

GROW YOUR PRACTICE WITH DIGITAL MARKETING

Align your clinic and your branding with premium offerings and messaging.

BY RAHIL CHAUDHARY, MD



Marketing has changed a lot in the past decade, mainly in response to the boon of the internet and the explosion of social

media platforms and networks. Today, many businesses and ophthalmology practices earmark a good deal of their marketing funding to online resources—and for good reason. Digital marketing is crucial to the success of your practice, especially in the time of COVID-19. Some, like myself, would even argue that digital marketing can make or break your practice.

Digital marketing can give you access to patients from all over the world, and it will work wonders if done properly. This article aims to uncover the best practices in digital marketing, provide you with a clear pathway to growing your practice with digital marketing, and explain how offering premium products like the EVO Visian ICL (STAAR Surgical) can help promote the premium positioning of your clinic and your surgeons.

MARKETING 101

There are two kinds of marketing, targeted and cold, and the most effective marketing campaigns with the biggest return on investment (ROI) use both.

Targeted marketing. This approach is an active marketing process intended to entice a specific audience looking for a solution to their problem, such as potential refractive surgery patients searching the internet using key terms such as *spectacle independence*, *refractive correction*, *laser surgery*, and *ICL surgery*. Targeted marketing typically gives you the greatest ROI.

Cold marketing. Alternatively, cold marketing campaigns target patients who don't know they have a problem until you present a solution. This is a passive



CLINICAL RESULTS WITH THE EVO VISIAN ICL

By Sanjay Chaudhary, MD

I was among the first ophthalmologists in India to implant the Implantable Collamer Lens (STAAR Surgical). Since that time, in 2005, EVO ICL has gained a great deal of acceptance not only throughout this country but specifically at my practice. Laser vision correction is a household name, but EVO ICL is continually gaining traction thanks to the great postoperative results it provides and the efforts we've put into digital marketing.

In the past 8 years, I have implanted more than 8,000 EVO ICLs with the KS AquaPort, a hole in the center of the optic designed to optimize the flow of fluid within the eye. Now, EVO lens surgery is easier than ever before because it no longer requires a peripheral iridotomy. This has, I believe, increased our procedure numbers. We use the EVO Toric ICL even for cylinders of 0.50 D with excellent visual outcomes. We routinely use the Verion Digital Axis reference marker (Alcon) to position the EVO Toric ICL on axis. Our EVO ICL results are phenomenal, and according to company patient registry survey data, 99.4% of patients are happy with their postoperative outcomes and would elect to have EVO ICL surgery again. In my own results, less than 1% of eyes with high myopia experience an intended versus achieved correction outside of ± 0.50 D. The occasional patient experiences halos at night, but in our experience, even these patients eventually adapt to their new visual system. In the 16 years since I started implanting the ICLs, I have never had to remove an ICL because of halos. Further, since incorporating the KS-AquaPort in the central optic of the ICL, there has been zero incidence of ICL-related cataract formation in our clinic.

1. EVO ICL Patient Registry data on file with STAAR Surgical

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- Financial disclosure: None

approach to marketing that is geared toward generating leads from the general population, not a specific audience. It is great for potential patients who are simply browsing their social media networks. In the context of refractive surgery, a cold marketing campaign could be an advertisement stating, "Get rid of your glasses!" For potential patients who are wearing glasses as they read the ad, they suddenly start seeing their dependency on glasses, and they want a solution—*your* solution.

ESTABLISHING A BUDGET

Your ROI is directly proportional to how much you invest in digital marketing. Digital marketing is expensive. Setting aside only a small budget, however, will not produce a good ROI. Over the past few years, Eye7 Eye Centers took the budget we used for radio, newspaper, magazine, TV, and website ads and reallocated it for digital marketing. Now, digital marketing is the only kind of advertising we do.

