

# Pharmaceutical Executive

FOR GLOBAL BUSINESS AND MARKETING LEADERS

## Alternative Media

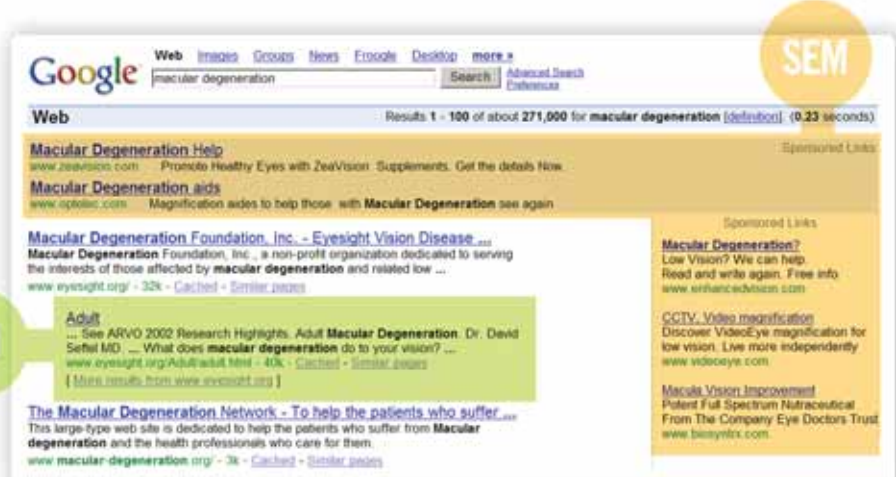
### Searching for Answers

Find out how your target audiences search the Web.

**T**he most important web page to communicate with doctors and patients may not be one that you can control directly. Instead, it's the page of results that your potential customers see when they use search engines, such as Google, Yahoo!, or MSN. The importance of the search engine has been well documented:

A 2004 study by the Center for the Digital Future (a project by the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communication) found that search engines are the number-one resource for those seeking health information—used by 86 percent of those with health queries. Almost two-thirds of people seeking health information online use a search engine rather than directly inputting a URL, according to a 2002 survey conducted by the Boston Consulting Group.

Because a search engine plays a huge role in directing customers to sites, marketers are paying increased attention to how information-seekers carry out searches, and to how search engines process queries and rank results. The



With SEO, you can raise your Web site's ranking on various search engines, like Google, Yahoo!, or MSN. This will enable users to see your link at the top of their search-results page, thereby increasing the likelihood that they'll click on your site first. The caveat: It can take three-to-six months to improve a site's ranking. With SEM, you can buy sponsored links that appear at the top or the side of the search-results page. This way, you can link users immediately to your Web site. The caveat: Not all users will click on the ads.

techniques they have developed, known as search marketing, are becoming increasingly important for both marketers and patients.

#### Basic Strategies: A Primer

There are two parts to Internet search marketing. The first—search engine optimization (SEO)—looks at ways to raise a particular page's ranking on the search engine, with the hope of getting a site

onto the all-important first page of results. The other—search engine marketing (SEM)—takes advantage of opportunities for paid placement of ads or links on search engines.

SEO A typical search on Google or Yahoo! may return thousands or tens of thousands of results. To make the information more useful to searchers, the engines use computer algorithms to rank the relevance of pages, with the most rele-



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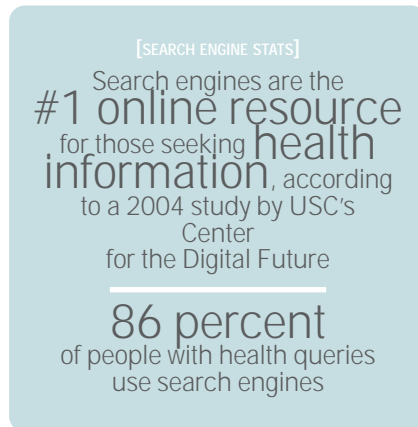
vant appearing first in the result list. Each engine uses its own techniques, but most of them rely on factors like frequency of key words, placement of key words on the page, the number and quality of sites linking to the page, and so forth. SEO uses design, coding, editing and creation of content, and other methods to improve the performance of a site.

SEM, also known as pay-per-click, refers to text ads, or sponsored links that appear at the top or side of the search results. Marketers can buy certain keywords or search terms that they think searchers will use. When users enter those terms in the search box, the text ads appear on the search results page, linking users to a customized landing page on the marketer's Web site. Ideally, when searchers reach the landing page, they should see content that's relevant to the search term they used. A search engine's ordering of text ads is based on how much each advertiser has agreed to pay for a search term and, in some cases, how often people actually click on the ads.

