

Bright and Shiny Marketing (and How to Turn an Impulse Buy into an Educated Purchase)

Have you ever experienced when one team member goes off to a convention, conference, or meeting and sees a new presentation about a new marketing service or feature that they *must* have? Or perhaps you are an avid reader of a message board, and are following the hot new trend on the market. Before you know it, the new service is selected, contracts signed, and money transferred; with a big happy smile on your face, it is proudly presented back to the team.

And is met with frowning faces.

What just happened?

Bright and shiny marketing, or impulse buying, is just what happened. Sales people count on it, actually. Instead, the right way to conduct a veterinary hospital's marketing is through consideration, planning, and results. Remember, marketing is a complex machine when it is done correctly. Bright and shiny can work for a practice, but only when something new is needed. How does one tell? First off, start with an inventory of all of the marketing services your practice currently uses. A good place to start this list is by looking over invoices and talking to the team. Please note, if you don't understand what a service is, then some research might be needed either by viewing a company's website or giving them a call. The inventory list needs to include:

- The name of the provider.
- What service is purchased from the provider, because some providers have multiple services.
- What part of the service is being used. For example, if it is a portal, how many pet owners sign into the portal? Or is it being used for text and email reminders only?
- The cost of the service.
- A "yes" or "no" as to whether or not the hospital is using this service.
- Both negative and positive feedback from clients, if available.
- The potential for an increase in practice offerings being utilized at the hospital, or the possibility to increase client satisfaction because of the marketing service.
- Any service overlap with other services that have been purchased. Make sure to ask why there is overlap, and consider whether or not both services are needed.
- Is the hospital receiving reports about the services purchased to understand that it is working?
- How does the hospital team feel about the service? Is it working for them? Do they feel ownership and pride in the work they have accomplished?

The inventory list will allow you to weed out the services no longer needed, or those that are duplicate to other services. It should also show the team where there is a need for a particular marketing service. Once the need has been identified, it is important to make another list before running off and making an emotional decision. The questions to ask are:

1. Is the service I am looking at a want or a need? If it is a want, is it something I can afford?

2. What are the “must haves” for this new service? Make a short list of them. Make sure to separate the “must haves” from the “nice to haves;” it’s okay to have an “I just think it is cool and I want it” column.

Next, time to do research on the companies that offer the new services you are seeking to find. It is easy to make an emotional decision based on the marketing of the company and their sales people. Of course we want something fun, shiny, and new! Who doesn’t? Instead, it is time to take a deep breath, slow down, and do your last pieces of due diligence. When interviewing each of the companies, make sure to:

1. Refer back to your “must have” list. Make sure to have those needs met before moving over to your “nice to have” list.
2. Check to make sure the service doesn’t duplicate other items on your marketing inventory list.
3. Ask about customer service and resolutions.
4. Review your contract, both for fine print and duration.
5. Consider how a company’s services would integrate into your overall marketing system already in place.

Now, when a new service is purchased, the team will know how it will merge with the current marketing structure in place, that it is needed, that there are no surprises, and that it will add value to the hospital. Marketing is a long-term process. Disrupting the flow of marketing can set the practice visibility back by months. Making sure it is thought-out will create success in the future and stop unnecessary bright and shiny moments from happening.

Marketing 2017

Questions to Ask When Working With a Marketing Provider

Veterinary hospitals are realizing they need help with their online marketing. It has become just too overwhelming to manage completely in-house. However, how does a practice find a firm that is a solid “fit” to assist with their marketing? The Beyond Indigo team has created a list of questions to ask, along with the reasons/answers that a veterinary hospital should hear when interviewing a marketing provider. Remember, to have successful marketing four components are needed: online reviews, social media marketing with pay-to-play, search engine optimization with AdWords, and a mobile focused website.

Questions & Answers for Your 2017 Marketing	Y	N
Online Review Management		
Q: Does your firm provide automatic tracking of online reviews?		
A: Reviews are in multiple places and it is difficult to keep track. Immediacy is the key when responding to reviews. Shoot for an online review management system that sends an email as soon as a review is posted. Plus, the software should include a dashboard that gives statistics on the hospital's review status.		
Q: Where do pet owners post their review the first time?		
A: Many review management companies/software sell to the fear of receiving negative reviews. To assuage this fear, the software asks a pet owner to post a review that the hospital approves, then asks the pet owner a second time to go post that positive review on Google or another review site. This creates posting fatigue. People only want to leave a review once. The online review software selected should ask a person: “How did you like our service?” Then, if the rating is less than 7, the pet owner can leave a message for the hospital. If it is 7 or over, the pet owner is sent to leave a review directly on a review site like Google.		
Q: Does your firm check the hospital's online review areas and listing to make sure they are correct every 3 to 4 months?		
A: Google specifically requires information to be consistent from online review area to online review area. Information such as phone numbers, addresses, and business hours are easily searchable, particularly on a mobile device. As Google continues to move to a mobile-only index, it is important to make sure local information about a business is correct. A marketing firm should assist in submitting and verifying this information. To start, make sure everything is correct at www.google.com/mybusiness/ .		

