



# What is Google Console?

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Google has many tools to assist website owners in understanding and managing their online presence. Just like any software, Google Console is one area that has changed and grown over the years. The good news is that it is still easy to understand for the everyday person. What is Google Console? Google says:

“Search Console tools and reports help you measure your site's Search traffic and performance, fix issues, and make your site shine in Google Search results.”

Google knows data. It likes to share your data with you in order to enable you to improve your online presence and reach customers. Besides Google Analytics, which is a key depository of information about a business's website, Google Console also provides additional information that is crucial to staying in Google's good graces. Key areas in Google Console that should be monitored are:

- Errors that Google has flagged that might impact how it ranks the site

- Whether or not an up-to-date site map has been submitted for the practice's website
- The click-through rate of people searching for a veterinary practice and actually clicking through to your veterinary hospital

Let's dive in and understand exactly what these concepts mean and where to find them in Google Console. Start by going to <https://search.google.com/search-console/about>. Once here, you'll need to sign into the Console or register to use it. Not sure if you already have a login? Check with your marketing provider to see if Google Console has been set up and established for your business. If it has, please ask them to add you as a “full” user since this is your data about your business. Remember, for every single online property that is connected to the veterinary hospital, the owner(s) should be managers/admins/owners or full users. Each online property uses different terminology but, basically, whatever is the top-line access to a platform, the owner(s) should have that access.



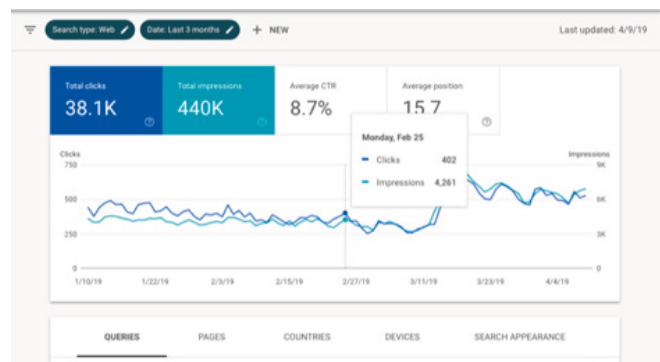
"Search Console tools and reports help you measure your site's Search traffic and performance, fix issues, and make your site shine in Google Search results."

five spots.) One to-do item, in this case, would be to increase the ranking of the website in Google which might even increase the CTR.

- Work needs to be done to increase the average position of the site ranking in Google which, in this case, was an issue known to the owner.
- Review the keywords used to find this website and consider adding fresh content over time to keep these search volumes viable.

**Click-through rate.** Once sign-in has occurred, a dashboard will be seen that gives snapshots of various aspects of the underpinning of the website including Performance, Coverage, and Enhancements. Next to it is an arrow that says "open report." This report gives some quick information that is a barometer of how people are finding and flowing through to the website. In the example below, over the last three months, this website was seen 440k times. This means that the website showed up in various search queries and could be seen in the search results. Out of those 440k times, people clicked through to the website 38.1k times, creating an 8.7 percent click-through rate (CTR) with an average position of 15.7. Some takeaways from this data could be:

- The website is attracting a good volume of people, evidenced by its high CTR, even considering its lower position on the page at 15.7. (Position means the average of where it is listed on Google. In this case, it averages 15.7 on a page. The goal, of course, is to be in the top

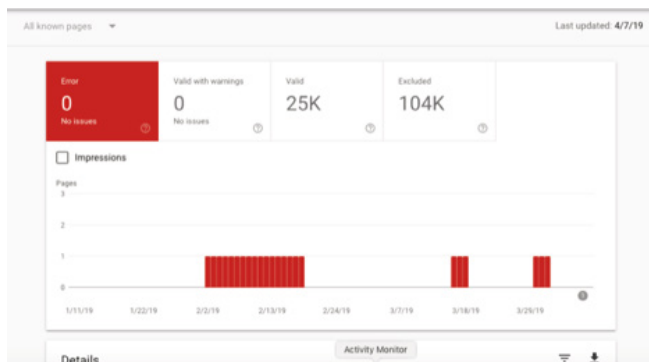


On this report, lower down on the page, there are options to delve into further data. There are sub-reports labeled Queries (Keywords), Pages, Countries, Devices, and Search Appearance. Your marketing provider should be looking at these areas carefully as they conduct Search Engine Optimization for your website. As an owner/employee of the hospital, it is good to understand this information as well.

**Coverage.** The second key piece of data to review would be Coverage. Either look to the left in the navigation bar

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or through the overview page to find the Coverage report. When clicking through to this report, do not be alarmed if red screams out to you from the graph. Google is pointing out where there are errors with the website. Errors are not necessarily a crisis, but more of a conversation piece to have with your website provider. Why? Because the data is not 100 percent accurate and needs a human to help interpret it and make choices. For example, one error might be that the text on a page is too small. However, the website might have been constructed with that in mind to allow another feature to be “seen” better in Google and by humans. And, what exactly is too small? This can be a subjective answer. Each error needs to be reviewed independently and taken in the larger context of how the website is performing as a whole. The takeaway on this Google Console feature is have a conversation with your marketing expert and be educated about why these errors appear and what the plan is to address or leave them alone.



**Sitemaps.** Finally, the third key aspect of Google Console is Sitemaps. A Sitemap is what it sounds like. It is a layout, in a specific fashion, of your website. It is created in such a way that Google can “read” it and help index your practice’s website. On the left, under the Index section, click “Sitemap.” Basically, your job is to make sure there is a sitemap listed there. If there is not, a conversation with your website provider is in order as this is a key building block for Search Engine Optimization (SEO). If you do not have a website provider and are a DIY type, check out [www.xml-sitemaps.com](http://www.xml-sitemaps.com) to create a sitemap. It is free to use up to 500 pages and is easy to understand. Note, the sitemap will have to be loaded into the root director of your website. If you do not have access to that aspect of your website, call in professional help. The bottom line is that

there is no reason a sitemap shouldn’t be generated for your business’s website.

Finally, if you are clicking around and mosey into the Security and Manual Actions section on the left, do not panic. It is always good to check if there are any Security issues. If there is one listed here, this is not your job to fix, but it should be addressed with your website/marketing provider. Pick up the phone and give them a call.

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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 has presented and been published in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK.

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