

## Just the Facts



**153,144,180**

US Active Internet Home Users in July 2008 (Nielsen Interactive)

**83%**

Percentage of respondents who said they have visited websites for healthcare information. (Nielsen Interactive)

**17.3 million**

Unique visitors to WebMD in July 2008. (Comscore)

**2.24 million**

Searches for **back pain** in September 2008 (Google)

**90,500**

Searches for **herniated disc** September 2008 (Google)

**58%**

Seniors (65-74) who regularly log on to the Internet. (Retirement Living TV)

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## Search Engine Optimization and the Medical Practice

- method to improve ranking on Google and Yahoo
- no per-click cost involved
- natural search more trusted by consumers
- recognizes societal trust in M.D.'s



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Search Engine Optimization is a series of actions that are intended to improve the ranking of a website on the major search engines, such as Google, Yahoo and MSN. This is not the same thing as paying for Google advertising, or "pay-per-click" (PPC) advertising on other websites.

Search Engine Optimization is intended to increase the number of visitors to a website through what is called "natural search" or "organic search". Natural search is an internet term for a simple idea. Natural search results are the search results that a user obtains when he/she searches for a topic, a condition, or idea on a search engine. To repeat..., they are not paid ads.

Internet users have become significantly more aware of the difference between actual search results on Google, compared to the advertising that appears alongside those "natural search" results. Accordingly, users tend to click actual search results and trust those results more.



Search engines have a vested interest in providing relevant results and use complex algorithms to judge the relevance of a webpage. The technology has advanced greatly since the time when "optimization" often meant repeating the same word multiple times on a web page. This method is now contraindicated.

A simple example of current technology is that Google calculates that the word "lumbar" is sometimes related to the phrase "herniated disc" or word "radiculopathy", and yields results accordingly.

Factors measured include words, ideas and related concepts found on the page and its parent website, popularity of the page, relationship of the page to the web at large, age of website, etc. Google reports that more than 100 factors (positive and negative) are included in their ranking.

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## Business on the Web



### Mergers and Acquisitions

Revolution Health Network announced October 3rd that it has merged with Waterfront Media to create a group of health-related Web sites that will compete with the most trafficked medical website, WebMD.

WebMD had 17.3 million unique visitors in July 2008. Waterfront Media operates the Everyday Health Network, which is a collection of health Web sites that received 14.7 million unique visitors during the same period, making it the second most frequent destination for health information online. Revolution Health's websites collected 11.3 million unique visitors, during the same period.

The new company plans to operate as Waterfront Media and will integrate the Revolution Health sites into the Everyday Health Network, resulting in 24 total sites. According to Benjamin Wolin, CEO of Waterfront, the combined company will have a more than \$100 million revenue in 2009, which would double Waterfront's 2007 revenue.



### Availability of Technology

The World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report 2009-09 ranks the United States 11th in the world for technological readiness. The measurement relates to the availability of Internet infrastructure, digital communications, broadband and usage of personal computers.

The Netherlands ranked in the number one position. The Scandinavian countries of Sweden and Denmark rounded out the top three positions.

## Search Engine Optimization (continued)

A successful website must include useful and informative content. Search engines are designed to exclude useless websites. The primary techniques of optimization include careful analysis of search terms, their volume and relevance..., restructuring of your content, titles and keywords to be more search friendly..., creating content to address specific topics..., organization of the architecture of your website to promote specific ideas..., creation of inbound links to your website.

More advanced techniques might also include positioning your website within a "neighborhood" of authoritative links, placing your website within social networks (eg. facebook, linkedin) on the Internet, or the creation of related websites whose purpose is to direct traffic to the primary website.



All of the techniques are intended to result in your website ranking well on the search engines when a prospective patient searches for words or phrases that are relevant to your practice or the patient's needs. Successful optimization can yield significant increases in the number of people who view a website.

Although search engine optimization is clearly compatible with the marketing and positioning efforts of a successful practice, it is significantly different from purchasing advertising. The main advantages of search engine optimization as compared to pay per click advertising are:

- Patient perception that they are viewing information vs. advertising
- Avoids "bidding wars" with other local practices
- Long term cost is typically less per visitor than PPC
- Builds the overall internet presence of your website and practice
- Enhances practice reputation and recognition

The primary disadvantage of optimization is that direct measurement of short term results is misleading and/or impossible. Results occur over a longer time frame and are seen in overall traffic increases from search engines. Accordingly, it is important that the practice has confidence in their chosen provider.

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### Next Issue

Video on Your Practice Website. - Good Idea?