

# DIGITAL MARKETING GUIDE

FOR MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY COMPANIES

A five-part industry guide to the biggest digital marketing opportunities available to medical technology marketers today

Part 2

## SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION



GREY MATTER MARKETING

The healthcare marketing landscape is undergoing a dramatic transition brought on, in part, by a wave of new regulations. Now, more than ever, it is important that medical technology companies and their customers evolve together. Manufacturers can no longer succeed by simply delivering incremental product and cost improvements and deploying a retail/detail sales force. Instead, hospitals and physicians are seeking broader, more strategic relationships with manufacturers.

Nothing lends itself better to this new buying process than digital marketing. Digital marketing initiatives allow manufacturers to engage with prospects earlier in the sales funnel to communicate their value offering while reducing the costs of sales. When done right, digital marketing aids in the discovery of meaningful insights, allowing you to engage customers better and cause changes in their behavior. The more meaningful customers find your solutions, the more profound and favorable these changes will be. As the campaign progresses, digital marketing also provides real-time access to performance metrics so marketers can maximize the efficiency of their investments.

In the spring of 2013, Grey Matter Marketing fielded an online survey of 108 marketing professionals employed by U.S. medical technology companies. Grey Matter Marketing requested that respondents share opinions and comment on current trends and challenges in digital marketing. Using the insights from this survey and experience in the field of digital marketing, Grey Matter Marketing has developed a five-part industry guide to provide medical technology marketers with a roadmap for the biggest digital marketing opportunities available today.

**Part two of our five-part series shows medical technology professionals how to put search engine optimization (SEO) at the heart of their digital marketing strategy to get found, gain authority and build their business. Even more importantly, it gives readers the supporting evidence needed to recommend specific SEO strategies to management.**

## *Search Engine Optimization Defined*

Ten years ago, we used to talk about "going online" to get information. Today, we talk about "Googling something." This may seem like a meaningless shift, but, in fact, it is huge. Before, there was a division between our online and offline existences, but more and more with each passing day, they overlap, get tangled, and exist intertwined. We have the Internet in our pockets. Our cars tell us where to go by consulting maps that are updated in real time, then speak the directions out loud. We can ask questions to our smartphones and get answers spoken back to us. People use the library more for the Internet than for the encyclopedias. And as we mentioned, "Google" has become a common verb. It is clear: search engines are now how we find information. Whether we are looking for a new pair of running shoes or researching a disease, search engines are the focus of almost all our information-gathering.

Search engines scan the web and use proprietary algorithms to categorize information so they can serve their users the most relevant results. Search engine optimization, or SEO, is the process of affecting those results in an "organic," or natural, way. Companies often pay experts or agencies to improve their SEO, but search engines themselves do not accept payment to improve your organic listing. Instead, they offer paid search results also called pay-per-click (PPC) advertisements.

## *Why Search? Why Now?*

Search has become one of the most popular Internet activities. On any given day online, **59%** of people using the Internet use search engines to discover information.<sup>1</sup> **Eight in ten** people start their search by typing a query into a search engine when looking online for health or medical information.<sup>2</sup> Even when patients end up in the doctor's office following a phone call or referral, they have usually started their fact-finding and decision-making online.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Search-Engine-Use-2012/Summary-of-findings.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2013/Family-Caregivers/Part-1/Health-inquiries.aspx>

With such universal use of search engines for health information, there is a great opportunity for companies to become part of the prospective patient's consideration set early in the decision-making process, and even for companies to help connect patients with providers. Some medical technology organizations consider themselves business-to-business companies, though, and do not directly target patients. But this should not affect strategy: companies that target physicians can still greatly benefit from SEO.

*"We know our customers are looking for health information online. Clearly we want them to find us first. Search engine optimization helps us accomplish this. It is how we get found by our customers and how we get found first among our competition."*

David Esterly, Principal Manager,  
Digital Marketing at Boston Scientific

Physicians today use a variety of resources for information and to help them diagnose and treat patients. In addition to colleagues and professional journals, search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, are among the top three information sources that physicians use. According to their August 2011 Point-of-Care Survey, Wolters Kluwer Health found that search engines were cited by **46%** of physicians as a frequent source of information and by another **32%** as an occasional resource. Nearly **9 in 10 physicians** reported that improved access to online medical information improved their quality of care. **Sixty-three percent** reported changing an initial diagnosis based on new information accessed via online resources.<sup>3</sup>

Given these statistics, it is not surprising the Grey Matter Marketing Digital Marketing Survey revealed that medical technology marketers understand the value of search engine optimization, with more than half reporting that SEO was "very important" or "extremely important" to their overall digital marketing strategy.

