The domain where visibility equals increased patient volume

How important is Google? Important enough that it's now part of our daily lexicon. We don't search online; we "Google" it.

From Halloween costumes to health care, we all use the world's dominant search engine to locate what we need.

Just take restaurants, for example. Millions of diners turn to Google on a daily basis to read about restaurants their friends are talking about. And if a restaurant's website doesn't appear when you search, you may wonder how good it really is — even though, in reality, there is no connection between the quality of the food and the restaurant's Internet visibility.

Consumers use Google for everything, not just restaurants. This includes one of the most important aspects of their lives: health care. In fact, according to one report, some 84 percent of Internet users have used the Internet to search for health care information in the past year, with 52 percent searching on behalf of loved ones. How do they find the information they're looking for? Google. With 70 percent of the search market, Google dominates the search world.

In today's digital world, prospective patients associate the quality of your practice with your visibility on Google, even when their search began from a word-of-mouth referral. If your practice doesn't appear in Google's search results for the terms and locations you need to rank for, you have a problem on your hands. Unfortunately, some of the nation's most reputable dental practices lack Google visibility.

The good news is there are steps you can take to improve your visibility. A comprehensive Internet marketing strategy, consisting of a well-designed (and programmed) practice website, a professional search engine optimization (SEO) plan and even a simple social media approach can transform your practice from Internet anonymity to Google standout.

Three steps to Google Visibility

Here are three important steps you can take to improve the visibility of your practice in Google's search results.

Step 1: The Google visibility test

This easy test should give you a good indication of where you stand. Simply go to Google and type in a few key terms related to your practice specialty, such as "cosmetic dentistry," "veneers," "implants" or "teeth whitening." Note the following:

• Where do you appear?
• Is information about your practice readily visible on the first page?
• Where do your competitors appear?
• What about the second page?

If you have trouble finding information on your practice in the Google results pages, so will your potential patients.

Core terms such as the ones mentioned above are searched by tens of thousands of prospective patients each day. Consumers often begin their Google searches with these terms to locate a practice. If your practice doesn't appear, chances are they're looking for? Google. With 70 percent of the search market, Google dominates the search world.

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