

Transcript: Module 3a

The 3 Pillars of Search Engine Marketing

» What are Search Engines?

For all intents and purposes, the only search engine that matters is Google. You use Google, I use Google, and we know from the DVMelite website platform data that 97% of the searchers that are coming to veterinary websites are also using Google. In fact, as we can see in the graph, 59% of consumers say that they use Google every single month to locate a local good or service. This means that your prospective clients are using Google search to make a selection, and if you are not highly visible, you will be virtually invisible to your market.

Consider for a moment a scenario that I posed at a recent lecture. I asked everyone to stand up and I'd created signs at four corners of the room. One sign said 'online', one said 'ask a friend', one said 'yellow pages' and the last one said 'walk in'. These four corners of the room represented options. I asked the audience if they had moved to a new city, what would they do to find a new veterinarian? Would they go online, ask a friend, go to the yellow pages or walk in to a practice they just saw on the street. Virtually the entire audience moved into the 'online' corner. As you can imagine, this was quite stressful for me as I had over 200 people crowded into a single corner! This was actually a little surprising to me, too. I had assumed that the online segment would be over represented, but I had no idea to what degree.

Then I posed a second question. To those that were not already in the 'online' corner, what would they do next? They'd asked a friend for a recommendation. Then what? Were they going to go to the yellow pages, walk in or go online? Everyone from the 'ask a friend' section walked over to the 'online' corner. So take a mental picture of this representation. Are your marketing budget, and your client attraction and engagement efforts proportioned accordingly? It's important for us as an industry to recognize that our online presence is so important, and that in order for us to be successful we have to make sure that it's not only inspiring and beautiful, but that it's also easily found.

» Search Engine Visibility

So, what exactly does search engine visibility mean and are these rankings really that important? What happens if we're on the second page? Is that really significant? Well, just take a look at these search engine rankings and the corresponding clicks and time spent within the Google search results. As you'll see, the vast majority are in the top 3 sections. What's more, the first page, in its entirety, comprises 97% of the clicks. This means that only 3% of the people that are looking for a veterinarian in your area ever go to the second page. What happens if your clinic is on that second page? It's virtually invisible to your targeted market.

We have to make sure, at a minimum, that we get your website ranked on the first page for those keywords. As you can imagine, this is going to be the driving force behind the growth of your veterinary website and the growth of your online practice visibility. The more visibility we can garner, the more we will be able to generate new clients and engage with our existing clients.

Hopefully your practice is already found on the first page of the Google search engine results. But, do you know exactly what is being represented of your practice? There's something called a Google Plus Local listing, and it's what the majority of your prospective clients are finding when they look up a vet in your area. Google Plus Local pulls information automatically from the internet and from your website and it populates this listing with these various images. You have no control over this unless you claim and verify your listing.

Just look at this example. I'm sure that this practice has no idea that this is the primary image representing their practice to new clients. I'm going to show you exactly how to claim and optimize your Google Plus Local listing to double your client engagement and to drive new prospective clients to your practice.

» Pay Per Click Marketing

Pay-per-click is essentially advertising directly with Google. Let's take a look at an actual Google search result as an example. If we were to look up "Toronto vet", we would see a beige area appear at the top of the search results. These are paid advertisements. Each of these practices are paying \$1 - \$2 per click to show up at the very top when a user types in "Toronto vet". They would also show up for other keywords such as "Toronto veterinarian", "Toronto vet clinic" or "Toronto animal hospital". There are also further ads along the right hand side of the search engine results as well.

The great thing about pay-per-click marketing is that it's instant. When you start a pay-per-click campaign, immediately you will show up at the top of the search engine results. It's also laser targeted, because you get to choose the exact keywords that you want to display for. Finally, you're advertising directly with Google, so there's no middleman and you're engaged in a real-time bidding process with the other businesses that are bidding on similar keywords.

The negative to pay-per-click is that you have to pay to play. As soon as you stop paying for your advertisement, it will disappear. There is no long-term value or asset being developed through pay-per-click marketing. Regardless, I highly recommend pay-per-click as a valuable practice growth tool.

