Guide to Search Engine Marketing for Healthcare & Pharmaceutical Businesses

By Damon Lightley
Genetic Digital
www.geneticdigital.co.uk
Introduction

The search engine is now probably the most widely used research tool used by consumers and business professionals alike when looking for new products and services. Around 80% of people will start their online session at a search engine. Therefore, search engine marketing offers many benefits for businesses looking for a highly targeted and measurable form of marketing to disseminate information and promote products and services.

This paper aims to help CEOs, Directors, Marketing & Product Managers within Healthcare, Pharmaceutical and Medical organisations understand all the different elements and business benefits of ‘Search Marketing’ and how they can be applied to their businesses to help reach and interact with their target audiences.

It’s All Happening Online

All over the globe the Internet is increasingly being recognised as a tool for healthcare sectors to develop as part of on an e-health infrastructure. The e-health initiative is all about using technologies like the Web to transmit, store and retrieve digital data. In 2010 the total e-health spend accounted for 5 percent of total health budgets of the EU Member States compared with just 1% in 2000 (Christodolou et al).

In the US the number one most trusted source of information is physicians (62%). The second most trusted source is the Internet (57%). In Europe these figures are 85% for physicians and 75% for Internet - (Source: OTX, 2010). So, clearly the Internet must be seen as an important channel for communicating with your target audiences. However, most pharma and healthcare companies save only 2-3% of their marketing budgets for digital and search will probably get a small percentage of that, somewhere in the region of 2-3%.

The Internet & Healthcare Info

“We Google health related keywords”

In the UK approximately 15% of individuals will “often” use the Internet to search for advice about health, medicines, or medical conditions. Approximately 60% will “sometimes” use the Internet and 25% will “never” use the Internet as a source for information. (Source: Bupa Health Pulse, 2010). The survey also indicated that graduates and those in highest income bracket are more likely to regularly use the Internet to search for health information.
Search engines are the most visited sites on the Web.

Most searches for health related information will take place via the major search engines, Google, Bing or Yahoo. Searches for specific diseases or medical problems, medical procedures and exercise/fitness related information are the most popular areas being researched online.

Google is by far the most widely used search engine with 83% of searchers in the UK using Google and only 4% using Bing and a mere 2.5% using Yahoo. Google clearly dominates the search market and should therefore be the search engine you focus on for your search campaigns. In fact out of all the websites in the UK, Google is the most visited site. Facebook is second and the top non search/social media oriented site is the BBC ranked at number 8.

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