

“Recession/Depression-Proof” SEO Strategies for the Pharmaceutical Industry

CASE STUDY: PHARMACEUTICAL

Despite once being accredited as a “recession-proof” industry, pharmaceutical/biotech companies are feeling the effects of the current downturn. Competition from generic drugs, FDA hesitancy for new drug approvals, and upcoming patent expirations of big-selling brands are just some of the reasons contributing to US prescription drug sales to grow at their slowest pace since the mid-1990s.

During this slowdown pharma marketers have expressed the growing importance of online advertising versus traditional media. A trend that is expected to continue through 2010.¹ However, this industry often faces challenges when it comes to the successful implementation of online marketing strategies due to regulatory and legal constraints.

Our client, a global leader in the pharmaceutical market, experienced those challenges when it came to their prescription drug related sites. However, recognizing the opportunity the downturn presented, they came to IMPAQT in hopes of capturing increased market share through branding efforts for an informational soft-branded site, and a willingness to test optimization strategies which they previously could not implement.

Challenge:

How could IMPAQT help the research-based pharmaceutical company to increase brand awareness without pushing any specific products?

Revelation:

Big pharma was one of the first adapters of SEO, and our client was no different. After working on various campaigns for the company for over six years IMPAQT had delivered successful SEO results through optimization of site copy, title tags, Meta descriptions, etc. However, implementing successful linking strategies had always remained elusive. Seeing an opportunity to further their online brand presence, IMPAQT devised a plan to build partnerships and acquire links for their information site.

Since the pharmaceutical market is extremely competitive organically, linking is an excellent way to secure a competitive advantage. In order to maximize link value, IMPAQT implemented a series of linking requests to highly relevant Web sites and monitored the implementation. IMPAQT provided research, strategy and reviews of sites that provided potential linking opportunities for our client and developed e-mail solicitation letters to site owners. Since engines are smart enough to detect a “linking campaign”, IMPAQT was cognizant of varying content in each linking request.

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Witnessing early success with the initial strategy, the pharma company wanted more. IMPAQT began putting together a plan to introduce a social aspect to the site by including social bookmarking links/tags to articles, web and/or blog pages that would be a resource to searchers. Visitors to the informational site would have the ability to easily index the link within the social bookmarking engines.

¹Online Ads Healthy as Pharma Sales Grow, eMarketer, March 20, 2008, <http://www.emarketer.com/Article.aspx?id=1006076>

The IMPAQT:

Since implementation of the linking campaign, the pharma site added a number of new links - with many more on the way - which contributed enough third-party endorsement to help generate the following successes:

- An 124% increase in online visibility
- An additional 12 keywords that have visibility in the engines