

Search Engine Marketing for the Pharmaceutical Industry

Search engine marketing is one of the best sources of qualified, targeted traffic and meaningful market data, whether that traffic originates from "organic" unpaid search listings or paid advertising listings.

Unique Challenges

Search engines such as Google, Yahoo! and MSN Live Search are the first places many consumers go for health information. Yet because of regulatory issues, search marketing poses unique challenges for the pharmaceutical industry.

Consider these statistics:

- 80% of American Internet users (113 million adults) have searched for health information
- 66% begin at search engines
- 27% begin at health-related sites

Source: August 2006: Pew Internet & American Life Project. Based on 2,928 respondents

Connecting with Consumers

Consumers who use search engines to find health information are three times more likely to spend time on pharmaceutical-branded websites and twice as likely to view third-party health sites. These statistics mean it is more important than ever to have a coherent search marketing strategy.

Paid Search Marketing and Regulatory Issues

Paid search, or paid placement, uses a bidding process to ensure top positioning within the sponsored results of search listings for targeted key phrases. When the key phrase is searched for using a search engine such as Google, Yahoo! or MSN Live Search, the listing will return as a result to that query.

Regulatory Benefits of Paid Search Marketing

- Keyphrase control
- Control of text listing and landing pages
- Ability to respond to market concerns in a timely manner

Paid Search Best Practices

- Educate and involve regulatory team
- Present and approve corporate policy via regulatory
- Include safety information on every website page
- Put condition and brand name in text ad – one click away from safety information
- Be complaint and minimize destination disappointment

Organic Search Marketing and Regulatory Issues

Organic search, also referred to as natural search, refers to listing results that are produced by search engine algorithms rather than sponsored links. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of enhancing a website so that it meets the criteria of search engine algorithms for good code, good content and good links. The higher a site scores against these requirements, the higher ranking it will receive in organic results.

Organic Search Best Practices: Content (Relevance)

- Be aware of how consumers talk about conditions
- Present keyphrase research to your regulatory team
- Design solutions for frequently searched terms such as “schizophrenia” when guidelines dictate a sixth-grade reading level
- Plan for misspellings and popular keyphrases used with incorrect circumstances

Organic Search Best Practices: Code (Indexability)

- Find out what your users see vs. what search engines see
- Do not include competitors’ drug brand names in meta tags
- Make sure visible and non-visible content is approved by marketing and regulatory teams

Organic Search Best Practices: Links (Authoritativeness)

- Have all text links approved by regulatory team
- Link from U.S.-based sites for U.S.-approved drugs
- Be careful of making claims—linking from “cure” sites could be seen as false claims
- Stay away from “bad neighborhoods” i.e. link farms
- Optimize press releases to enhance press release visibility
- Link properly to product sites from press releases
- Leverage existing corporate assets and relationships to enhance website “authoritativeness”

About Catalyst

Catalyst, a WPP company, is a leading provider of search engine marketing services with nearly a **decade of experience** in both organic search engine optimization (SEO) and paid search services. We offer a unique combination of strategic capabilities with tactical implementation and on-going solution management experience. Our clients include national and international organizations in the consumer product, biotech and pharmaceutical industries, including Procter & Gamble, Pfizer, Novartis, Biogen Idec, Noven, and the Drug Information Association.

About Heather Frahm, President and Chief Operating Officer

Heather Frahm, who co-founded Catalyst online in 1998, was an early proponent of the potential of the Internet. Heather’s unique expertise combines experience in Internet marketing with an in-depth understanding of business and organizations. This combination means that she creates online business and marketing programs that give clients’ tangible results. In addition, Heather has created a specialty niche within the company focusing on the unique online marketing needs of the pharmaceutical industry.