3

» Search Engine Optimization

Now, if we scroll further down the page to below the paid ads, we'll see the organic search results. Search engine optimization is the art and science of getting your website listed within these free results. These results are called "organic" because they rely on Google's algorithm, which is constantly changing but is based on a number of fundamental principles which we will go over in greater detail in the next module. The great thing about search engine optimization is that you're building an asset. If you implement the strategies that we'll be discussing, over time your practice is going to become highly visible in this section.

Each time somebody clicks on one of your links, it's entirely free. Unlike pay-per-click advertising, which charges you every time somebody clicks, you will not have to pay anything for this increased visibility. The negative aspect is that it takes time. Search engine optimization is a long term strategy, and one that requires a real systematic approach in order to be successful.

» Google Plus Local/Google Maps

The third pillar of search engine marketing is what's called Google Plus Local and Google Maps. The area with the 'abc' markers and the map on the right hand side of the search engine results are examples of these listings. As you can see, these occupy a dominant section of the search engine results, so it's important that we know if your practice has been in these listings, and exactly what's being represented.

Another area in which these listings display is Google Maps. As an example, we typed in 'vet' and a small town. The results show all the hospitals in that area. Now what stands out? As you can see, one of them has an image and one of them is on top. We're going to show you how you can make your practice's listing have an engaging image that will come up in the search engine results and how you can make sure that your practice is highly visible.

Our objective for your practice is to create an engaging listing. At the moment your listing might not yet be claimed, so it may not have any of these warm and engaging elements. I find that these abandoned listings tend to attract negative reviews. It's really important that we show our clients that we care and that we frame every representation of our practice in a compassionate light.

4

Let's look at some key statistics. These stats were taken from just one month of a Google Plus Local listing in a town that had 65,000 people. As you can see, about 66 people actually clicked on the listing to get more information - either to go to the practice's website or to get directions. Now a question to ask is, although it seems like a lot of people, are these just people looking for that practice by name? I'd like to refer you to the bottom of that slide where you can see the words that people were actually using in their searches.

They were not looking up the practice by name, but instead were using generic terms, such as "vets", "vet", and "veterinarian". These were potential clients that were looking at all the vets in the area and trying to come to a decision. So, if your practice was not shown in these results, or if it was shown in a less than positive light, you would be missing out on these potential clients and we, as a profession, would not be there to engage those that are looking for our help. It's extremely important that we get this Google Plus Local listing right and make it a 10 out of 10.

At one of my recent lectures, I asked the audience if they'd had any trouble with accurate Google Plus Local information. The hands started to go up. One of the

most heart wrenching stories involved a client calling them on the phone while they were circling an empty lot with a trailer full of horses. The client stated that they just followed the address information on the practice's Google Plus Local listing. The poor receptionist had to tell the fellow that he was circling a lot that was an hour and a half away from the actual practice location.

So, not only will we be increasing our client engagement through this process, but we're also going to be creating verifiable and accurate information for your practice's listing to ensure that you are properly represented online.

» Let's jump into the how: The 3 C's of Google Plus Local Visibility

Completeness – If we think about search engine results from Google's perspective, they want to show the results that have the most time and care spent on them, and they don't want to be showing inaccurate information either. So, if we dot our i's and cross our t's, Google will reward our practice with higher listings. This means we need to make sure we fill out our practice information and include lots of engaging, compassion focused images and links to videos. I've included some sample links that you can use in the meantime, until you get your own videos of your practice. We also need to fill out the "offers" section.

Consistency – If we think about it from Google's perspective, they have to build an algorithm to try and show the most accurate listings above those that are inaccurate. How do they do that? They make sure that all the information they gather in an automated way is cross-referenced. So, if your website has a different address format than your Google Plus Local listing or another online directory, then Google may deem their own listing as possibly inaccurate and not list it at all. We have to make sure your address is in the same format on your Google Plus Local listing, on your citations (which we'll cover next) and on your website. For example, if you have "West" in your address, either it's "W." or "West" consistently – make sure you're not using both.