Q: Does your company's online management software system conduct big data trend analysis?		
A: Online reviews have matured and now data analysis can be conducted on all reviews left for an animal hospital, back to 2005. Word trends from the reviews are shown, such as "GREAT JOB" or "CRABBY."		
Website Management		
Q: Are your firm's websites ready for the new Google mobile-only indexing coming Q1?		
A: Google is splitting its algorithm and moving to a mobile-only search for devices. If you are not sure if your website is responsive or mobile friendly, use Google's mobile test to find out at https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/mobile-friendly/ . Don't be left out of Google's new mobile search!		
Q: How quickly does a firm make changes to the hospital's website to "turn on" AdWords landing pages and make quick SEO adjustments?		
A: Google has rules that are crucial for key placements in various search areas like mobile, desktop, and Ads. A website needs to follow these rules or it isn't seen. Making sure a firm follows the rules of Google Panda and Penguin is key. Also, making sure that a website page for an Ad can be built according to Google's rules can save money when an Ad is placed.		
Q: Will you please tell us about some key features a website in 2017 should have?		
A: Websites today, besides being responsively designed, need to have calls to action like book an appointment, streamlined navigation, and key internal and external links to other veterinary information. For an example, see http://www.conciergemobileanimalhospital.com/ .		
Q: Will you please tell me how a blog is incorporated into the websites you build?		
A: A blog should be integrated into your website—meaning it is part of your domain name, such as www.abchospital.com/blog/ . If you have your blog on Blogspot or Blogger, or any other blog software that is NOT part of your website, then that company gets "credit" with Google for the new content you are producing.		
Social Media		
Q: How does your marketing firm incorporate social marketing into our day-to-day strategic business planning?		

A: Social marketing is not just cute photos and memes anymore. A social marketing plan should be part of a monthly business strategy, with discussions about how a practice should grow its numbers through ads, posts, and audience targeting—and you want to control your online brand in a strategic way. If you're not managing your digital brand, it's likely not serving you very well.		
Q: Does your firm conduct Facebook and other social media targeting?		
A: Targeted advertising works, brings in business, and costs little money. Location-based ads, custom audiences, and so many new ad targeting features help you reach your specific target audience, such as dog and cat owners between certain ages within a 5-10 radius of your business address. Facebook should be the main focus because that is the pet owner demographic. Make sure to ask if a firm is working on their Blue Print Certification now being offered by Facebook.		
Q: Who provides the content for a blog that is needed for social media?		
A: A blog is the main fresh content on a website, which Google loves. And, with websites having fewer pages and less text on pages, the shift is to friendly, educational content on a blog page. Social marketing can then drive interest and traffic back to a blog. As time passes, the blog library grows, blog traffic grows, and people find blog content in response to search inquiries.		
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)		
Q: What is the firm's strategy with Search Engine Optimization?		
A: Google is in business to make money. To that end, it has eroded free organic search and replaced that real estate with ads. Today, to have a successful SEO program, it needs to include AdWords, mobile placements, desktop placements, and ads on video.		
Q: Has your marketing company been certified by Google and, if so, how many certifications have been mastered by each employee?		
A: Google has over 10k factors in managing organic search and an equal amount for AdWords. To pay less money to Google per campaign, it needs to be set up correctly and monitored consistently. Google requires certifications to be passed and an ongoing checklist to be accomplished to hold a Google Partner Badge. A marketing company should have more than one person certified and they should have all the certifications Google requires.		

Q: Will you please show us an example of a Search Engine Optimization report that incorporates Google Analytics data, AdWords, and local placement information?		
A: Every marketing firm should provide a monthly SEO report that shows how the traffic is acquired and how it flows through an animal hospital's website. If a report is not provided, move to another marketing company. If the report looks like Greek, make sure the marketing firm provides a meeting to discuss the report.		

Beyond Indigo is a Badged Google Partner and we work directly with Google employees on AdWords. We stay up to date in the marketplace and cringe when we hear stories of veterinary hospitals that have received sub-standard marketing care. We provide all four services listed above. Ask us for statistics on how well our marketing has performed. Call Melissa Neff at (877) 244-9322 ext. 100, or email her at melissa@beyondindigo.com.

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