

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO PLASTIC SURGERY SEO

A 40-point plan for cosmetic and plastic surgeons to lift their search rankings, treat sagging web traffic, augment their online effectiveness, and attract clients quickly.

BREAKING DOWN EVERYTHING NEEDED FOR SEO SUCCESS INTO A CRYSTAL CLEAR 40-POINT PROGRAM.

How does Google know to show your website when someone types a search inquiring about procedures or looking for surgeons into it?

It uses a complex – and frequently changing – algorithm that reviews and evaluates many different aspects of any given website.

Priming your site to satisfy the algorithm's requirements for specific search terms is what the practice of search engine optimization (SEO) is all about.

And it's critical to take SEO seriously. Between 75% and 95% of searchers never click past the first page of search results, and the first three search results alone account for nearly two-thirds of the share of clicks.ⁱ

In other words, if you don't successfully rank high in search results, you might as well be invisible online. And given that 89% of consumers turn to a search engine when looking to solve their healthcare

queries,ⁱⁱ and 83% of patients visit a health provider's website before booking a treatment or procedure,ⁱⁱⁱ if you're not visible online, you'll miss the lion's share of potential business.

The good news is that success in SEO comes with fantastic rewards. Search engines drive 300% more traffic than social media, making this channel an extremely cost-effective way of getting people to your site.^{iv} Even better, SEO leads enjoy a 14.6% close rate (outbounds leads like print advertising average only a 1.7% close rate).^v

But it takes work to reach that point. A good SEO plan requires strategy, time, and careful execution. And because Google's search ranking algorithm considers so many different factors, it can feel overwhelming; but an effective SEO program is entirely achievable for anyone willing to simply walk through the requirements, step-by-step.

That is exactly what this paper will help you do. Let's get started.

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2. Content Activities
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Keywords

01

Generate a list of keywords appropriate to your practice.

Keywords are how prospective patients find you, so spend some time brainstorming all possible keywords your patients might use, including multiple versions of the same procedure (e.g., “breast augmentation”, “breast enhancement”, and “breast enlargement”).

02

Perform keyword research.

With a list of keywords in hand, you’ll want to do some research to determine how much traffic each keyword produces and how competitive they are, i.e., how difficult it will be to rank highly in search results. This will help you identify the highest priority keywords to use on your website.

03

For local SEO, append geographic indicators to the keywords.

Unless you’re a high-end surgeon, or otherwise famous nationally, most of your patients will come from your local area. To reach them via search engine, append geographic indicators to your keywords (e.g., “liposuction in Chicago”).

