

REHAB CENTERS LEAD ACQUISITION STRATEGY

5 example strategies and how to implement them

THERE'S A LARGE MARKET OF INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED REHABILITATIVE ADDICTION TREATMENT. CAN THEY FIND YOUR FACILITY?

McKinsey & Co. analysis found the opioid addiction problem is significantly underdiagnosed. Only about 11% of people with substance use disorders are receiving treatment; that, in turn, means that about 18 million people in need are not receiving care – a number that may be growing.ⁱ

Indeed, admissions to treatment facilities surged 600 percent between 1999 and 2008 alone, according to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.ⁱⁱ

Yet, this is a notoriously difficult market in which to reach prospective patients and generate leads from the population of people who need help.

Skyrocketing growth has led to an explosion of providers, so it is an intensely competitive environment. Further, many providers have used unethical, exploitative advertising and referral practices (which means legitimate rehab centers are competing against unscrupulous ones willing to do anything to get patients).

Unfortunately, that bad behavior by those centers and brokers has led both lawmakers and search engines like Google to impose significant restrictions on industry practitioners, which makes it harder for all providers in this sector to advertise successfully.

Those changes are also leading the market into a time of upheaval.

“Those two steps will clean up the industry,” said Hunter Peterson, a partner at the Riverside Co., which operates residential treatment centers in Florida and Texas, told Modern Healthcare. “[But they] may wipe out 75% of the mom-and-pop operators in the next two years.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Fortunately, opportunity still abounds for forward-thinking modern rehabilitative addiction treatment centers to successfully reach the people who could benefit from their services, particularly online.

How can you stand out and successfully generate leads in such a competitive and turbulent market? This paper will present five ways.

In This Paper...

1. Implement SEO
2. Use Content Marketing
3. Leverage Reviews
4. Advertise with Google
5. Cultivate Legitimate Referrals



Implement search engine optimization

A good search engine optimization (SEO) campaign should always be the starting point for acquiring new leads online. Why? Nearly nine out of ten (86%) of individuals seeking drug or alcohol treatment use Google search before scheduling their appointment, and the best way to reach them is to have your website appear with relevant content when they search for information.^{iv}

In fact, showing up in the search results offers serious value in capturing new leads, because not only do top-ranked pages get more traffic, leads generated from online search are also two times more likely to convert.^v

But SEO is only effective if the searchers see your site show up in the listings. That means rehab and treatment

centers must show up on Page One of search listings, because fewer than 2% of all Google searchers will click over to Page Two of search results.^{vi} A good SEO program is the only way to show up on Page One in the organic search results (you can also pay to appear; we'll discuss that in Section 4 below).

You can also use SEO strategically if there's negative content about you online (e.g., bad reviews). If you can dominate the first page of search results, you can shoulder other content off the first page to the second, where the vast majority of searchers will never see it.

How do you get started with SEO? The table below highlights the hallmarks of a successful SEO campaign.

SEO ELEMENT	WHY IT MATTERS	TACTICS
Content	Content marketing yields 3x more leads than search ads. ^{vii}	• Patients want to know about your approach and expertise. • Avoid a sales-y tone and don't "spam" keywords. • See Section 2 below for more information about content.
Links	The average top organic search result has 35k+ external links pointing at it. ^{viii}	• Good content serves as "linkbait" that attracts external links. • Links from credible sites like industry organizations are powerful. • Avoid "spam" tactics – Google will punish you otherwise.
Keywords	"Keywords" can be phrases: 50% of search terms are four words or longer. ^{ix}	• Target the search terms that your prospective patients really use. • Be sure to capture any specialties, not just "rehab" in general. • Add geographic indicators to appear for local searches.
Mobile	Since the "Mobilegeddon" update, Google prioritizes sites optimized for mobile. ^x	• Use "responsive" web design that adapts to mobile devices. • Make sure users can easily interact with the site on mobile. • Make sure pages load quickly for a fast experience.
Reviews	81% of patients read reviews about medical providers. ^{xi}	• Reviews are critical to both search engines and customers. • Many patients will refuse to work with you without good reviews. • See Section 3 below for more information on managing reviews.
Local	46% of all searches on Google are local. ^{xii}	• Some high-end treatment centers may have nationwide reach. • But others may wish to target local/regional populations. • Set up a 'Google My Business' profile and include location-specific content on the website.

Use Content Marketing

Another way to generate leads: publish good content that is useful, helpful, and appealing to prospective patients.

