first page of Google for an organic search, then purchasing pay-per-click advertisements can provide additional visibility. In any case, a pay-per-click ad strategy (if it is in the budget) can act as an adjunct to boost the practice’s online visibility.

Pay-per-click advertising can be relatively easy to implement, drive substantial traffic, and support brand building, however, there are several cons associated with pay-per-click advertising. Click fraud is common; the practice has to pay for clicks that are not legitimate. It can get expensive, and there is no long-term visibility; once your PPC advertising is stopped, your website no longer appears in the search results. The biggest con, however, is that these ads have limited credibility in the eyes of consumers and only one in seven users click on pay-per-click ads, according to Jupiter Research. Your online marketing company can set up the PPC advertising and help to evaluate the ROI. For larger PPC marketing budgets, more than \$2000 a month, it is best to use specialists in this area.

Directories

Directories are another excellent way to build practice awareness online. A good directory can drive substantial traffic to the practice website and generate a significant number of email and phone leads, and dramatically increase practice revenue. Directories can also effectively boost conversion. According to eMarketer, patients are 2/3rds more likely to convert if they have seen the practice in more than one place online.



Think about it, if you are researching a restaurant and can find the restaurant’s website, but the restaurant information is not listed anywhere else online, you may get a little suspicious. This holds true for the premier eye care practitioners. You should be listed in multiple places online to create synergy for your online visibility and branding strategy.

Several factors make a good directory. The directory should rank well for search terms related to the procedure. The directory should have highly credible and high quality content, because this lends credibility to the practice. It should also list only a limited number of doctors and should make it easy for the consumer to contact the practice. And, it should have an ROI equal to above 2 or 3 to 1.

Social Media

Social Media, particularly Facebook, is an important part of the online visibility strategy. Facebook is now the most heavily visited site online and the number of visitors to the site continue to grow rapidly.

The practice should create a Facebook page and routinely update the page with happenings in the practice, local news and eye care related information. The practice should designate a Social Media coordinator who will interact with current and future patients, and build the fan base.

Promotions can be used to build fans, such as discounts on designer sunglasses or free give-a-ways (Starbucks Cards or Gift Certificates).



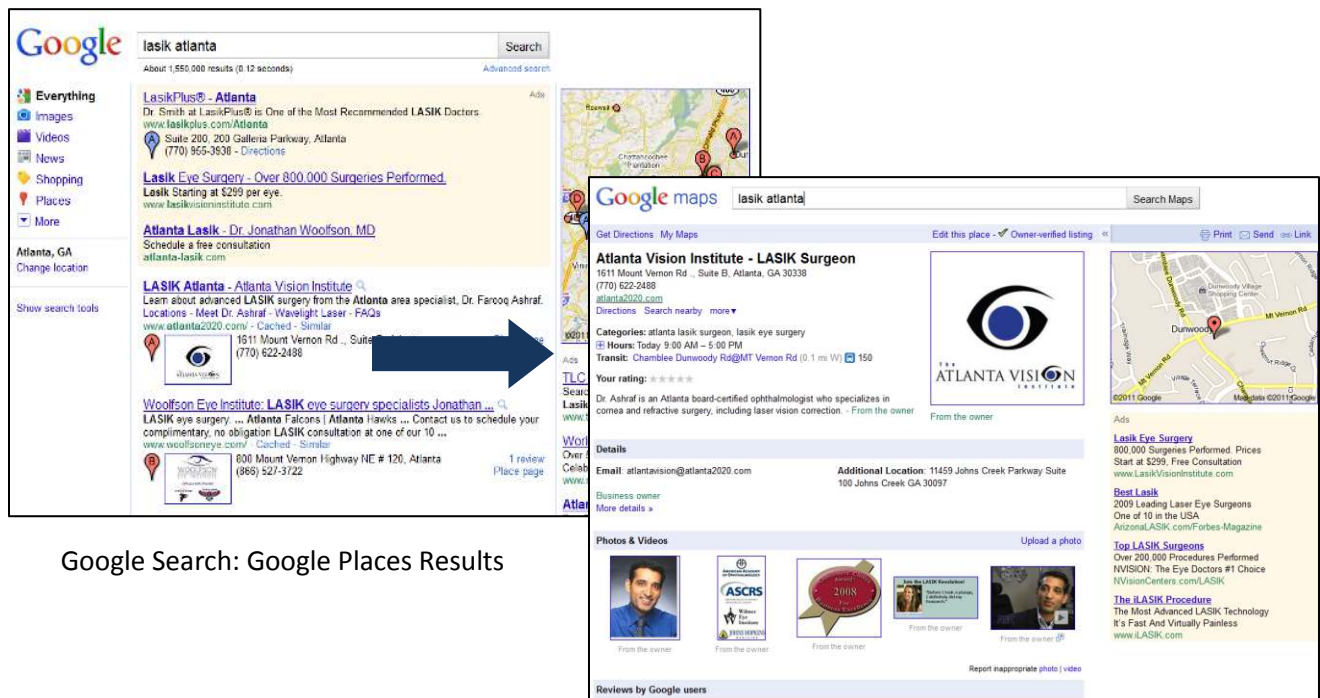
The number of Fans may become important for website rankings. A minimum of 25 Fans are needed in order to obtain a uniquely branded URL. (Keep in mind that the jury is still out on how Social Media and health care research interact. A recent study by Pew Research shows that although participation in Social Media is expanding rapidly, only 11% of Social Media participants have used Facebook or Twitter to conduct research about a procedure or a surgeon.) However, it can still be a meaningful part of your Internet strategy and an effective online marketing company can set up your social media and train your staff on how to interact successfully with Facebook and Twitter.

