



## It's Almost 2020! Have You...?

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Have you taken a deep breath lately? The world seems to be a chaotic place right now. Dump the holidays smack on top of it and ... oofda! With 2020 right around the corner, it is time to figure out your marketing plan. However, marketing is best done in a mindful way, not in a frenzied flurry. Now is the time to sit back, drink your favorite holiday beverage, and look over 2020 from an eagle-view perspective to see where your marketing car should travel next.

When visualizing 2020 from a marketing perspective, it is helpful to consider the following factors:

- What is the world doing today? Have you considered how the global level of activity will affect your local area?
- As a business, have you thought about adding any new services? How about removing services?
- Have you looked at the financials of the company and considered where additional marketing would prop up or boost an area of the practice?
- While reading publications, networking and attending conferences, have you run across new technology or marketing tricks you want to try?

- During your 2019 journey as a business, have you noticed if your demographic is changing? Do you need more of one age group of humans vs. another? How about pets? More puppies and kittens or less seniors?

Pondering these “have you...?” questions can help determine a focus for 2020. From a technology viewpoint, here are some things to consider:

### Google

Keeping an “eye” on what Google has done lately can assist in keeping your business seen and found by current and future pet owners. Google is making multiple changes a day. For 2020, make sure the veterinary hospital has these three Google features nailed down:

- **Google My Business (GMB).** Google My Business ([www.google.com/business](http://www.google.com/business)) is currently where Google seeks information about a local business. Accuracy of business information is key because Google takes what is posted here and publishes it for all to see. Hours, holiday hours, services, phone, address, etc. all “live” here on Google. If you think you are all set in GMB, do

not fall back on your laurels. Google is changing this area of search the most in order to capture the local search market. New features are being added daily, which can assist in driving tails through the door.

- **BERT.** Big under-the-hood changes are rolling out for organic search on Google. It is called BERT. Basically, the code that Google uses is morphing into more of an AI that can determine the *intent* of the search queried. Currently, 1 in 10 searches uses this new technology. Apparently, using this type of search requires an intense load time on the servers. Keep an eye on this change because it may impact how your business is found. <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/google-applies-new-bert-model-to-search-rankings-affecting-1-in-10-queries/332135/#close>
- Google Ads. Ads on Google are receiving their share of update love as well. New features are being rolled out that will enable curious seekers of your business to engage and book with you sooner. Remember, Google wants all four aspects of its search (mobile, organic, local, and ads) to be used. Make sure to have Google Ads as part of your 2020 strategy.

To keep on top of the Google My Business changes (and others), set up an alert at <https://www.google.com/alerts#>. As soon as a new article comes out about the topic of the alert, it will come to your inbox. It's a handy way to keep abreast of what Google (or Facebook) has done lately.

## Facebook

Facebook is a whirlwind of activity that is changing daily. It's difficult to even predict what Facebook will be doing tomorrow, nonetheless three months from now. The way to manage Facebook is to use Facebook, and that includes Instagram as well. Currently, Facebook is working on security such as two-factor authorization—for some people. Or, it is changing how an Ad is set up and delivered—for other people. Plus, Facebook is thinking it is a bank now, and using digital currency. Pre-set posts on a schedule are good, but shouldn't be the only interaction with Facebook in the coming year. Ads should be a part of the equation because they make Facebook a powerful tool to reach new and existing customers.

## New technology to consider

As long as there are people with ideas, we will have new technology to consider. When thinking about integrating new functionality into a hospital's marketing program, consider the overarching questions first:

1. Is this technology a want or a need?
2. Will it integrate with my existing marketing program, or will it tear up the pea patch and ruin the momentum that has been established?
3. Who on the team will implement and manage this new feature?
4. How will it enhance the current marketing? Will it bring in a new way to reach current and future pet owners?
5. Has the staff been told about the purchase to ensure it won't ruin the work they have been doing? Too many times we have seen decision-makers attend a convention, sign a contract for a new type of service or technology, and come home all excited, only to be hit with upset staff. Why? Because what was purchased totally ruins years of work that is already bringing in results.

With those questions in mind, there are a few technology advancements that might be a new addition to a veterinary practice's marketing portfolio. These tools have matured to a stable point and reach into people's lives where they are at the most—their phones.

- **Marketing through texting.** Practices have started to embrace sending text reminders for appointments and, less frequently, for review acquisition. However, first adopters in the field are looking at text marketing where marketing messages are texted to current (or future) pet owners. For example, a special can be offered to existing clients before it is open to the general public.
- **Assistance through chat on the website.** Most likely you have been on a website where a little window opens up in the lower right corner, asking if you have any questions. Or, you can click a button and a chat window opens. Many major companies have gone this route for their customer service options because people do not want to have a phone conversation using their voice. Instead, texting is preferred. It can occur while

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people are at work or in a place that is loud, and a typed conversation cannot be overheard.

There are many companies that offer a basic level of software service that is free to put on a business’s website. The customer service team could be the ones to keep an “eye” on this form of communication. For additional dollars, a CSR can actually see who is on the website and “reach out” to them and ask if they need assistance. Capturing people when they are searching for your services is easier than trying to get to them when they are not interested.

Want help focusing on 2020 for your marketing program? We make it easy with simple marketing plans that keep your marketing car on the road. Marketing done right matters greatly. Our results are the proof in the pudding with high click-through rates and tails streaming through doors. Give us a call or stop by and see us at VMX and WVC. Beyond Indigo has been conducting internet marketing for 22 years. Our CEO and COO have each been working in marketing online for 24 years. Our team knows the old and the new. We focus on results first and discuss costs second. We are committed to staying up-to-date with the changing online environment, such as ADA compliance. Plus, we are Google Ads Partners, and we know how to build Google mobile-friendly and fast websites. Need help creating a marketing plan? Call 877.244.9322, ext. 100, or go to <https://www.beyondindigopets.com/contact/>.

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Kelly Baltzell, M.A. is President and CEO of the Beyond Indigo family of companies which she founded in 1997. Beyond Indigo is a full-service marketing company focusing on Search Engine Optimization, is a Google Adwords Partner, Social Media Marketing, Online Reviews and websites. She has been a monthly columnist for MWI Animal Health since 2011. She has also presented and been published in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK.

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