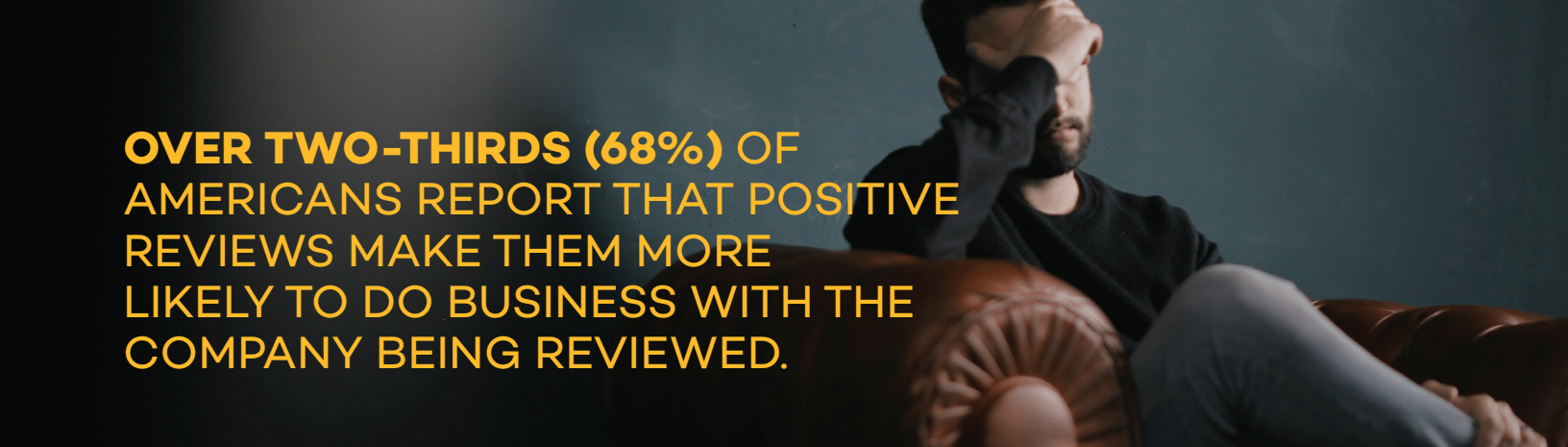
Content marketing works on several levels simultaneously. For one, content is a critical component of SEO; an abundance of good content helps websites to rank higher in search results.

For another, content that communicates expertise and credibility can be enough to convince a reader to inquire for more information and become a lead. In fact, such content can be particularly important and impactful due to trust issues plaguing the addiction trust industry.

Indeed, trust is at a premium in this market; thanks to ethical and legal issues with patient brokers and unscrupulous treatment providers, skepticism has risen. As a result, more patients than ever do more due diligence than ever. According to Google, 76% of these patients reviewed the websites of treatment centers while researching for the best facility.^{xiii}

So, your content needs to provide information that searchers can use to establish trust. In general, that means showcasing expertise and incorporating trust factors like patient success stories. Content should answer questions about your methodology and facility and give prospective patients a feeling of confidence that you can genuinely help them.

CONTENT BEST PRACTICES	
Length	• The average wordcount of a first-page result on Google is 1,890 words.^{xiv} • Google favors in-depth over shallow content. This is an opportunity to showcase expertise. • For example, write about the science of rehabilitation and addiction treatment.
Keywords	• Incorporate keywords into the content, but don't overdo it. • Aim for no more than 2 or 3 keywords per webpage.
Accessibility	• Provide content your customers genuinely want or can use. • Then, provide it in a way that is easy to consume and understand. • Avoid jargon and academic language where it impedes understanding. • Further, content doesn't have to be just words. Visuals count, and 70% of marketers say that content with visuals assets performed better than without.^{xv}
Quality	• Some content will be sales-y by nature, but most should be informative. • All of it should be legitimately helpful. • List staff information and credentials, discuss how the facility works, and describe successful outcomes produced in the past.
Quantity	• Google rewards frequently updating sites. • Businesses that publish 16+ blog posts per month get up to 3.5 times more traffic.^{xvi} • You can also update old posts to keep them fresh. • HubSpot effectively doubled their monthly leads just by refreshing old content.^{xvii}



OVER TWO-THIRDS (68%) OF AMERICANS REPORT THAT POSITIVE REVIEWS MAKE THEM MORE LIKELY TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE COMPANY BEING REVIEWED.

Manage and Leverage Reviews

Reviews alone can generate leads, but only if they're good reviews: having five reviews results in purchase likelihood increasing by a factor of almost four times, according to the Spiegel Research Center.^{xviii} In fact, over two-thirds (68%) of Americans report that positive reviews make them more likely to do business with the company being reviewed.^{xix}

Bad reviews, by contrast, have the opposite power: they can kill potential leads. A single negative review can drive away approximately 22% of customers.^{xx} Three negative reviews can drive away 59% of the customers.

