11

MUST HAVE
UPDATES

For Your Medical Website for 2018

LYNTON

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INTRODUCTION

Medical websites have changed a lot over the years in response to consumer needs and behaviors. Today's tech-savvy patient won't even consider scheduling a medical appointment with a health care provider without checking out its website. In fact, that's usually their first step—reviewing your online presence. Your website should be at the core of your online branding, customer service, and lead generation efforts.

Websites used to act as megaphones or billboards—displaying a message and possibly having some functions for members. Now, patients expect a two-way communication machine that works in real time to solve an increasingly diverse set of problems.

One particular trend, which isn't really a trend anymore, but rather just the way things are, is the interconnectedness of the website to the overall marketing discipline—lead generation, sales, and customer service are now all responsibilities of your website. In this guide, we'll cover the most essential updates that medical websites need to have to stay relevant and generate business.

Enjoy!

IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE
Calls to Action

Whether your goal is patient engagement, lead generation, or you just want to make sure people are getting value from your website, you must show them what to do. Using an effective call to action (**CTA**) is the best way to do that. In terms of updates you need to have for your medical website, there's a reason this feature is listed first in this guide!

A CTA is a stimulus to get a web visitor to carry out a specific action—sign up for this, learn more about that—on your website. The best CTA's will be relevant to what the visitor just finished consuming on your site. For example, if a web visitor has just reached the end of a page or blog post about preventive health services, you might place a CTA to "Learn more about flu shots" or other related service.

A CTA can take many forms, from buttons to in-text links, but they all have a few similarities. Here are some characteristics of an effective CTA:

- **Be brief**—just a few words is best
- **Be action oriented**—use verbs like "download" or "schedule"
- **Be relevant**—don't link to an unrelated service; think about the next logical step
- **Be bold**—make sure the CTA sticks out by using a different color or design element

PRO TIP:

*Avoid the words "**submit**" and "**newsletter**" like the plague.*

SETTING AND TRACKING GOALS
With Digital Analytics

If you have your CTA's in place—great! But how are you measuring if anyone is clicking them?

If lead generation is your goal, then hopefully you'll start seeing a bunch of leads pile up in your CRM, or marketing database, but that doesn't tell the full story.

Ask yourself the following questions:
- What percentage of page views are clicking the CTA? (conversion rate)
- Where do the visitors who click the CTA come from? (source)
- If you have more than one CTA on a page, which one is getting more clicks?

There are many different ways to track clicks to your CTA's. If you're using an all-in-one solution like HubSpot, CTA tracking and reporting is built into your website pages. Alternatively, free services like Google Analytics allow you to put "event tracking" on buttons and links that can answer all of the questions above.

If your web design or marketing vendor doesn't proactively offer to set up analytics and provide regular reporting, you need to press them for this service—it's the only way to accurately calculate the ROI of your marketing efforts.
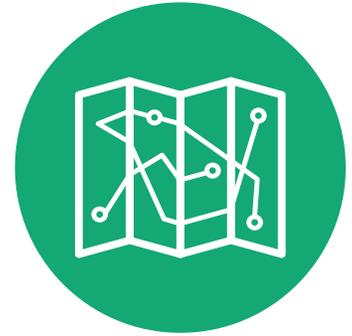
DON'T MAKE THEM THINK—
User Experience Tracking and Optimization

User experience measurement is another step up from standard digital analytics metrics mentioned on the previous page. What you're trying to figure out with user experience tracking is **how the web visitor behaved on your website**.

Did she scroll past your CTA? Did her mouse hover over certain areas but not click? What parts of the page drew her eye? What page did they exit your website from? Tools like visitor recording and heat mapping can provide clues to help you optimize your web design.

Software developments in the last few years have allowed websites to run more like math than guesswork. Tools like **HotJar**, **ClickTale**, **Crazy Egg** or similar can help you with mouse and eye tracking to find gaps in your design assumptions based on actual user behavior.

Watching a 'movie' of a web visitors behavior on your website is an enlightening experience.

DECREASING WEBSITE LOADING SPEED

This tip could have arguably been placed #1 in this guide because of its importance to overall website goals. As consumer attention spans get shorter and mobile web browsing continues to grow, page loading speed (especially above the fold!) is critical to accomplishing your goals.

According to HubSpot, the **ideal page load time is 1.5 seconds**.

What's the point of spending a lot of time and resources on design and content if nobody will stick around for the page to load? Additionally, ever since Google rolled out its Panda update, page load times have had a drastic effect on search engine optimization (SEO).

PRO TIP:

*Head over to **Google PageSpeed Insights** to test your website's loading speed and mobile optimization. If you're in the red, consider tactics like image caching or structured data to decrease page load times.*

PROVIDE A SECURITY BLANKET
with an SSL Certificate

SSL stands for "**Secure Sockets Layer**" and it's the standard security technology for creating an encrypted link between a web server and a browser, ensuring the data passed between the two remains private. From a user's perspective, an SSL certificate adds the "s" to https:// and displays a lock icon in a browser address bar.

Privacy is already a huge concern in health care, and the **consumer demand for secure websites is growing**. SSL certificates are no longer just for ecommerce and payment websites; most people submitting personal info (like an email address) through a website form will check to to make sure the website is secure.

SSL certificates have a yearly cost and vary in terms of price and quality—more expensive SSL certifications have increased encryption capabilities and customization options—just look at the web address bar of your financial institution's website for an example.

PRO TIP:

*Google announced that "**https**" is indeed a **ranking signal for SEO**, so you'll want to make sure you're using it for your content marketing efforts.*

ELIMINATE DISTRACTIONS
with Landing Pages

CTA's are a good way to encourage a specific action on your website, but on most web pages, visitors still have lots of options (other things to click on) that may not be in line with your objective. Landing pages, however, have only **one option** for the user to choose, typically filling out a form or pressing a button.

