Harness the Power of Internet Marketing, Part 2: Google Places

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Judging by the response I’ve received regarding part 1 of this article [Jan. 15, 2012 issue], it confirms the belief that chiropractors are starting to realize the importance of getting online.

There is a genuine interest in exploring Internet marketing, especially if you live in a larger town where larger groups of people will search for you before they book an appointment.

Last article, we discussed the role of getting on the first page of Google so you can be found easily. We discussed how to monitor what people are saying about you online. Relationship management is critical to ensuring you address any negative comments and publicity. Let’s expand on some of these concepts, focusing primarily on getting noticed using simpler methods that can be initiated right after you finish reading.

Google’s Done the Work for You

Most of the e-mails I received were about the need to set up a Web site. Some doctors were starting to reassess their site and ready to change it, while others were looking to start one. Nearly all of them appeared to be overwhelmed with the assumption that it requires a lot of work to get their site ranked and found online.

That assumption is true – to a degree. That’s why there are SEO and Web companies that specialize in ensuring your site is relevant to the search engines. If someone searches for a chiropractor in your home town, your Web site should be one of the first things seen. For this to happen, an SEO company will work toward optimizing your site. However, there is also another way to get to the top of Google. Best of all, Google has already done the work for you.

Google Maps / Places

googl e place - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Google understands that most of the searches in the future will consist of "local" searches. That’s why it set up Google Places. Want to see what Google Places looks like? Go to Google and type in "chiropractor" and the name of your town. You’ll see that after the paid advertisements, the names of various chiropractors in your home town pop up. Notice the symbol
(resembling a pin or a teardrop) to the right of each site listing. Click on one; you’ll get additional information on the chiropractor in question. Some will provide in-depth information about the practice and even reviews.

That symbol means the chiropractor has "claimed" this listing. If you have not claimed your Google Places listing, it’s time you did. Type in your own clinic name into Google and you will see your location pop up with that pin symbol below your name. The listing will also say "Place Page." Click this and you will be taken to another page. On the top right, you’ll notice the words "Business Owner?" That means that your business has not claimed this free site. Click it and go through the process of claiming your Google Places. (For more detailed information on how to do this, simply search the Internet for videos or instructions on how to set up your own Google Places page.)

Most chiropractors spend a lot of time trying to set up their Web site, when in reality, Google is giving away your own business listing at the top of the search engine. I have done some initial searches of chiropractors in various towns and am shocked at the number of Places that have not been claimed by the business owner. If this describes you, then you need to get started on this ASAP. Once you claim your site listing, there are many things you can easily do. The following is a short list of some of the key information you can provide prospective patients:

A list of your services. I know most of us would love to list all the services we provide. However, look at it from the potential patient’s viewpoint. If you do Graston Technique, do you think the average potential patient is looking for it? Most likely they are looking for a chiropractor, physiotherapy, physical therapy, active rehabilitation, or acupuncture. List the most popular searches only.

A short description of what your clinic does. Some clinics go overboard and try to jam the description with as many "keywords" as they can. For example, I’ve seen descriptions such as, "Chiropractor clinic specializing in chiropractic care, low back chiropractor care, chiropractic rehab, and chiropractic acupuncture." This is called "keyword stuffing" and can actually get you penalized. Make sure your description is short and simple, and includes your town name and some of your services. If someone tells you otherwise, don’t do business with them.

Images and videos. This is a very important step to take. All too often, business owners add information such as clinic hours, payment methods, and description, but leave out pictures and videos. Google Places allows you to post 10 pictures. I highly recommend that you post 10 pictures. You also have the
opportunity to post five videos. You can easily create five videos on your camera or mobile phone.

The videos do not have to be of professional quality. That’s one of the biggest mistakes business owners make. Your goal is to provide a general introduction and tour of your facility and its services. The reason to put 10 pictures and five videos up is to send the message to Google that your business listing is relevant to chiropractic. The more information you provide, the more “relevant” your listing appears; hence, the higher up in the listing you get.

*Patient reviews.* Google Places allows people to leave reviews. If you have not begun this process, begin immediately. Ask patients to provide an honest review on your listing. Make sure that you do not log into your work computer to provide the reviews. Although it’s a lot easier getting patients to leave a review at the clinic, Google knows that the reviews are coming from the same computer or location. If you do that, you will get penalized.

**Optimize Your Internet Potential**

Claiming your listing on Google Places is one of the most important things you can do to put your name in front of the people who matter – your patients and potential patients. If you can’t find your listing, you can still go to Google Places and submit your business address.

If you feel uncomfortable in dealing with your business listing, you can ask for the services of your local SEO company. Apart from this basic work, SEO companies also provide links to various other sites and ensure that your Google Places is optimized. Using a company will help you get to the top of Google without the worry of waiting around for your Web site to be relevant and work its way up the rankings.

If you decide to go this route, always ask about the up-front costs and any monthly costs you will have to pay. In addition, get the names of previous customers and phone them to make sure they are satisfied with the service this company provides. A little background check will go a long way toward ensuring you find the right company.

Regardless of how you choose to expand your Web presence, it needs to be a priority. With the Internet becoming a progressively bigger player in local marketing and advertising, you need to focus more time and energy to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity and optimize your Internet potential.