Pharma marketing managers will find value in both marketing techniques. While SEO places a site higher in the search results, it can take three to six months before it will improve the site's ranking. SEM enables a marketing message to appear immediately, affording marketers the ability to control the search terms that generate the text ads. They can also control where searchers go since the link embedded in the ad, when clicked, leads directly to a predetermined landing page. However, not all searchers click on these ads.

### Consumers Know Their Drugs

While it may come as a surprise, most consumers search for drugs by brand name, according to Compass Healthcare Communications, which recently conducted a study reviewing how people search for drug information. The study, which included more than 75 pharma and biopharma brands, revealed that only five percent of those searching by brand names are



healthcare providers; 92 percent are consumers.

From that consumer population:

- » 50 percent are existing patients or caregivers of patients using the brand.
- » An average 19 percent, or one in five, have an unfilled script in their hands.
- » Ten percent are diagnosed but not currently on a product.
- » Four percent use a competitive product.

Pharma marketers can leverage this information in the following ways:

**Enhance loyalty among existing patients** For patients who are already taking a product, this is an opportunity to respond to their queries and offer compliance programs or coupons.

**Close the patient "acquisition loop"** The patient has spent a few minutes with a doctor, received a prescription, and wants to learn more before getting it filled. Marketers can influence these script holders by ensuring that patients are directed to a landing page on the brand's Web site, which highlights the specific information consumers seek. Branded pages can help reduce patients' anxiety about the script and product's potential side effects. For marketers, product Web sites can serve as platforms for inviting patients to join loyalty programs or to sign up to receive ongoing information about the brand.

**Educate the diagnosed about their options** Since these patients have yet to commit to a particular course of therapy, marketers can help them explore the

options that best suit their needs.

**Turn on "switch" messaging** In highly competitive product categories in which there are several treatment options, it is likely that searchers are investigating alternative brands. This is an opportunity to provide head-to-head research results, and encourage patients—especially those who are unhappy with their current medication—to ask their doctor about different treatment options, possibly resulting in a switch to your company's brand.

**Build trust with healthcare professionals**

While most healthcare professionals search for drugs by the generic name, some search by the brand. For launch brands or brands with new indications, the Internet is the first place physicians go for the most recent information.

### Case Studies

**SEO** A brand manager for a complex therapy for enlarged prostate wanted to improve search rankings and Web traffic on the product's site—both were falling below expectations of senior management. After assessing the site, the company found that the content was not consistent with search terms relevant to the brand or the condition it addressed. Rather, the site's content was focused on treatment issues. But when investigating a health condition, people typically search by symptoms.

To address the problem, the brand team included more references to symptoms, added links to other relevant sites, and arranged for other sites to link back to the company's site. Within one month, site visits increased 100 fold (by just over 1,100 percent) and page views increased by 340 percent.

**SEM** The same company also developed a SEM program. First, it purchased the specific symptom terms related to its brand that people were using in search engines. Second, text ads were created, and landing pages were developed to aligned with the information being sought by existing and potential users. This resulted in a click-through rate of

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10 to 15 percent of site visitors.

SEM can also help counter negative impressions of a brand. One brand, for example, had received so much negative coverage in the press that a search on the product yielded text ads mostly from lawyers seeking class action participants. To drive traffic quickly to the brand's online properties—thereby minimizing the impact of legal and competitive advertising—the company made select keyword purchases. This helped ensure that the company's text ads appeared at or near the top of search pages, reducing the prominence of the legal advertising. Over a three-month period, the program attracted more than 14,000 searchers to the brand's Web site. The rate of those who visited the page and actually clicked on the ad was more than three percent, resulting in 420 potential new patients.

**When investigating a health condition, most consumers search for information by inputting their symptoms. Offering symptoms-related information on your site could help improve its ranking.**

### [SEARCH ENGINE STATS]

Almost two-thirds of online health-information seekers **start the search process** using a search engine rather than directly inputting a Web site address, according to a 2002 survey conducted by The Boston Consulting Group.

Internet search marketing can be a valuable asset to a brand's overall marketing plan. It can help support existing patients, complete the acquisition of new patients, and meet the information needs of health professionals. SEO and SEM enable pharma marketers to appeal to a target audience that is seeking guidance. If your marketing team doesn't help them, someone else's will. 

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