

CONTENT MARKETING TOP FIVE BENEFITS

— for your Healthcare Practice —

There once was a time when medical doctors looked down on advertising for medical practices. The thinking was that a doctor's job was to care for patients, and not to worry about peddling his or her services. Physicians were expected to grow their practices through referrals and word-of-mouth marketing; if they were good, the patients would come. This worked well at the time, as patients themselves turned to their small circle of family and friends to find doctors they could trust.

Today, health consumers' behaviors have changed, and so have approaches to running a profitable medical practice. In today's digitally-connected world, word-of-mouth patient referrals happen online. Potential patients turn to the Internet for recommendations, relying on the online testimonials, reviews and comments people post about their health care experiences.

Whereas the waiting room used to be a patient's first interaction with a doctor's office, today, patients visit several websites to learn all they can. They "Google" you to see what pops up; visit YouTube to see any videos you may have shared. They follow you on social media networks (like Facebook) to see how you interact with patients, and they will read reviews from a host of directories to see what other patients are saying about you, all before even calling to set up an appointment. How do doctors make this patient behavior work for them? By marketing with content.

Content Marketing: Good for Doctors, Good for Patients

Simply defined, content marketing is the act of creating and circulating *audience-focused* content to attract a desired audience and to drive profitable interactions. The content you create and distribute can include articles, blog posts, images, videos, and even social media status updates. Unlike advertising which focuses on your unique offering as a physician, content marketing focuses on helping the reader to solve a problem or to live a better life. In other words, today's crop of effective marketing techniques rely less on the hard-sales approach of traditional marketing methods such as advertising and direct mail and instead rely on sharing your knowledge and expertise with the flair of a publisher.

“content marketing is the act of creating and circulating audience-focused content”

Doctors may find this form of marketing particularly palatable because of its effectiveness as a marketing method, and also because it has everything to do with sharing and educating and nothing to do with selling. In this regard, health care marketing has never been so good for patients.

Let Patients Find You: Understanding Inbound vs. Outbound Marketing

Content marketing is something of a new term that arrived on the marketing scene in the early 2000s and has been growing in popularity ever since. Its popularity relates to a wider shift in marketing and how we, as consumers, interact with businesses. To understand content marketing, it is helpful to first understand the difference between outbound and inbound marketing, and why the latter is the preferred method in our digital age.

Outbound marketing is the act of sending a message out to prospective clients or patients. One can do this through advertisements, cold-calls, and direct-mail pieces such as brochures or flyers. Traditionally, these methods have been expensive. In recent years, the effectiveness of these approaches has diminished as consumer behavior has changed. Because we are all inundated with promotional messages coming at us through so many different channels, as consumers we have almost become immune to them—adept at tuning them out.

Inbound marketing on the other hand pulls people to you through valuable audience-focused content. In this approach people searching for information online find your website through Google and other search engines. No longer do you need to mail out 1,000 flyers to find one patient. Instead, the people who are looking for health-related information online will find you. Content is the vehicle that will attract those people.

Addressing Patients' Needs: What Makes Content Marketing Special

The Content Marketing Institute (CMI) defines content marketing as “a marketing technique of creating and distributing valuable, relevant and consistent content to attract and acquire a clearly defined audience – with the objective of driving profitable customer action.”

The operative word in this definition is *valuable*. This means the content that you create and distribute should focus on the readers' needs. Think about what your patients want to learn, versus what you want to tell them about your practice. Though it may seem counter-intuitive at first, marketers value this approach for its effectiveness when it comes to building awareness, loyalty, trust and a positive online reputation.

Though the term content marketing may be relatively new, the idea of marketing with valuable audience-focused content has been around for a long time. In 1900 the tire company Michelin developed the now famous traveler's guide book, *The Michelin Guide*. Rather than advertising tires, the guide helped drivers to maintain their cars and find lodging on road trips. The Michelin company gave readers what *they* wanted, and in so doing, built awareness of their brand name while also building loyalty and trust. These guide books have been in publication for over 100 years.

What's new about content marketing these days is the plethora of publishing tools available to businesses and consumers alike. No longer do you need to buy paper and secure time on a printing press. Today's web publishing tools allow all of us to share our information and expertise in powerful ways.