04

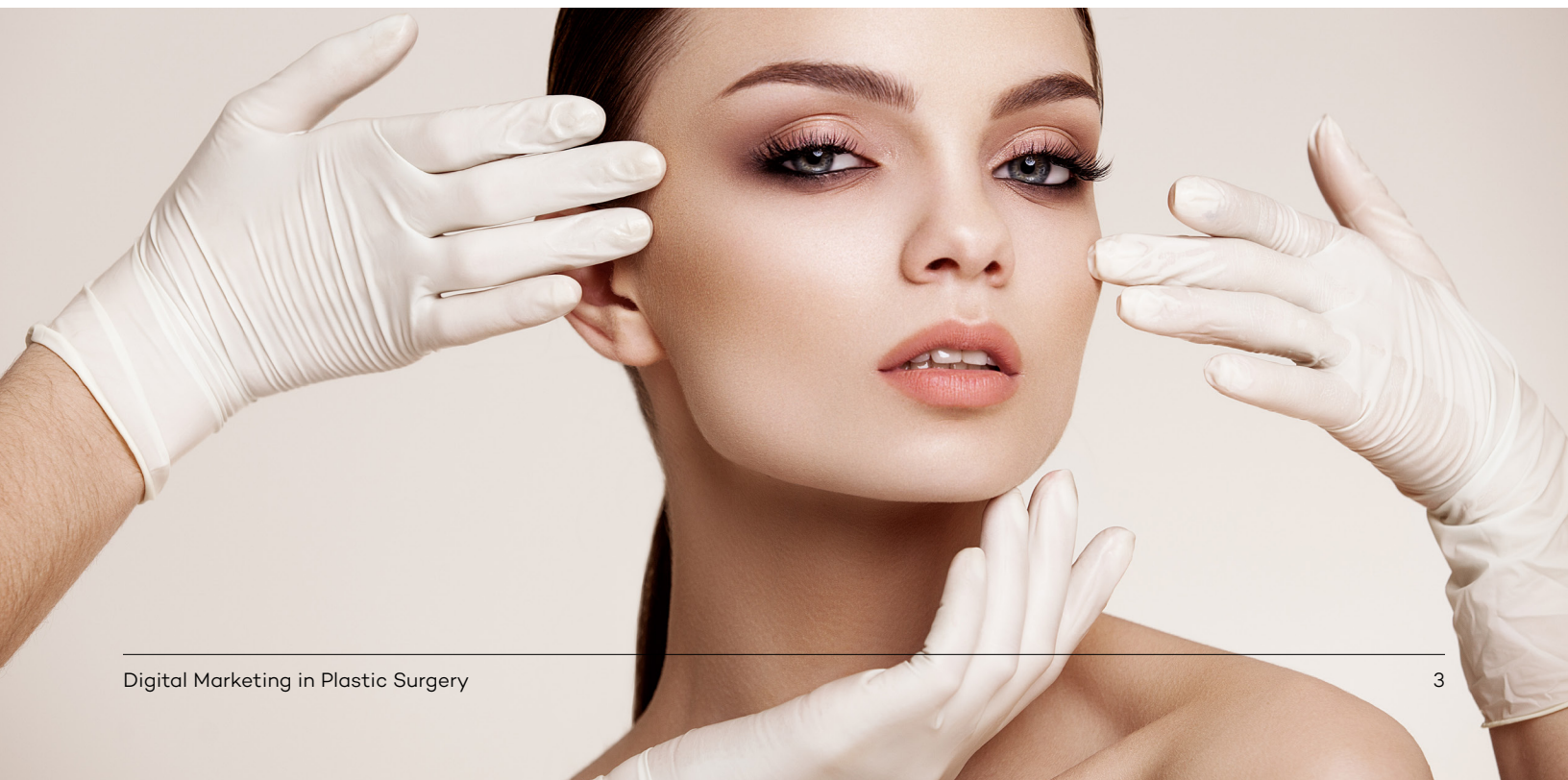
Use your keywords in the right places.

Optimizing for specific keywords isn’t difficult per se, but you must use them in the right places. The most powerful spots for keywords are the URL (web address), page title, any headers, and in the text. Also try to use them in image descriptions and any metadata associated with the page.

05

Seed – but don’t overstuff – each webpage with keywords.

Next, pay attention to when you use them. Google is savvy to fishy keyword schemes, so overloading your content with keywords won’t do any good and could hurt your ranking. Instead, use no more than 2, maybe 3, keywords per page and use them naturally throughout the page.



Content

06

Create core content.

Content is the bedrock of any SEO strategy, but what content should you produce? In general, have at least one page for each service/procedure, one page for each surgeon in your practice, pages for each location where you work, and pages addressing patient questions (like financing options).

07

Create a strategy for adding new content over time.

Then, focus on growing content over time. Google favors sites that update frequently with fresh content. In fact, a blog increases your chances of ranking on search engines by 434%; consider adding a blog or patient education area where you can publish news and topics of interest.^{vi}

08

Begin by adding 1 to 2 pages of content every month.

You don't need to go crazy with new content, but try to scale up if you can: HubSpot has found that "companies that published 16+ blog posts per month got almost 3.5X more traffic than companies that published between 0 - 4 monthly posts."^{vii}

09

Focus on wellness/beauty content patients will appreciate.

