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# Internet Marketing Do or Die

by **Mary Kay Miller**

There are dramatic changes taking place in our society today—changes that heavily influence both how people around the world communicate with one another and the buying decisions of consumers.

Websites, blogs, YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and Twitter weren't even in our orbit a decade ago. Now, for most consumers in today's tech savvy society, the Internet is the primary source of information and entertainment. The speed, scope, and power of the "new media" is staggering. It's no wonder that professional practices can be intimidated, unsure, and skeptical of the communications superhighway which we are now experiencing with all the advances in Internet marketing and digital technology.

Professional practices spend thousands of dollars on new websites or updates to engage prospective new patients online. Traditional marketing with TV, radio, newspaper ads, and direct mail campaigns are no longer effective with consumers who tune out and don't pay attention to all the marketing clutter. Advertising alone lacks credibility, third party endorsement, and the ability to generate the elusive "buzz" when one person tells someone else about something spontaneously to create emotion. With the new advances in Internet technology in the past few years, you now have the perfect forum to create personal relationships that build credibility online.

Fortunately, with Web 2.0 Internet marketing components that include blogs, video, and social networking, you have the opportunity to deliver your own personal PR message

the exact way you want it delivered, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year... over and over again. It is the most cost effective marketing tool available today to reach prequalified audiences

looking for your expertise and services, at the exact time they are looking for it.

Even though Internet marketing programs are tough to track, they are a much better return on investment than traditional marketing methods of old that randomly target all consumers, interested or not, in the hopes something will stick. This no longer works in our current cynical marketplace, during an economic crisis. Competition is stiff among peers; general dentists are encroaching upon market share to boost their bottom line; and consumers are wary of long term financial commitment.

## Three Keys to Internet Marketing Success

When creating an effective Internet marketing campaign to attract new patients, three key factors come into play:

1. Your website and Web 2.0 marketing programs must be easily found on the search engines based on "consumer" keywords.
2. Your website must appeal to viewers, deliver your personal marketing message in a communication format they are comfortable using, and be presented in a format that is easy to understand and navigate.
3. Once delivered, your message must engage new patients and direct them to "take action" to schedule a new patient exam.

All three components working together simultaneously create an effective Internet marketing campaign. If one link is weak, it affects the strength of your entire marketing promotion. Whether your website is outdated and boring or state of the art and flashy, the ability to attract and engage new patients is mute if your website and Web 2.0 marketing promotion can't be found on the search



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engines, in one form or another, throughout most of your targeted demographic.

The most common questions orthodontists ask me today is, "Why doesn't my website show up correctly on the Internet?" or "How can I improve my positioning on Google?" I find it ironic that most doctors and staff have no idea if their Internet marketing program or website is a finely tuned Maserati attracting new patients... or a Model T... non-existent in the eyes of consumers on the search engines. They assume that if they have a website, it is doing its job promoting their practice online.

It is my experience that most websites are not coded correctly for their local area and many are outdated and neglected. The new patient phone call is no longer the first form of communication with your practice... it is the Internet. Does your website properly represent your practice online to new patients looking for an orthodontic treatment provider? Look at your website from the "eyes of a consumer." If the content,

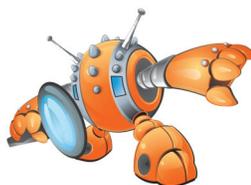
*If the content, look, and feel of your website are outdated, the consumer's perception is your services are outdated also.*

look, and feel of your website are outdated, their perception is your services are outdated also. This is the reality of marketing your business today. PR no longer means public relations... it represents delivering your marketing message based on consumer "perception and reality."

## The Importance of SEO and Your Internet Marketing Efforts

When designing a website, the hub of any Internet marketing campaign, most professionals fail to comprehend how search engines index their website, blog, social networking sites, and video on the Internet. They leave this up to their webmaster or staff members unfamiliar with Internet marketing. Understanding the basics of SEO (search engine optimization) and how it affects your website and setup, allows you to intelligently monitor your online efforts when outsourcing services or overseeing staff. SEO is the most misunderstood factor when building an Internet marketing program.

Search engines such as Google, Yahoo, and MSN (now Bing) cannot read the written words on your website or determine if your design is new and engaging or old and outdated. The Googlebots scan and index your website content repeatedly looking for updates based on sophisticated mathematical algorithms. Search engines don't care what your website looks like, the quality of your written



content, or your experience level and expertise. They are programmed to sort through vast amounts of data based on meta tags, keywords, linking, how long you have been online, and the number of times consumers click on your site... just to name a few. Your results are indexed and compared to other websites providing similar content, then positioned accordingly on the pages.

Each piece of your Internet marketing program must tell the search engines correctly who you are, what you are all about, and where you want to target new patients. If your website, blog, video, and social networking sites are not coded correctly for your local demographic, they won't be found when consumers search. Too often sites are coded with branded business names rather than consumer and local demographics keywords the search engines can index to position your site.

Does all this sound like Greek to you? It did to me—until I spent hundreds of hours delving into the ins and outs of SEO and Web 2.0 Internet marketing tactics.

## Test for Success

How do you determine if consumers can find your website on the Internet and how you compare with your competitors? Test it!

- Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).
- In the search box, type in patient keywords— "orthodontist," your city or town name, and your state. Orthodontist is the #1 keyword new patients use to search for an orthodontist.
- Jot down your website page ranking and the page ranking of your competitors. If it doesn't show up on page one, write N/S. (You can download a free Excel template to outline this information and my video showing you how to do it correctly off my blog [www.orthopreneur.com](http://www.orthopreneur.com).)
- While you are there, look to see if your name is showing up on your local map.
- Repeat the same steps again with the keyword "braces" and again with the branded keyword "Invisalign" in place of orthodontist. Do your website, blog, video, and social networking sites display on page one of Google? Does your practice name and website URL show up on Google Local Maps under each keyword?
- Now go through all the steps again, but this time, one by one substitute the names of all the surrounding towns in

your area you target also. Is your website or blog visible? If not, you are overlooking a huge window of opportunity to increase your demographic on the Internet.

Practices located in major metropolitan areas are obviously more difficult to index on page one of the search engines. Competition is fierce. Web 2.0 social networking and video is in its infancy and very effective when marketing on the Internet in these highly competitive areas, if keyword coded correctly. Google's rules of engagement favor new content found on blogs and social networking sites. Information websites that rarely add new pages of content are viewed as outdated. Linking blogs, video, and social networking sites to your website increases your visibility in the eyes of the search engines, which improves page ranking. Older more established websites with long term click through rates also have a distinct advantage.

No matter how great your website design and marketing message, if you can't be found on the search engines, you are missing a wealth of opportunities to build your practice. This can translate into hundreds of thousands of dollars falling into the hands of your competitors over the years.

Your website and Web 2.0 marketing programs are very powerful marketing tools if set up correctly, start to finish. The Internet is here to stay... whether we like it or not. Successfully implementing Internet marketing tactics now, will help secure the growth of your practice in the future. You don't know... what you don't know... till you know it! Find out what you need to know to market successfully online, today! ♡

## About the Author

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Mary Kay Miller of Orthopreneur™ Marketing Solutions is an Internet marketing coach specializing in SEO and Web 2.0 Internet marketing solutions. She will present two Internet marketing courses at the 2010 Ortho2 Users Group Meeting.

Mary Kay has more than 30 years experience in orthodontic marketing and practice management and 10 years in Internet marketing. For a complimentary demographic evaluation of your website via private webinar, contact Mary Kay at [marykay@orthopreneur.com](mailto:marykay@orthopreneur.com) or call toll-free (877) 295-5611.