Citations – I've alluded to these a number of times when describing where Google gathers its information. A citation is essentially an online directory, such as Yelp or Angie's List. The importance of these online directories is that they each have their own database – they're like a mini Google Plus Local. So, if you're able to claim and verify these online directories, Google will reward your listing with greater authority and greater visibility.

As you can see from this dizzying image of the citation ecosystem, it's quite

complex. Don't worry – I've created a citation jump-start tool that you can use to claim the most important citations, and there are only about 5. If you have time, you can claim others, but these 5 will go a long way to increasing your Google visibility. They'll also serve as a foundation for your reputation management, because now any time someone writes a review on these citation sources that you've claimed, you will be notified so you can take action in response to those reviews.

» Let's move on to our 2-part action plan

Your first task is to use the Google Plus Local optimization tool. This is a detailed manual that will walk you through, step by step, how to optimize your Google Plus Local page to increase your client engagement significantly. Don't worry – it's not complicated and it's there in step by step format. While you're doing this, be sure to have your boilerplate messaging on hand, because the description of your website should be copied and pasted from this document in order to be compelling and inspirational.

We've also purchased the licenses for photos that you can use in your listing. This is a great way to get started even if you don't have your own professional photographer. Just visit the resources provided and download the images. One key point to remember is that the very first image you upload will be the image that will be found under your Google listing so be sure that it is compassion-focused. What we don't want is just an image of your building because, as we've already reviewed, that's generally uninspiring and not something that's going to prompt client engagement. Instead, use one of these proven images as your very first upload.

Next, I've also included 2 video resources from DVM 360 that you can use in your listing. This is important from a consistency perspective and can be used as a placeholder until you get your own videos. Finally, I've provided you with a checklist. Just make sure you have all of these boxes completed and your Google listing will not only have increased visibility, but it will also be designed to engage.

Your next homework task is to tackle what's called the "Citations Jump-Start". Again, there are so many you can claim to help your listing, but I've selected the top 5 that will create the greatest impact and are the easiest for you to verify. We've gone through in detail the step by step process for each one, so just follow the instructions and claim the most important citation sources. You'll find a Citations Jump-Start for both US-based practices and Canadian-based practices, as these citations vary slightly for both locations.

Before concluding this module, I'd like to share with you the real impact of what's going to happen when you implement these strategies. This is a graph from one of our clients and it shows the impressions and the actions that people take.

As you can see from the past month, there's been, on average, about 20 impressions and 3 actions per day. The red arrow represents when these strategies outlined in this module were implemented, and look at the results. The impressions nearly doubled from about 20 to about 40, and the actions suddenly spiked. So, while approximately 90 people were interacting with the listing per month, suddenly that number jumped to over 200. In one single action we've engaged an extra hundred potential clients each and every month, and this is entirely free. So, if we do further math, 1200 potential clients will now come into contact with this practice that would otherwise never have before. Talk about a significant client engagement and practice growth tool! I hope you can see how important it is to follow these strategies, and the potential impact it can have on your practice.

» Common mistakes to avoid:

- 1) Not using a compassion-focused first image. Remember, this image is going to show on your Google Maps listing, so you have to make sure it's really engaging and that this image will prompt those users searching for a vet in your area to click on your listing.
- 2) Using incorrect categories. My recommendation is, at a minimum, to use the categories "veterinarian" and "animal hospital". Then, if you have any other services, you will see as you write in the name of those services, suggestions by Google. Be sure to use those suggestions.
- 3) Finally, make sure that you do go through the sequence of verifying the 5 most important citations. Once you've put the information together, you can hand it off to a staff member to handle when they have time over the next few weeks.

7

It's been a pleasure working together today and I look forward to our next module, where we're going to create a content-generating machine, to empower you and your staff to systematically write in a way that's going to be engaging and found by your local audience. Each time you write one of these articles, you're going to be carving out a little section of online real estate, and this will fuel the growth of your website and your practice.

If you have any questions while you're working on this week's homework, feel free to email them and we'll help you out as best we can.

See you in the next module!