What should you write about? News and medical developments are obvious contenders. Plastic surgeons can also discuss wellness and healthy living, case studies (anonymizing if necessary, to comply with HIPAA), and explainers about procedures.

10

One strategy: Improve upon your competitors.

If you're still hurting for content ideas, look at the kind of content that your competitors publish and then improve upon it. If it works for them, it'll work for you; and if you can make it even better, readers will flock to your site.

11

Vary the length but be willing to go into detail.

Content of any length can be helpful and impactful with SEO, but Google does like in-depth content. That's because it wants to deliver search results that will really help the web searcher, and it's why the average first-page result on Google is 1,890 words long.^{viii}

12

Periodically update old posts.

HubSpot refers to this tactic as "Historical Optimization." They've found simply going back to old content and updating and republishing the content can increase traffic by over 100%.^{xi}

13

Add content beyond text, like before-and-after photos.

Imagery is a powerful form of content, especially for plastic surgeons. Add a gallery of before-and-after images – this is the #1 thing prospective plastic surgery patients look for. You might also include videos of happy patients and doctors explaining procedures.

Links

14

Try to create “link-worthy” content.

The content you create should do more than highlight keywords; it should help to attract links to your site from other online sources. This requires high-quality, informative content that is genuinely helpful, educational, and interesting.

15

Publish content off-site as well.

You can also create links to your website by publishing content off-site. For example, you might write articles for local and industry news and business sites, or appear as a guest on other blogs, reputable podcasts, or well-trafficked YouTube channels.

16

Join industry associations and local chambers of commerce.

You can generate links from some unusual suspects, too. For example, when you join industry associations like the American Association of Plastic Surgeons and your local chamber of commerce, those groups may add your website – with a link – to their own.

17

Get listed in directories, both general and health-specific.

This follows directly from #16: any reputable website that lists and links to medical practices offers a valuable source for links. This can include third-party review sites like Yelp, as well as industry directories specific to health care.

18

Make sure you have a “Google My Business” profile.

One key site for a business listing: Google. “Google My Business” creates a profile of your practice that gives Google more information to provide in search results and can help strengthen your search rankings.

19

Search for variations and inaccuracies in your data.

As you add or review your listing on directory sites, make sure all information is accurate and matches across sites. If you find errors, fix them. Google looks for directory listings to confirm your practice is legitimate, but you need to ensure all information matches exactly everywhere.

20

Sponsor charitable groups or activities.

Another great way to get links is to sponsor charitable groups or activities like sports and little league teams, especially in your local area. This is a great way to build up your reputation and brand, while getting listed – and linked – on informational materials.

21

Avoid “black hat” link spamming.

Organically generated links from reputable sites are the prize. By contrast, spam tactics like buying low quality links in bulk will be counter-productive. Google looks for such tactics and will punish your site with lower rankings.

Reviews

22

Understand that reviews are the new referrals.

The first step is to understand the relationship between reviews and online success. 72% of new patients use reviews as their first step in finding a doctor, so it's imperative that modern medical practices pay attention to – and manage as much as possible – the reviews that patients leave.^x

23

Ask existing patients for reviews

To cultivate reviews, simply to ask for them. Many patients will be very accommodating to the request, especially if they're pleased with your work. However, make it easy and frictionless for patients to provide those reviews (e.g., include the link with your request).

24

Take steps to reduce bad reviews.

Bad reviews can be devastating, so take steps to prevent them; for example, make sure you have a customer satisfaction/grievance process in place to reduce bad reviews. When someone does leave a bad review, respond promptly, helpfully, and non-defensively.

25

Monitor all applicable review sites.

Medical-specific review sites are especially critical because they often show up in search results. For example, [Healthgrades](#), [RateMDs](#), [Wellness.com](#), and [Vitals](#) provide reviews, ratings, and information on all kinds of practitioners. [RealPatient Ratings](#) and [RealSelf](#) focus on plastic surgery.