Let's look at an example. A potential patient sees an ad from Practice A

FIVE TIPS TO GET STARTED WITH DIGITAL MARKETING

- ▶ **No. 1:** Set aside a substantial budget for digital marketing and apply it across multiple platforms. The smaller the budget, the smaller your ROI. Likewise, the smaller your scope, the smaller your pool for potential patients.
- ▶ **No. 2:** Invest in Google Ads and Google+Local. By doing so, the Google search engine optimization (SEO) function will recommend your practice higher up on the search results and ensure your practice's locations show up on Google Maps (Figure 1).
- ▶ **No. 3:** Post videos on YouTube and pay for YouTube SEO. Searches on YouTube will continue to increase (Figure 2) and will likely one day overtake the volume of searches being performed on Google.
- ▶ **No. 4:** Be active on as many social media networks as possible. Your presence on a variety of platforms will help to increase your visibility and reputation, as well as position your practice as a premium brand (Figure 3).
- ▶ **No. 5:** Use retargeting ads to convert more patients. When someone logs onto your website, YouTube channel, Facebook page, or Instagram page, these platforms hold a small piece of that individual's data called a cookie. Businesses can use those cookies to redirect, or retarget, their ads to that individual. The ads will essentially follow the individual around to other websites that they engage with. This marketing strategy acts as reminder to that person to revisit their interest. At Eye7, we have an almost 50% conversion rate with retargeting ads that mention a discount, coupon code, or promotion.

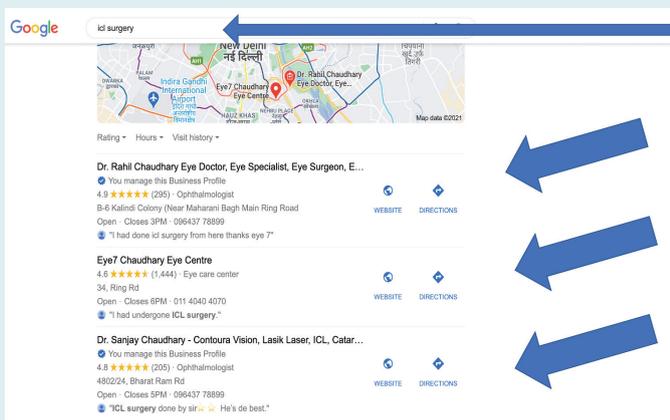


Figure 1. Eye7 clinics are visible on Google Maps.



Figure 2. YouTube SEO for the EVO Visian ICL and Eye7.

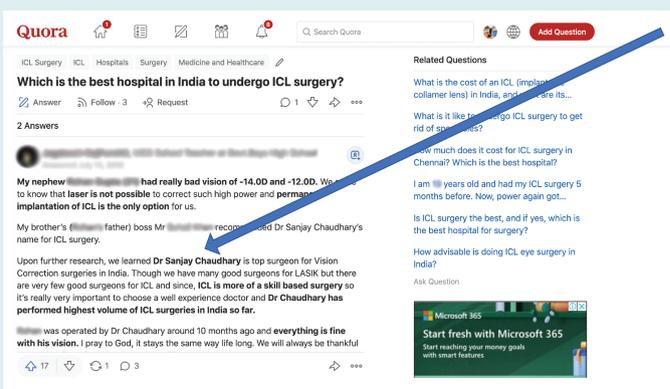
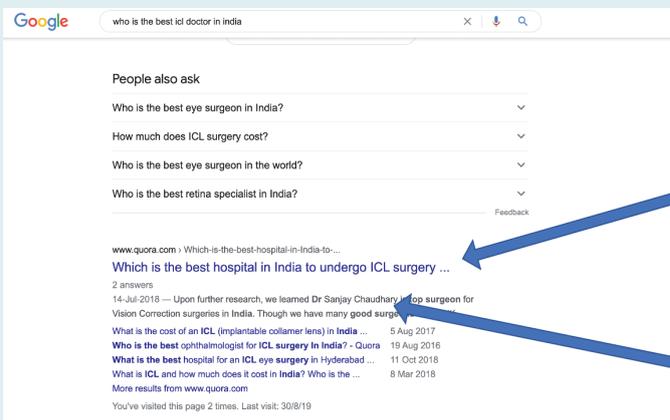