The user can either choose to complete the action or close the page—that's it. Good landing pages remove additional site navigation, external links, and basically anything that could distract from the desired visitor action.

Landing pages need to present a **clear value proposition** that the reader can understand in seconds. Many times, the benefits are broken down into bullet points for easy consumption, and the page will include a graphic visualization of the benefit they receive from taking the action, like a graphic of an ebook.

PRO TIP:

Landing pages are especially vital to the success of paid digital advertising campaigns—if you're spending a lot of money with Google AdWords, you want to make sure there is nothing in the way of your desired outcome.

DON'T ASSUME; A/B TEST

Speaking of landing pages, make sure to test different variations! The success of landing pages always comes down to conversion rate—you want as much of the traffic as possible to take your desired action, such as filling out a form. If you have two sets of graphics, or multiple sets of headlines/copy, it's wise to try different variations to see which converts better.

Here's how to set up a proper A/B test:

1. Create a control page
2. Create a variation of that page, but only change one variable (the headline, for example) at a time
3. Send traffic to each version, see which has a higher conversion rate
4. Try changing small things (like button color) as you continue to optimize

There are plenty of tools to help you create and A/B test landing pages. Software like Unbounce or Leadpages offer this service as a standalone, and the Enterprise version of HubSpot has A/B testing built in.

CONVERT VISITORS
with Compelling Copy

When looking to convert web visitors into leads, there is arguably no better tactic than compelling copy. Think about it—almost every action you take online (including hitting the back button!) is directed preceded by reading something.

If you've taken all the time and effort to implement the strategies and tactics in this guide so far, it's imperative you take the time to write effective copy—you need your web visitors to be thinking "YES! That's me! That's the answer to my problem!" as they browse your website.

Many companies write their website copy themselves, sometimes because they don't believe an outsider could understand their business and describe it accurately. Professional copywriters can, and they also know the science behind what wording leads to conversion, how to paint pictures with words, and how to put themselves in your customer's shoes. This isn't saying to not write the copy yourself, just be mindful of the patient and don't sell too hard.

PLAN AND CONFIGURE
the Appropriate Follow Up

We've talked a lot about conversion and how to optimize your medical website for leads, but what happens once you get a lead? Generating the lead is really just the beginning—you need to have a system that turns that lead into a paying client!

There are an infinite number of follow up actions you can configure to turn your leads into customers, from marketing automation to lower tech solutions.

Marketing automation usually involves emails that are scheduled to go out relative to the request from the lead—they could contain more information about a product or service, the next step in the sales process, or something else.

An example of a low-tech solution would be a notification to your sales team to call the new lead. Hey, just because it's simple doesn't mean it can't work.

Either method of follow-up can be effective for your medical website, but the key is to configure the appropriate follow-up. If the lead is only in her research phase, she probably isn't ready to talk with a salesperson yet—a sales call would only waste your time and try her patience. It would be better to nurture that lead further down the buyer's journey with more content.
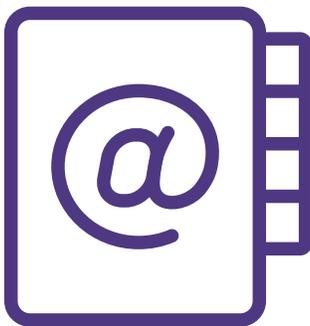
On the other hand, leads that raise their hands, or ask to be contacted, should be contacted via their preferred method (email, phone call, text message, live chat) ASAP.

5 DESIGN QUICK HITS

1   **Eliminate stock photography**

Web visitors have become numb to stock photography, and there is actually a cult following of website that post hilariously bad stock photos. Your real-life customers aren't grinning from ear to ear on a white, seamless background. Make sure the photos on your website aren't, either.

2   **Use flat design**

Flat design is a minimalist approach that prioritizes usability. Bold colors and san serif fonts take the place of detailed, skeuomorphic design trends of the past.

3   **Use as few menu options as possible**

Full-page width main navigation menus have fallen out of style with the web design industry, driven, of course, by user preference. Consider grouping like content and pages together, while using a secondary navigation menu for necessary but non-essential (to the user) pages, i.e., a privacy policy page.

4   **Consider microactions to build trust, eliminate confusion with clicks/hover**

Microactions are small animations on a website that signal purpose to a web visitor. An example would be a button becoming a different color upon hovering your cursor over it, stimulating the user to click the button. Other microactions are text and animations to symbolize loading time, website navigation, or just for fun!

5   **Use cards to group similar items**

A design trend popularized by Pinterest and Facebook, using cards gives web visitors a visual cue as to what's related to what. Think of the way a caption always goes directly beneath a photo, telling the user information about the picture.

APPROACH WEB DESIGN LIKE A SCIENTIST

As you've likely gathered by now, medical websites are no longer a static piece of content—they live and breathe with interactions from their users. Updating a website every two years is no longer an option—you must approach web design with the intent to publish, observe, analyze, and optimize.

What are the most popular pages or blog posts? Could you create more content that's similar to those, or make the navigation to those pages more obvious?

Web design can be a science—have a hypothesis, assign metrics to test it, and then optimize based on your findings. Lean on your website design and marketing vendors to do the same.

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ABOUT LYNTONWEB

We hope you enjoyed this guide to creating and maintaining modern medical websites. We believe that web design is a combination of art and science—yes, they must look attractive in order to convert visitors into leads, but the design and functionality must be rooted in data.

We feel websites should connect with and enhance your marketing, customer service, and lead generation efforts. For more information or to speak with a web design and inbound marketing expert at LyntonWeb, please contact us here.

TALK WITH AN EXPERT
about your **inbound**, **web** and **tech goals**.

GET STARTED TODAY