Social Media

26

Bolster SEO with social media.

Social media is increasingly crucial to plastic surgeons by fueling a 31% increase in plastic surgery requests.^{xi} Cultivate this channel by maintaining an active social media account for your practice. Remember to provide links to content on your website in your own social media posts.

27

Make content easy to share via social channels.

Sharing before-and-after photos can be especially powerful. However, be careful to follow all applicable rules and guidelines. Always get patient permission, keep HIPPA requirements in mind, and remember some photos (e.g., breast enhancements) won't fly on most social media sites.

28

Consider paying for promoted posts.

Most social media platforms let commercial users pay to promote some posts. Interestingly, this can boost SEO. According to the social media gurus at Hootsuite: "Our findings show that paid promotion has nearly double the SEO benefit of organic promotion."^{xii}



Mobile

29

Make your site mobile-friendly.

Optimizing for mobile devices not only impacts search ranking (after Google's so-called "Mobilegeddon" algorithm update), it's also tied to higher patient experience.^{xiii} So, make your site mobile-friendly. To check if your current site already is, use Google's [Mobile-Friendly Test](#).

30

If appropriate, use a responsive site design.

Responsive sites automatically adapt to the screen size of the user's device. With such a design, your site will adapt its layout to appear attractive on everything from giant TV-sized monitors down to tiny smartphone screens.

31

Make it easy for users to interact with the site on mobile.

Ease of usability is crucial to online success, and it's something Google evaluates in search rankings too. For example, users should be able to navigate through your site and take action – like finding and using contact information – quickly and easily.

Quick Wins

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Update schema markup.

“Schema” refers to behind-the-scenes data that most people don’t see but search engines do. For more information, visit [Schema.org](https://schema.org), which is a collaboration between Google, Microsoft, Yahoo!, and others. It’s a quick and easy way to improve search rankings.

33

Optimize page loading time for a fast experience.

Your web pages should load quickly. The longer they take, the lower Google will rank you, and the fewer users will stick around. Run Google’s [PageSpeed Insights tool](https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/) to get an idea if your current page loading time needs to be improved.

34

Re-size images.

A quick and easy way to speed up a site is to downsize large image files and re-upload them. Often, large image files are the objects on a web page that slow load time the most. Downsizing them thus shrinks load time.

35

Supplement search optimization with search advertising.

The kinds of SEO efforts described in this paper can start working quickly, but none of them are instant. Pay-per-click, or search advertising, does work immediately and can fill the gap while SEO gets working. It’s just a matter of picking the keywords and setting a budget.

36

Identify and fix any links that are pointing at a 404 page.

When external links point at a page on your website that no longer works, you’re losing the optimizing power of that link. Thankfully, you can quickly find such missing pages by using [Google Search Console](https://console.cloud.google.com/searchconsole/links/).

37

After any changes, ask search engines to re-crawl your site.

When you make changes to your site, you can ask Google to re-crawl your site and update your search rankings right away, rather than waiting for it to do so in its own time. You can do that with Google [here](https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/9353623).

Get Help

38

Use automated tools wherever possible.

If you try to do everything described in this paper – and any other SEO tactics – yourself by hand, you'll be in for a lot of work. Instead, use third-party tools to automate many of these otherwise tedious tasks.

39

Use third-party services to supplement your efforts.

Similarly, you can use third-party services to cost-effectively handle the labor. For example, instead of spending hours regularly reviewing and dealing with reviews across a plethora of review sites, let specialists to handle it for you.

40

Outsource to an expert SEO agency.

On that note, you might also opt to outsource your whole SEO strategy to an agency that specializes in it. Not only does that free you from the time and labor involved, but you reap the advantages of working with people whose core expertise is dedicated to SEO.

About DMA

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