Google Places

Your Competitors are Already Set up on Google Places – Are You?

Google Places are those thumbnail pictures that show up on the top of the Google search results when a consumer searches for LASIK and cataract surgery related information. If you click on one of those pictures you are linked to a profile of the practice. Google Places were designed to help consumers better research businesses that are “Truly Local,” that is, the consumer already knows what he or she wants and proximity, or location, is a key factor in the purchasing decision. Eye surgery is not really a “Truly Local” business, because consumers will travel over

a wider geographic range to visit a practice and the buying decision is not based primarily on location. But, a presence on Google Places is important for your practice to take advantage of the visibility created by this Google algorithm. Optimization of the Google Places, so they appear prominently in response to the most competitive search terms, can be difficult, particularly in large markets. It is important to implement your Google Places account very carefully because, just as in SEO, improper optimization of Google Places can lead to significant penalties therefore it may be beneficial to consult with a specialist who can obtain dominant visibility for your practice in a given market. If you plan on optimizing the places pages yourself, here are a few tips.



Google Search: Google Places Results

Google Places Profile Page

What To Do

- Establish a Google Account and set up Google Places.
- If you have already established a Google Places page, be sure you “Claim” it. Ensure the address, phone number and other information is consistent with your website
- Input pictures and other information to highlight your practice (if you don’t, Google will choose the pictures at random and you may not like what shows up on your Places page.)

What Not To Do

- Don’t set up more than one Places Page for the same address. If you have multiple doctors and locations, be very careful about how many Places pages are set up and ensure there are significant differences between the pages.

- Don't use a toll free or tracking phone number. (Use a local number from your website.)
- Don't use a title for your Places Page that is different than your practice name.

Reviews and Reputation Management

Online reviews for the practice and the surgeon have become a very important component of practice branding and marketing. It is inevitable that busy, premium practices will have less than flattering reviews. Each practice should have a strategy in place to create momentum for positive reviews. The old adage applies to reviews — patients who are unhappy are much more likely to write a review than the happy and satisfied patients. A process should be in place to encourage patients to create positive reviews.

The First Step is Setting Up a Monitoring System

To manage the reputation of the practice online, it is best to set up a monitoring system by registering for Google Alerts. This lets a practice or a surgeon know when its name is mentioned in the Google index. (Your online marketing company should be able to set this up for you upon request.)