Answer Options	Response
Not at all important	1.5%
Slightly important	13.6%
Moderately important	31.8%
Very important	45.5%
Extremely important	7.6%

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.wolterskluwerhealth.com/News/Documents/White Papers/Wolters Kluwer Health Survey Executive Summary-Media.pdf](http://www.wolterskluwerhealth.com/News/Documents/White%20Papers/Wolters%20Kluwer%20Health%20Survey%20Executive%20Summary-Media.pdf)

According to the survey, the top search engine marketing activities were:

- Content marketing **52%**
- On-page optimization **51%**
- Pay-per-click advertising **48%**
- Link building **32%**
- Article submissions **30%**

## *What Medical Technology Marketers Need to Know About SEO*

The case for SEO is clear. Search engines are the hub for people who need medical information — not just patients, but practitioners too. No matter what your position in the healthcare marketplace, you need to make sure that when someone goes to a search engine for something you manufacture, sell or simply know about, such as a disease state or medical condition, they find you. SEO is how to get that done.

This is not an easy task. The methods that work today may be out of date tomorrow. For this reason, and so you can keep on top of the search rankings, it is important to keep on top of how SEO evolves.

# 75%

### **Rank or Perish**

*If you are not at the top, you simply will not be found. Seventy-five percent of users never scroll past the first page of search results.<sup>4</sup> In fact, anything listed after the fourth position receives less than 2% of all clicks.*

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<sup>4</sup> marketshare.hitslink.com, October 2010

## Search is a Moving Target

Though several different search engines exist, none is more heavily trafficked than Google, which has **67%** of search market share.<sup>5</sup> The next most cited search engine is Yahoo, mentioned by just **6%** of search users.<sup>6</sup> Google has been known to alter its algorithm — its method for determining and delivering search results — as many as **600 times per year** in its quest to deliver evermore relevant search results. A company's rankings can dramatically change with even the slightest update. A strategy that leads to high rankings today, can work against you tomorrow if Google determines that it no longer fits the principle of delivering the most relevant information to readers.

### Recent Google Updates



**Panda:** tackles publishers of low-quality content



**Penguin:** punishes spammy links and keyword-heavy sites

**EMD**

**Exact Match Domain (EMD):** confronts poor quality websites with keyword domains

With such drastic and continuous changes occurring to search engine algorithms, the recommended rules and best practices from even just a few months ago may already be irrelevant. What causes your company to rank high one day might knock you off the first page tomorrow. Marketing professionals need to stay on top of the latest trends and updates made by Google and other search engines in order to stay competitive.

Alternatively, they should engage with outside vendors who specialize in SEO and can consistently monitor and optimize their clients' web presence. One common mistake medical marketers make when developing a search engine optimization plan is to consider SEO a one-time event rather than an ongoing part of any marketing strategy in order to continue to stay in front of your target patients and physicians.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press\\_Releases/2012/12/comScore\\_Releases\\_November\\_2012\\_U.S.\\_Search\\_Engine\\_Rankings](http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Press_Releases/2012/12/comScore_Releases_November_2012_U.S._Search_Engine_Rankings)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Search-Engine-Use-2012/Summary-of-findings.aspx>

## SEO Basics

Despite the nuances and technicalities of search engine algorithms, good search rankings comes down to understanding your keywords and ensuring on-page and off-page optimization.

### Keywords

A keyword is a word or phrase that a person types into a search bar, like Google, to gather information on a topic online. Keywords are most often used with search engines, but portals, directories, and even social media sites offer users the ability to search their content for relevant information.

### Understanding Keywords

	Branded Keywords	Unbranded Keywords	Long-Tail Keywords
Definition	A keyword or phrase that includes your company or product name	A keyword or phrase that describes a need, a product, or a service	A keyword phrase composed of three or more words that collectively are more specific than a single keyword
When they are used	Searchers are aware of your business, products, or services and want to learn more	Searchers are unaware of your business and are using a search engine to help find companies, products, or solutions that interest them	Searchers are unaware of your business and are using a search engine to help find companies, products, or solutions that interest them
Decision cycle time	Searchers are more likely to be at the end of their decision-making process	Searchers are more likely to be at the beginning of their decision cycle	Searchers are more likely to be at the beginning of their decision cycle
Competitiveness	Low competition	High competition	Moderate competition
Conversion	High conversion	Moderate conversion	High conversion

Marketing professionals can use a variety of methods to discover their keywords. While many methods are available at no cost, they are often time-intensive. The keyword discovery method will be highly dependent on the internal resources available and the timeline.

### Some common methods include:

- Sifting through online review sites, social media, and other websites your customers frequent, and seeing which topics come up
- Talking with your sales team and customer service department for FAQs and common topics
- Reviewing your current website analytics for patterns and trends
- Using free tools from Google, such as the Ad Word Keyword tool and Insights for Search

## On-Page Optimization

On-page optimization refers to the pages of the website itself and settings you can apply to make your website search engine friendly. Think of on-page optimization as a way to ensure your website is speaking a language that search engines, like Google, can understand. On-page optimization impacts **25%** of your search engine results placement (SERP), but even though this number may seem low, it shouldn't be discounted. Your website is the backbone of all your digital marketing initiatives — where you educate, collect and convert customers — so starting with a strong foundation is key.

