

[Guest Post] 5 Reasons Healthcare Marketing Strategies Should Target Baby Boomers by Greg Fawcett of Precision Marketing Partners

☒ Recently we covered the issue of [marketing your medical practice to Millennials](#), the biggest generation group in human history. That got us thinking – what about the other generation groups? We know that they have vastly different needs and wants, but healthcare services are a must for pretty much everyone.

How does medical marketing differ from one group to the next, and what can you do to make your services appeal specifically to each group? Let's consider the Baby Boomers, for example, which is the group currently reaching retirement age.

Reason #1: Numbers Almost Equal Millennials

With roughly [79 million Baby Boomers currently alive in the U.S.](#), this massive generation is second only to the Millennials. Born between 1946 and 1965, they are far more in number than the generation that followed them, which saw only 66 million American births.

Since 2011, the earliest Boomers have begun reaching the age of 65, which means they are likely starting to need treatment for a range of chronic illnesses.

Reason #2: They Feel Younger

Pew Research indicates that the average Boomer feels 9 years younger than their actual age, and that they believe old age only arrives after 72 years. This means there's a strong possibility that they will want to maintain good health for as long as possible.

Most Boomers believe that at 70 they should still have active, healthy lifestyles that include work, leisure and sexual activity. This makes the Baby Boomers a primary target market for all [healthcare marketing strategies](#).

Reason #3: Boomers Are Online

The perception remains that older people aren't online users, but this couldn't be more inaccurate. Forrester Research shows that Boomers between 47 and 55 years old spend more than 40 hours per month online.

Compared with Gen X'ers (35 to 46 years) and Gen Y'ers or Millennials (18 to 34) who spent 35 and 32 hours per month online respectively, that's a significant number of hours.

Reason #4: They're Wealthier, and They Spend More

Boomers [control three-quarters of the country's wealth](#) and outspend other generations by \$400 billion annually. In addition, they spent \$650 online per person over a three-month period in 2010, compared with \$581 per Millennial during the same period.

This means they are comfortable using online shopping carts and databases, which could bode well for patient portals and content marketing.

Reason #5: Boomer Marketing is Different

So, given all these statistics, how do you market differently to the baby boomers? Research shows that these are the important points:

- They are more likely to pay attention to reviews by peers than other generation groups are.
- Only 50% of Boomers use search engines to find products and services, compared with 60% and 70% among other groups.
- Boomers are the group most likely to access a website from an address found on printed material.
- They value the brand or patient experience more than the services themselves. Apple found this out recently and adapted its marketing of the iPad to point out the simplicity of the experience and the usefulness of the product. This has proved to be a pivotal point with the Boomer market compared with other products that promoted how “cool” devices were instead of how useful they are to everyday life.

By factoring these points into your healthcare marketing strategies, you can target Boomers during what they consider to be their prime of life. Secure them as patients now with the allure of achieving future quality of life with preventive care, and you’ll have happy, healthy patients throughout their twilight years.

✘ *About the Author: Greg Fawcett is President of leading North Carolina medical marketing firm [Precision Marketing Partners](#). In this capacity Greg helps healthcare service entities to research their target markets, build their brands and develop creative strategies to reach patients.*

Do Medical Practices Really Have to Market Anymore?



With more changes coming to healthcare in 2013 and 2014, should practices be looking at traditional marketing, social media marketing, or do they even have to market at all? I asked healthcare marketer Greg Fawcett from Precision Marketing Partners to talk to me about the future of marketing for the medical practice.

Mary Pat: There is currently a physician shortage that is expected to become more severe in the coming years. If each physician is expected to have more patients than s/he can handle, why is marketing a medical practice important in the current/future environment?

Greg: Natural attrition contributes to the loss of clients in all types of businesses, and medical practices are no exception. No matter how many patients you have or how loyal they are, death, relocation or a switch to managed care programs that you don't belong to are bound to reduce your client list over time. Unless you're vigilant and market consistently to replace those patients you lose, you'll wake up one day to the realization that business isn't what it used to be!

Here are a few of the reasons why you need to do medical practice marketing:

- Establish your practice's reputation as specialists in a particular field of medicine
- Attract new patients to build your practice
- Increase awareness of your practice and create a dominant presence in your specific community
- Improve your efficiencies and maximize the return on your financial investment

Mary Pat: Many medical practices seem to be doing fine using their in-house talent for marketing. What is the value proposition for taking on the additional expense of hiring a professional for marketing?