Figure 3. A Google search (top) and the related results on Quora (bottom).

stating, “Get the EVO Visian ICL for vision correction.” The patient searches the term ICL on the internet and sees that Practice B offers ICLs but appears in organic search under the first, second, fourth, and seventh positions due to their work placing videos across the internet on YouTube and expert sites

such as WebMD. As a result, a patient may believe that Practice B is more reputable and, thus, the patient should choose Practice B. This is an example of why it is crucial to be active and present with your marketing efforts on as many platforms and social media networks as possible.

BUILDING A DIGITAL PRESENCE

Google. Most searches start on Google, so it is important to start your digital marketing campaign here. Google SEM Ads are the first three results on a Google search. They are expensive ad slots, but they give you the maximum conversion, or in other words the best ROI. Further,

with Google Ads, the Google search engine optimization (SEO) function recommends your practice higher up on the search results.

You should also be on Google+Local, which ensures your practice is present and viewable on Google Maps (Figure 1). If your practice is not already listed, you can manage or create your service listing with the Google Places Business Center. It should link to your practice's website; this is important for Google SEO. Your website should include your practice's services, achievements, and awards, which will all help patients to make an informed decision about your practice.

YouTube. The second best place for digital marketing is YouTube. This platform is well positioned to be the next Google.

Video is an important and effective way to convert your patients. Simply posting videos to YouTube, however, is not enough. Investing in YouTube SEO helps to ensure that your videos rank on top, which means more potential for people to see your videos.

We use YouTube SEO to promote ICL eye surgery. When you search *ICL eye surgery*, videos from Eye7 come up in the first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth positions

(Figure 2). Four months after the video in the second position on Figure 2 was uploaded, it had been viewed 620,000 times.

Videos go a long way toward educating, convincing, and motivating potential patients on the benefits of vision correction surgery. Further, they give patients transparency into the surgical process and build their confidence in the procedure.

Facebook and Instagram. Of course, there are tons of other platforms, but rounding out the top three is Facebook and Instagram. Frequent social media engagement on these sites is important because it improves your opportunity to be noticed. Some people feel that posting surgical videos can scare off potential patients. We have found the opposite: The majority of patients like to watch surgical videos because they get a front row seat to how the procedure is performed.

Quora. This community network can also be an important resource for potential patients. When I do a Google search for, *Who is the best ICL doctor in India*, Quora comes up on the first page of results (Figure 3; top). When you click on the link, Eye7 is mentioned in the first response (Figure 3; bottom).

The more potential patients see your practice's name on websites, and the more they read reviews from patients recommending the same doctor, the more they feel confident in selecting your clinic for their surgical needs because they see you as an expert in the field.

CONCLUSION

Digital marketing is extremely effective when done right. It will take time to develop a strategy that works best for your practice, of course, but learning how it works is the first step toward success. Pairing your digital marketing efforts with promotion of premium products like the EVO Visian ICL (see *Clinical Results with the EVO Visian ICL*) and leveraging STAAR's patient website www.discoverEVO.com not only highlights your clinic but it endorses your practice as a premium place for patient care. ■

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Important Safety Information for the EVO/EVO+ ICL

The EVO/EVO+ ICL is indicated for phakic patients 21 to 60 years of age to correct/reduce myopia up to -20.00 D with up to 6.00 D of astigmatism. The Visian ICL for hyperopia is indicated for phakic patients 21 to 45 years of age to correct/reduce hyperopia up to +16.00 D with up to 6.00 D of astigmatism. Careful preoperative evaluation and sound clinical judgment should be used by the surgeon to decide the risk/benefit ratio before implanting a lens in a patient with any of the conditions described in the DFU. Prior to surgery, physicians should inform prospective patients of possible risks and benefits associated with the EVO/EVO+ ICL. Reference the respective ICL DFU for a complete listing of indications, contraindications, warnings, and precautions.