

What? It Used to Be Free!

Article by Kelly Baltzell, M.A., CEO, Beyond Indigo Pets



Over the last five to six years, slowly and silently, what used to be free marketing on the internet has flipped over to a paid environment. For the veterinary space, there is a disconnect with this change. Many people are fixated on how the internet was five years ago versus what it is today. This creates confusion and frustration with a practice's online marketing program. Let us review what today's reality is and what an animal practitioner needs to do to be current in his or her marketing in order to drive results and tails through the door.

Facebook Posts

Before 2012, a practice could make a post on Facebook and most of the people who had liked the business page would see the post. Then Facebook started to throttle how many people would "see" the page, or what is known as "reach."

"A study from Edgerank Checker found that between February 2012 and March 2014, organic reach for the average Facebook Page dropped from 16 percent to 6.5 percent." (<https://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/facebook-declining-organic-reach>)

After 2016, reach declined even further so that a post was only seen by about 2 percent of the people who liked a page. Today, that has dropped still more, unless time and

attention is given to a post to increase engagement. In addition to increasing engagement in order to be seen in the newsfeed of people who have liked a page, as well as new potential pet owners, a paid ad can be used.

The old: Posts were free and could be seen by current and potential customers.

The new: Hospitals have to pay-to-play to be seen on Facebook, or work on their organic postings to increase engagement.

Results of the change: Money and/or more time have to be spent, but the return does drive tails through the door and money to the bottom line.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Search used to be simple and mostly free. In the "good old days" there were two options: organic search, with the race to the top of page one, and paid ads. On June 8, 2009, the first iPhone was released. Hard to believe it has been eight years already and now version X is available. Because of how websites are viewed on smart phones, search has a new division of mobile search. Plus, these devices birthed the concept of local search. Most people use a smart phone to search and then utilize a local service. Google knows this

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

and has now monetized local and mobile search as well as desktop searches.

“According to Searchmetrics data released in October of 2016, the number of traditional organic search results dropped from 10 on both mobile and desktop to 8.5 on mobile and 8.59 on desktop.” <https://www.searchenginejournal.com/death-organic-search-know/189625/>

Now, there are more ads at the top of the search page results and ads in locations where there used to be none. Today, there are four ads on top of search results, then local results, and finally the original organic search. Ads have also been added to local search in the “3-pack,” Google Maps, and searches such as “nearby veterinarians” and “best animal hospital.” To be found, as a business, all four types of searches need to be addressed in a practice’s marketing program, including pay-to-play ads.

The old: Focused on reaching the top of page one organically by utilizing a hospital’s website. Ads were used in the short term while organic search took hold.

The new: Make sure to have a Google-friendly website and work for good organic desktop and mobile placement. Ads are a must.

Results of the change: Organic and pay-to-play are required to be seen on Google. Focus on all four areas of search needs to be monitored on a monthly basis.

Websites

For 23-plus years, websites have been key to a business being seen. When the technology was new, little besides text and a few compressed blurry images could be used. People were excited when the dancing baby materialized and moving GIFs appeared. Just having information about a business on a personalized domain name was the focus. Now, it is all about how people engage with a website on a mobile device to find the information they need.

The new factor at play is having a mobile-focused website that is fast. In July 2018, Google will be taking page speed load time, especially on mobile devices, into consideration as a ranking factor. To help impress upon website owners the need for speed, Google has created three tests to illustrate how fast or slow Google considers a website.

To test your website, go to <https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/>. Keep in mind, to stay current with Google, a practice should consider building a new website every three years.

The old: Websites with business information and a personalized domain were the focus. Mobile friendliness and speed were secondary considerations.

The new: Mobile and speed are the key. This requires pared-down websites that are easy to read on a mobile device and load quickly in most situations.

Results of the change: We, as website owners, have to change. This is difficult for many veterinarians because they love their existing sites. However, what is loved from the past might not be seen today, or in the future, on Google.

Beyond Indigo has been conducting internet marketing for 21 years. Our CEO and COO have each been working in marketing online for 23 years. Our team knows the old and the new, as well as how to generate revenue and tails through the door. We focus on results first and discuss costs second. We deeply know how Facebook and social media work, are Google AdWords Partners, and we know how to build Google mobile-friendly and fast websites. Need help kicking out the old and bringing in the new? Call Melissa Neff at 877.244.9322, ext. 100, or email her at Melissa@BeyondIndigo.com to have us assist you!

Also check out:

- Educational blog at BeyondIndigoPets.com/Blog
- Facebook at Facebook.com/BeyondIndigoPets
- YouTube at YouTube.com/BeyondIndigoPets
- Pinterest at Pinterest.com/BeyondIndigoPet
- Twitter at @BeyondPets



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.

Beyond Indigo is an MWI Animal Health Distinct Advantage™ program partner. To discuss how your practice can qualify for a free Distinct Advantage program membership, contact your MWI Territory Manager.