Greg: Comprehensive management of your medical practice depends on making the most of all opportunities to achieve economies of scale. Marketing may be necessary, but it isn't practical to do it yourself if it's not your area of expertise. Appointing a professional medical practice consultant with in-depth knowledge of inbound marketing techniques can help you overcome the issues your practice faces, and find ways to achieve financial success that benefit your patients and staff.

Mary Pat: So much in healthcare is changing, but a lot is happening in marketing too: how has the internet changed how medical groups can market their services?

Greg: Medical practice marketing using new media channels offers the opportunity for patients to comment, write reviews and spread the word through social networking. Healthcare is uniquely service-driven, and research shows that 80% of consumers trust the advice or opinion of others.

This has had significant impact over the past 20 years, mostly because the Internet has given people the power and ability to

choose for themselves what information they want to receive. It also gives patients a choice of the channels through which they prefer to consume it.

Mary Pat: Is it true that social media is free advertising and that every practice should be taking advantage of this?

Greg: Absolutely. Social media is not entirely free, because it carries a cost in time for someone to craft, post and monitor content in order to be effective. It is much cheaper, however, than any form of traditional media, and it gives you direct access to the burgeoning youth market. These are your patients of the future, while their parents and grandparents are current patients for whom they may be making healthcare decisions.

Mary Pat: What is Inbound Marketing?

Greg: Inbound marketing focuses on providing information that generates interest among the members of your target audience who are actively looking for your products and services. In the medical practice marketing context, this translates into making it easy for your prospects to find you, then giving them information that creates demand using methods such as content marketing, social networking and publishing.

This differs from outbound marketing, which relies more on advertising spend than a digital presence and “pushing” information at the target market through traditional mass media channels, such as television, print publications, radio advertising, direct mail campaigns and email blasts.

Mary Pat: What about a practice’s or provider’s reputation? How does marketing manage that part of the brand?

Greg: Your brand is associated with your services and the reputation or position you hold among your patients and target audience. The Internet has made it much easier to disseminate feedback about your brand, both positive and negative. By

taking a proactive approach to marketing, you can manage the impact of patient commentary on your brand.

- Build up your online reputation through addressing issues raised by patients.
- Encourage open feedback online in a forum or on social media.
- Thank users for positive feedback, and address negative feedback publicly to resolve problems.
- Increase the value you offer to users by delivering news and information online.

Mary Pat: What types of marketing challenges are your healthcare clients facing in today's market?

Greg: With the healthcare industry currently in a state of transition and the reduced marketing budgets resulting from the economic slump, medical practices face the challenge of finding ways to promote their services with far less funds. In addition, the industry's high levels of both regulation and litigation make practitioners nervous about the relative "freedom" of the online environment.

It's an ideal time for medical practice marketing to embrace managed content marketing, take a strategic approach to carefully controlled social media, and start building databases of market segments they can target with specific approaches.

Mary Pat: If a physician wanted to start a new solo practice from scratch – what would be your recommendation for an initial marketing plan?

Greg: Any initial marketing plan needs a comprehensive mix of media with components of inbound and outbound marketing. While traditional medical practice marketing still has a place, particularly with the older generations, new media offers opportunities for achieving significant results at vastly reduced costs.

Begin with a branding strategy, carry it through your website design, and get your online presence up and running as fast as possible. Then drive traffic to your various profiles using traditional media, and once you get it, engage users online to build up relationships. Gather intel about your audience from the feedback you get, and use that to inform direct and email marketing campaigns and special promotions.

Mary Pat: Does a medical practice have to use a marketing firm like yours for “everything”? What are the options for practices of different sizes, specialties and budgets?

Greg: To implement a cohesive marketing plan, it’s best to keep all your marketing in one place. This helps to achieve an integrated program using a variety of media such as direct mail and print marketing as well as the digital marketing options of SEO, Google AdWords and some of the other regular inbound methods. Most agencies can work side-by-side with your own marketing personnel or other practitioners, if you prefer this approach.

Our firm works best with small to mid-size practices that have a local community presence and would like to expand their market. Budgets vary depending on the scope of the work.

Mary Pat: Is there a single basic step that you would advise all healthcare entities to take immediately to market their groups?

Greg: Start a blog. Content marketing is huge, and it helps with one of the healthcare industries biggest challenges, which is to remain relevant to its rapidly-changing market. By promoting a channel that offers free information and advice to patients, you can build up a readership to which you can communicate messages directly and in a time-sensitive manner.