### On-Page SEO Checklist

When optimizing for on-page SEO, there are several factors to consider. The checklist below will guide you in creating an optimized page. Take note: no single factor will make or break your ranking. Instead, each of these items work together to raise your overall score. Google considers hundreds of factors when ranking a website.

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Usability and accessibility | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Content           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Meta description tags | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site maps, both XML |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> URL structure               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keyword selection | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALT Tags              | and user-facing   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal linking strategy   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Keyword density   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> H1 Tags               |   |



## Off-Page Optimization

Off-page optimization refers to the activities outside the boundaries of your website that contribute to rankings, and it affects the remaining **75%** of your SERP. The main off-page activity that companies engage in is getting other websites to link to yours, a practice called “backlinks.” Each link, as long as it is a quality link, is considered a vote of confidence for your website and therefore boosts your authority in the eyes of search engines.

### The basics of quality backlinks:

- ✓ Make sure the website linking to yours falls in a similar medical niche
- ✓ Look for websites with high PageRank (PR) scores, because Google already considers them an authority
- ✓ Use different anchor text — the clickable text in a hyperlink — so you don't appear to be keyword-stuffing

Building backlinks alone, however, is no guarantee of results. Search engines have learned to measure the quantity and quality of your links and greatly favor natural links — links created by people who truly value your website's content.

Therefore, the best way to go about developing natural, high-quality backlinks is to produce trustworthy and relevant content and partner with trustworthy sources. The adage "if it seems too good to be true, it probably is" applies when it comes to off-page optimization. Companies offering hundreds or even thousands of links for a minimal cost are likely using “black hat” tactics and delivering you low-quality links. Search engines now recognize and even penalize for the use of black hat tactics.

## Social Signals

Simply put, a social signal is a link from someone's social network profile to your web page. For example, if you were to click the "like" button on a Facebook post or a blog entry, you have just given a social signal.

Search engines are increasingly rewarding websites for their social signals, and for good reason. Every time a reader gives a social signal, they are giving a vote of confidence that the content is worth reading. Social media is an important part of any company's SEO strategy.

Medical technology companies can improve their social signals by creating engaging social media content and encouraging discussion among followers. Companies can also be hubs for health information, serving as a bridge between physicians and the medical community or becoming a gathering place for patients with a certain disease state.

### Don't forget about social media!

*In addition to the regular search engines, all social media platforms have their own internal search engines, for example, Facebook's Graph Search, which is based on the information provided in the profile. So if you have an optimized profile, more users will find you while searching within the social network.*



### *If Nothing Else ...*

The conclusion is simple: search engine results matter. You want to be found by prospective customers and nothing accomplishes this better than top search engine page results. Patients and physicians alike are turning to search engines first when looking for health or medical information. To rank, you have to make sure your website is optimized in such a way that Google and other search engines can make the connection between what your company offers and what they anticipate your customers want. But the “best” ways to get found can change because the search engine companies continuously reinvent their formulas. Those with the best knowledge and experience with these ranking methods, whether that comes from internal teams or specialized consultants, receive the benefits of increased traffic and visibility.

If you're interested in learning more about digital marketing as it relates to medical technology companies — including the latest trends, ROI, and how to sell-in digital marketing to your management team— we are offering readers a free phone consultation. Email Grey Matter Marketing at [info@greymattermarketing.com](mailto:info@greymattermarketing.com) to set up a call.

# ABOUT GREY MATTER MARKETING

Grey Matter Marketing is a full-service, award-winning marketing agency working exclusively with medical technology companies. We provide the marketing architecture to build strong connections with providers and patients to drive adoption of innovative technology that improves lives. We have a proven track record in developing both traditional and digital plans that create compelling marketing experiences and drive business results. Our strength is finding the important truth in any communication effort, and translating that truth into something your customer understands, and more importantly, feels. Armed with this knowledge and insight, we roll up our sleeves and do what we do best: work hard, think strategically and deliver.

## ABOUT THE BOOK

In the spring of 2013, Grey Matter Marketing fielded an online survey of 108 marketing professionals employed by U.S. medical technology companies. Grey Matter Marketing requested opinions and information on current trends and challenges in digital marketing. The results of that survey combined with the changing digital landscape inspired this guide. Digital Marketing for Medical Technology Companies outlines how medical technology professionals can use social media in a regulated environment. Even more importantly, it gives readers the supporting evidence needed to recommend specific SEO to management and internal legal and regulatory teams.

Part 2

# SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION

If you are interested in learning more about digital marketing as it relates to medical technology companies — including the latest trends, ROI, and how to sell-in digital marketing to your management team — we are offering readers a free phone consultation.

Email us at [info@greymattermarketing.com](mailto:info@greymattermarketing.com)

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