“Content marketing is about helping, and then being rewarded for that help. It's much more in line with what doctors do—using knowledge and expertise to help make people healthy.”

Five Reasons to Market with Content

Doctors today can act as their own publishers – producing videos, articles, white papers, blog posts, webinars and audio podcasts. Creating and distributing original content this way has a number of marketing benefits.

1

Increased Awareness

Today, if you're not seen on Google, you're missing a huge opportunity to be found by the people who are looking for you. But how do you appear on Google and other search engines? You guessed it, with content. Content posted on your own website, and on other websites that cover your area of specialization will help you sift your way to the top of the search engine results pages where the world is searching for what you offer. Similarly, fresh, quality content gives your social media following something to share—valuable content helps social media fans introduce you to a broader network of contacts.

2

Greater Loyalty & Trust

Ultimately, content marketing is about building relationships. It's about helping people by sharing your valuable knowledge. If you consistently provide relevant content from a position of knowledge and authority, you are building a relationship with readers as a credible resource. Your generosity with your knowledge will be met with loyalty from existing patients and trust from prospective patients.

3

Your Reputation as an Industry Leader

Readers search online for answers to their health questions. When you post an article or blog on a health topic you know about, you are perceived by readers and your peers as an expert resource in that area of specialization. Unlike an ad, an article or blog allows you to provide more substance-in-depth information that is offered in the service of educating consumers, furthering your position as a thought leader.

4

Educated Patients

An informed patient is a good patient, and a misinformed patient is a drain on your time as a physician and on the healthcare system overall. Educating patients during appointments can take a lot of valuable time, especially if they have preconceived notions. Give your patients the background information they need to be able to receive your care and guidance fully by directing them to one of your informative pieces of content.

5

Positive Web Presence

Content marketing helps you make sure people find plenty of great information about your field, and about you. An informative blog, article or interview delivered in a warm and informative tone helps you build a positive online presence, and better manage your reputation online. Good content can help cast you and your practice in a positive light, giving your public relations efforts an added boost.



Energize Your Content Marketing Campaign with eDoctors.com

Interested in marketing your practice with content? Talk to the editorial experts at eDoctors.com and learn how you can partner with us in the creation of valuable, patient-focused content.

Being a Topic Expert for one of the eDoctors health websites is a great way to get your content marketing campaign started. When you contribute content on a topic that you're particularly passionate about —either by writing an article, or working with our editors to create the content on your behalf —that content will be featured on one of our health websites along with your name, image and a link to your website.

While you can certainly start building your content marketing campaign through creating a blog, video series, or social media outreach, becoming a Topic Expert for eDoctors provides some unique additional benefits. The eDoctors editorial team can help you get started—collaborating with you to produce a content piece you can be proud to post. Posting that content on a well-established, niche website like those in the eDoctors family provides a high level of exposure that will get your content noticed by search engines and readers very quickly.

eDoctors is offering to feature content from topic experts who have eDoctors memberships at no additional cost. With a small investment of your time, you can be positioned as an expert on one of our health sites and garner all the benefits the site offers, including good search rankings and increased website traffic.

Here are content possibilities to consider:

- Health tips—help keep people healthy by sharing your best tips for living well and preventing disease
- Procedures and new treatment approaches— what's ails your patient base, and what procedures they might like to learn about in the treatment of their conditions
- Health in the news – comment on new studies and other findings

In addition to working together to create new content, we can also work with you to breathe new life into your old content. Other sources of content that can be repurposed for one of our eDoctors sites include:

- Past or upcoming seminars or webinars
- Keynote speeches
- Publications (we can re-purpose your abstract or interview you on the topic)
- Have other ideas? Let's talk!

For more information on how eDoctors can help your practice grow, please contact us at:

1.866.499.5661 or visit www.edoctors.com

Remember, It's About Sharing, Not Selling

An important thing to remember about content marketing is that you aren't plugging yourself or your practice—you're sharing your knowledge and building a relationship with potential patients. Content marketing is about helping, and then being rewarded for that help. It's much more in line with what doctors do—using knowledge and expertise to help make people healthy.

Help readers by educating them on something they want to know more about, and establish yourself as an expert resource of information. The marketing benefits are inherent.