

New Year, New Internet Marketing Strategy

4 easy-to-stick-with marketing resolutions for 2014

By David Evans, PhD, MBA



Most of us make New Year's resolutions, only to break them (usually by March, if not before). Part of the reason we can't stick with our self-improvement goals is that they are too macro level and overwhelming.

Take your Internet marketing game plan, for example. Sure, you want your website to rank No 1 for all key terms, such as "best plastic surgeon Los Angeles," "revision rhinoplasty Dallas," or "breast implants Park Avenue," and you wish your waiting room was overflowing with patients. Who wouldn't want these things?

The best ways to make resolutions that stick are to be specific and to provide actionable checkpoints along the way.

Resolution No 1: Put the "You" Back in Unique

Unique is a big buzz word in Internet marketing. We hear it all the time. There are unique visitors, there is unique content, and so on. Search engines look to uniqueness to rank your site. The more unique your website, the better your rankings. Patients, too, want to see more of you when they look at your website so you stand out from the fray. Resolve to put the "you" in unique by updating your

"about us" page, for starters. Let patients know why you are so special, whether it is your training, media appearances, awards, pro bono work, or all of the above. Also, spruce up your site with your original before-and-after galleries and testimonials.

Content should also be unique. Are you sure that yours is? Do a few Google searches by cutting and pasting a sentence or two from one of your most popular procedural articles, and see how unique it really is. If it turns out that your content is canned, start writing or hire a crackerjack writer. Start small, and go page-by-page and section-by-section.

Resolution No 2: Become a Social Butterfly

Don't just dip your feet into the social media pool in 2014. Jump in! Use social media channels to show off your practice's personal side. Posts should promote not only procedures, but other interesting articles with topics that may appeal to your friends and fans. Post once a day on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube. Once you get the hang of these platforms, consider Instagram and Pinterest. Consider HootSuite or another deck to post on multiple channels in one log-in. It can be a time-saver. (See "Smart Practices" on page 18 of this issue for more tips on getting social.)

Resolution No 3: Enhance Your Online Reputation

BrightLocal recently published findings showing that consumer use of reviews to evaluate doctors and dentists has skyrocketed, increasing 51% in just 1 year. Now, the use of reviews for doctors and dentists is second only to restaurants. This means you can't just ignore bad reviews anymore. Your reputation-enhancement strategy should be twofold. Part one involves scanning review sites to find the ones that have the best reviews about your practice. Then, place buttons on your site to direct patients to these

treasure troves. Part two is all about encouraging patients—particularly, happy ones—to post reviews. Send post-treatment patients a follow-up email or postcard with easy instructions on how to post an online review. Your staff should follow up with patients multiple times to encourage them to post. Once is not enough.

Resolution No 4: Put Yourself in Your Patient's Shoes

Don't forget about the backbone of good reviews: patient satisfaction. Ask for feedback from your patients through questionnaires or surveys, requesting both positive and negative comments. Use the information to identify patients who are likely to post positive reviews and to isolate negative aspects of the practice. Many negative reviews are not about surgical outcome; they are about the friendliness of the staff and the communication skills/likeability of the surgeon. These issues can be fixed quickly, once identified.

It's also smart to secret shop your practice with email requests, and review the timing and quality of the responses. Record the phone calls coming into the practice, and then listen to them with your staff as a training tool. Ensure that staff members are following up multiple times with potential patients after the initial contact/consultation. A minimum of three follow-up efforts is recommended.

If you follow this action plan, I predict that by year's end, you will be a lot closer to the lofty goals of top rankings on Google and other search engines, and a packed waiting room.

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