



Which is better: SEO or PPC?

Dr. Lou Shuman and Ian McNickle, MBA, discuss the ins and outs of optimizing your online marketing results.

[curated by Dr. Lou Shuman with Ian McNickle, MBA, co-founder of WEO Media]

Each month, Dr. Lou Shuman consults with a dental digital marketing specialist to discuss the latest developments in SEO strategies, website optimization, social media trends, online reputation management, marketing and more.

This month, Dr. Shuman sat down with Ian McNickle, MBA, partner and co-founder of WEO Media, to talk about online dental practice marketing and the benefits of search

engine optimization (SEO) and pay-per-click (PPC) advertising.

Do you think SEO or PPC is a better tactic for online marketing results?

SEO consists of a wide range of activities that are done every month in order to get a website ranking highly on Google search results (or any search engine). PPC consists of using paid ads to generate traffic to a specific webpage. PPC ads

can be used on search engines like Google and Bing as well as social media platforms like Facebook and YouTube.

SEO and PPC results show up on different sections of a search result page. PPC ads typically show up in the advertising section of search results, which are located at the very top of the page in the first three or four positions listed as well as the very bottom of the page. By contrast, organic search results (which

are driven by SEO activities) are shown in the Local Map section as well as in 10 organic listings below the Local Map. It is estimated that more than 90 percent of all clicks are on the Local Map and organic listings.

SEO and PPC both can get your website found on page one of Google, but which is better?

SEO and PPC are both recommended for any online marketing program that wants to drive new patient growth. When implemented properly, they work together to complement each other.

For local businesses like a dental practice, each location has a physical address that serves that local market. Google will rank a local business in the organic results for the city corresponding to the physical address of the business but typically not for the neighboring or surrounding geographies.

This creates a problem. Your practice could serve patients in these nearby areas, but you won't show up in search results for those areas because you don't have a physical business address there. (Note: A P.O. box is not a legitimate physical address as far as Google is concerned).

This is where PPC ads come in, correct?

Yes. What we like to do at WEO Media is use SEO and PPC together to strategically maximize results. When we set up a PPC campaign, what we'll often do is analyze the search terms and geographies where the practice website is already ranking well and compare that to a map of all the geographies they could realistically pull people in as new patients. The areas on the map where the website is not ranked on page one are good candidates for a PPC ad campaign. It is best to target the top two or three services (such as dental implants, cosmetic dentistry, braces, etc.), and focus those ads on the geographic areas where the website is not on page one.

This approach is a smart way to get the maximum number of clicks from potential new patients for a given marketing budget. Obviously, the bigger the budget, the more clicks we can generate.

How should doctors select an SEO/PPC provider?

It is a good idea to ask to see some client examples. We often send potential clients a PDF that highlights a bunch of our clients ranking high on page one to demonstrate what we can do. In addition, I would recommend asking these questions:

- Is your company a Certified Google Partner company? If so, that indicates they probably have some people who technically know what they're doing — though it doesn't

necessarily mean they will do a good job for you. I see practices getting ripped off all the time by companies that just aren't putting in the hard work to get results.

- Do you have a lot of experience in the dental industry? There are lots of companies that offer SEO and PPC services, but not too many that focus entirely on the dental industry. We work with hundreds of dental practices and that experience makes a big difference in our ability to get results.

- Do I have to sign a long-term contract? It often takes time to get results with online marketing, but I would avoid 12-month contracts (or longer). It is reasonable to agree to a six-month contract, but I would recommend against longer contracts.

If an agency cannot demonstrate improving trends after six months, something is probably wrong with what they're doing. ●

If you have questions about your dental practice's website, social media or online marketing, you may contact WEO Media at 888-246-6906 or info@weomedia.com for a consultation to learn more about the latest industry trends and strategies. The consultation is free if you identify yourself as a reader of this publication.

ABOUT IAN McNICKLE, MBA

Ian McNickle, MBA, is a national speaker, writer and marketer. He is a co-founder and partner at WEO Media and winner of the 2017 Cellerant Best of Class Award for

Dental Marketing and Dental Websites. If you have questions about any marketing related topic, please contact Ian McNickle directly at ian@weomedia.com or by calling 888-246-6906. For more information, you can visit them online at weodental.com.

ABOUT DR. LOU SHUMAN

Dr. Lou Shuman is a long-time contributor to Dental Products Report and president and CEO of Cellerant Consultant Group. He is also the chairman of the Technology Advisory Board at WEO Media, a Venturer-in-Residence at Harvard's Innovation Lab and he founded a dental-education internet company.

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