You can learn more about Precision Marketing Partners at their

[website](#), or if you'd like to talk more about healthcare marketing, you can contact Greg Fawcett at greg@pmpnc.com or call him at (919) 457-6566.



Improve Your Medical Practice Website's Search Ranking in 15 Minutes

Everybody wants their medical practice's website to rank at the top of Google search results for their target keyword phrase. Dominating Google can get your medical, dental, or chiropractic in front of people who are *actively* looking for *exactly* what your business offers – something that print, radio and television advertisements are not as effective at doing. **Simply put, a top-ranking website can be a business owner's dream come true.**

But most business owners don't know much about search engine optimization. And getting to the top of Google search results is not a cinch. Depending on the competitiveness of a keyword phrase, it can take months (even years) for a site to climb to the top of the Google ladder.

Don't let this reality distract you from taking action, though. If your website is new or just isn't meeting your expectations, there are some

simple and powerful things you can do in just fifteen minutes that will help make your medical practice website more search engine friendly.

So here's the challenge I am issuing you right now: *take fifteen minutes to do (or make sure you have done) these three things*. After you do, come back and let us know how it went in the comments section below. And of course, if you have any questions, feel free to [email me](#). I reply to every email.

Ready? Here, we go:

#1. Identify your primary target keyword phrase (time: 5 minutes)

Your primary target keyword phrase is the main phrase you will optimize your site for. It is the phrase that members of your target market will use the most to find products and services that businesses like yours offer.

Go to the [Google Keyword Tool](#). It is completely free (Google is amazing). Type in possible primary keyword phrases. The chances are pretty good that your primary keyword phrase is “[Your city name] [Your specialty].” For example, if you are a pediatrician practicing in Denver, it is probably “Denver Pediatrician.” Nevertheless, give it a go and search a variety of options before you make a decision.

While using the Google Keyword Tool, pay special attention to the “Local Monthly Searches” column of data (obviously, the more traffic a keyword phrase has, the more weight you should assign to it). Once you locate a keyword phrase that you think is a good fit, tattoo it in your brain; you'll use it for parts two and three of this challenge.

#2. List your business and website on key directories (time: 7 minutes)

Backlinks (links from other websites that point to your website) are strong indicators of a website's authority. Google loves authoritative websites and rewards them with top spots. There are hundreds of directory websites out there that can help you build backlinks. But we only have fifteen minutes. To get the highest return on your time, make sure your medical practice is listed on the websites that seem to have the highest search engine klout:

- Google Plus Local (formerly Google Places) – [list your medical practice on Google Plus Local](#)

- Yelp – [list your medical practice on Yelp](#)
- CitySearch

CitySearch is peculiar. As of writing this post, they don't have an easy way to create a business profile on their website. But I have a temporary solution: email them your business information at myaccount@citygridmedia.com. I did this just a day ago for a client and CitySearch got back to me that very same day. I know, it is a bit of a hassle, but it is worth the extra effort.

When listing your business on these sites, make sure that your business name, address, website and telephone number are written exactly the same. Also, in places where it makes sense to do so (like in Category or Description sections), include the target keyword phrase you identified in step 1.

#3. Include your primary keyword phrase in the title, header and alt tags on your homepage (time: 3 minutes)

I have risked dropping too much SEO jargon on you by casually mentioning title, header and alt tags, which might cause you to exceed the 15 minute milestone. If you are unfamiliar with these, you can quickly learn what they are [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Search engines like Google have bots that crawl and index websites. These pieces of software look for title, header and alt tags to see what the website is about. Think of these tags as little website clues Google seeks out when forming an opinion on websites.

I'll explain this to-do with a handy example of how this is done correctly. Live Well Chiropractic and Lifestyle is a new [Chiropractic practice in Louisville, Kentucky](#). If you visit this practice's homepage, you will see that the title and header tags contain "Louisville Chiropractor" – their primary keyword phrase. The same phrase is wisely included in the first image's alt tag.

Here is a screenshot of the homepage that I have referred to for your visual enjoyment:



So there you go: three easy things you can do to help your medical practice's website get found on search engines.

Now, go out there and knock them out today!

If you have any questions, comments or tips, please share them by commenting below!

About Matt Langan:

Matt Langan is a Co-Founder of [CadenceMed](#), a company that improves patient relationships by optimizing the look, feel and functionality of a medical practice's online presence.