Offsetting Bad Reviews

The best way to offset bad reviews is to place positive information about the surgeon and practice in prominent locations online. Strategies include publishing news releases with positive comments and the use of social media and blogs to optimize the doctor and the practice's name. The best defense is a good offense, i.e., placement of positive reviews for the surgeon and practice in the same rating websites where less than positive reviews exist.

How To Develop Reviews

The best strategy for developing reviews is to focus on those patients who have had a positive result and are very happy with your practice and services. To isolate these patients, send out a post-op survey or provide the survey to patients during post-op follow up visits. Patients who have had a positive result will be most motivated to write the review right after the healing process, when the change in vision is most noticeable.

After you have isolated the patients who are most happy, encourage them to write a review. Ask them if they are already a frequent user of a review site such as Yelp or Google. (Having frequent users of these sites write a review for your practice can be extremely beneficial for your

rankings.) If the patient does not already have an account for one or more of the review sites, then they will need to create an account in order to post a review. To help encourage reviews, patients can be rewarded with discounts on products or services, gift certificates to restaurants, tickets for sporting events or entertainment venues, etc. Some practices enter patients in raffles for much larger gifts as an encouragement to write reviews. Someone in the practice should be available to show patients how to establish an account for the various rating websites if the patient is not aware of the rating sites.

Some Cautions

- Do not have your staff and friends write “canned” reviews. Prospective patients can spot canned reviews immediately.
- Do not have patients post the review in your office, as Google and other rating sites recognize IP addresses and will block reviews that all emanate from the same location.
- Do not create too many reviews at once. If your number of reviews spikes, and is not gradual, then Google may perceive that you are spamming reviews. Remember that your website is attached to your Google Places account. If Google perceives that the reviews are being spammed, it could affect both your Google Places ranking and your website ranking. Also, consumers are very savvy about reviews. If the reviews do not seem natural, it will hurt the credibility of your practice.

Tracking

Given the digital nature of the Internet, it is very easy to fall into the trap that a practice can track every lead and new patient that derives from online marketing. Nothing is further from the truth.

Often elective eye surgery patients require 6 to 9 months to make a surgical decision. Measuring the last place a patient visited online may not be the most accurate way to determine the value of each aspect of the marketing program.

It is not unusual for a prospective patient to receive a word-of-mouth referral and then go online to research the practice and surgeon. He or she will typically look at the practice website, maybe a few directory listings, perhaps some of the competitors in the market and then make a decision to contact the practice.

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But when he or she calls the practice and is asked “How did you hear about us?” the patient replies “Tom referred me.” The Internet ties all marketing programs together and is very supportive of the ever-so-important word-of-mouth advertising. The branding value and the value of online visibility cannot be underestimated.

A few simple activities can help to better track Internet patients. In addition to asking how a patient heard about the practice, add “Have you visited our website?” Also, tracking phone numbers can be used to determine where the patients called from, e.g. a LASIK surgeon directory or PPC advertising. In order for call tracking to be effective, the calls should be listened to. Also, proxy websites can be used to track visitors that first visit a directory listing or PPC advertisement and then come to your website.

The top Internet marketing companies offer concierge level support for tracking and evaluation of the online marketing ROI. To effectively help in evaluating ROI, your marketing company should be intimately familiar with Google analytics and Google webmaster tools, should provide call evaluation (including listening to the calls) and should provide regular traffic and call reports. (Data shows that only about 25% to 30% of calls are actual leads, so without listening to the calls, it is impossible to determine how many leads are being generated by your online marketing strategy.)



But, no matter how much effort is placed on tracking, it is vitally important not to overlook the branding, visibility and word-of-mouth value provided by the various online marketing platforms.

A patient may see a directory profile and then contact the practice through the website. Or a consumer who comes to the practice via online sources, may turn into a very happy patient and refer 10 or more of his or her friends. This “practice pyramiding” effect is very hard to track back to the original online branding effect created by the practice Internet strategy.

For more information on expanding your Internet marketing strategies, contact:

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