And rehab center clients certainly read reviews. Rehabs.com, an American Addiction Centers resource, reports that 46% of people would deliberately avoid an addiction treatment provider if they were unable to find any reviews

of their services.^{xxi} That's because prospective patients want to know if a given treatment center will really help them. To do that, they don't just look up the main website; they also want to know what former patients have to say.

In other words, trust-building doesn't end at your website, and managing reviews is critical. You can either leverage them to build your pipeline of leads, or you can let them sap your ability to get new patients in the door.

Of course, treatment centers don't have direct control over reviews, and you will get negative reviews (it's unavoidable); but you can also manage the process to cultivate more positive reviews and decrease the incidence of negative reviews.

Advertise with Google

SEO is not the only way to show up when a prospective patient searches for information about addiction treatment. Search advertising – also known as paid search and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising – puts you in the driver's seat: you're guaranteed to show up for your chosen keywords, and your website will show up above the organic search results if you successfully bid for top placement.

But rehab centers and addiction treatment facilities face some special considerations around advertising because Google restricts the advertising that happens in this space.

To advertise with Google, rehab centers must be certified by third-party organization LegitScript, which verifies medicine-related businesses online.^{xxii}

The reason is that too many bad actors were advertising for these services; consequently, people were clicking on ads for brokerage services rather than reputable addiction treatment centers, with "people looking for help [being] essentially traded like commodities and sent to incredibly expensive 'addiction centers' that often provided little recovery help at all," as reported by TechCrunch in an exposé of the practice.^{xxiii}

Google subsequently turned off all addiction-related terms for AdWords until they settled on the LegitScript certification solution. LegitScript uses a 15-point checklist to verify recovery centers are the real deal. Some organizations, like sober homes and referral agencies, are simply not eligible for certification, and they "are not allowed to advertise for drug and alcohol addiction services on Google."



Cultivate Legitimate Referrals

As discussed previously, the rehab center industry has a dark underbelly of unscrupulous brokers who funnel people in need to expensive centers in exchange for compensation. That has brought scrutiny on the referral process. However, serious treatment facilities cannot ignore legitimate referrals as an important source of leads. That means cultivating relationships with the people and organizations who can provide those leads.

See the sidebar for some suggestions but note that one of the most undervalued sources of referrals is program alumni. In fact, maintaining relationships with alumni does double-duty. It's helpful in preventing relapse (between 40% and 60% of recovering addicts eventually relapse, according to Recovery.org), and alumni can also be a good source of referrals if their friends, family, or other associates may also be struggling with some form of addiction.

Referral Building Best Practices

- ✓ Get listed in industry directories. This may mean joining industry associations and obtaining appropriate certifications.
- ✓ Reach out to local addiction specialists and even physicians.
 - Communicate your effectiveness in rehabilitating patients.
 - Give them the information they need to feel confident that referring a patient will likely lead to a good outcome.
- ✓ Maintain relationships with alumni. Stay in touch and inquire after their well-being.

CONCLUSION

It's a tricky time for rehabilitative addiction treatment centers. "The good news is the addiction provider side has been resource-starved for 50 years, and now the money is flowing in," Richard Frank, a health economist at Harvard University, told Modern Healthcare. "The less good thing is that expanded supply includes both legitimate organizations and folks who seem somewhat exploitive. The challenge is going to be separating the wheat from the chaff."^{xxiv}

This presents not just a challenge for those seeking addiction treatment; it creates a problem for legitimate rehab centers to figure out how to position themselves so that they stand out from the bad actors and underperformers in the industry to successfully generate more leads from the people who genuinely need their help.

Fortunately, today's treatment facilities have many options in this endeavor. From working to appear in the search results when a prospective patient searches for information online, to content marketing and review management, to the old standby of referrals, addiction treatment providers can grow their customer base through simple, straightforward steps.

Note, however, that many of the techniques described in this paper require their own niche expertise. While many treatment facilities are skilled in helping people dealing with addiction-related issues, their knowledge might falter when it comes to developing effective customer acquisition strategies. Absolutely, addiction treatment centers can do a lot to promote themselves online without outside help. But to really stand out in an increasingly crowded field, consider outsourcing to those who can quickly, knowledgeably, and deftly help pull in new leads.

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DMA Corporate Headquarters

111 E. Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60601

Contact Us

digitalmarketingagency.com
sales@digitalmarketingagency.com

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- ⁱ <https://www.modernhealthcare.com/article/20181124/NEWS/181129978>
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