

# Success Story

## Search Engine Optimization at Oakwood Healthcare System



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“We really didn’t know where to begin with SEO. We knew that our positioning with the search engines was less than we wanted it to be, so we did some research online, found some tools to measure our position and placement – and that confirmed that we really needed to do something.”

DAVE STANIS Director of Digital Communications  
OAKWOOD HEALTHCARE SYSTEM  
Dearborn, Michigan

### Oakwood Shows Effective Search – The Number One Method to Attract New Visitors

While your every billboard, brochure and business card includes your hospital’s Web address, you may be surprised to know these mediums aren’t driving much traffic to your website. The number-one way to attract new visitors to your website is through search engines.

Studies show that up to 90% percent of all new visitors come to a site through a search engine.\* So when Oakwood Healthcare System set out to attract new patients – and retain/recapture previous ones – an effective search strategy was essential.

#### The Previous SEO Situation

Before 2010, Oakwood did not have a significant presence within the top rankings on Internet search engines. The health system ranked modestly in its immediate area of Dearborn, Michigan. But with a lot of competition in Metro Detroit, Oakwood fell in rankings for any other cities within a 30-mile radius.

Dave Stanis, director of Digital Communications at Oakwood, sought the help of his Web content management system (CMS) provider, CareTech Solutions, and CareTech’s Search Engine Optimization partner, Peak Positions.

#### Focusing the Strategic Effort

The team took a strategic look at Oakwood’s very large website – 5,000 pages of content – to see what areas aligned best with the hospital’s strategic and marketing plans in order to focus on those areas first.

A major imperative was to “protect” the names of the hospital’s big centers, big programs, and then go after popular broad-based keywords associated with their medical services – every subject from top to bottom.

An overall concern that touched all areas was the physicians. The hospital wanted physicians to be easy to find, so the team really honed in on SEO around the physician profiles.

#### Aligning Online and Offline Efforts

Jack Roberts, president of Peak Positions, did the initial Google research around the product/service lines including the most common words and phrases searched around those. Stanis shared the lists for each product line with the marketing person responsible for those areas.

Together they reviewed how the product lines are marketed to consumers and made sure that any of those keywords and phrases used for offline, more traditional marketing, were captured in the SEO efforts. In short, they aligned their online efforts with their offline efforts.

#### Process into Practice

The SEO research identified the most keywords that best corresponded with what Oakwood had to offer. This led to Keyword Qualified Traffic. That is, traffic “filtered” by the keywords, producing visits from potential patients rather than casual scrollers.

Those finding Oakwood on a search are now also finding them on a specific keyword phrase – a highly popular phrase that is 100% in line with the medical services that Oakwood provides. Stanis spent extra time working on the keyword research – and his insights really paid off.

\* Nielsen NetRatings; www.nielsen-online.com



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### The Role of a Good CMS

One of the major requirements Oakwood had when launching the project was that SEO had to integrate into the CMS, CareTech Solutions' CareTech CMS. By converging SEO best-practices with its CMS, Oakwood enabled rapid progress.

CareTech CMS is a very search-friendly CMS that enables easy updates and a seamless integration of SEO elements. CareTech's programmers made sure that the typical traps of a CMS system weren't there to impede the robot spiders that crawl the site – such as page ID numbers, dynamic links, or pages dynamically driven and built on the fly, like directory listings and video libraries.

The technical team also aligned the code of the CMS platform to be more in sync with the often-changing search algorithms. (Google alone makes up to 400 changes to its ranking formulas every year.)\* Of all the CMS platforms on the market, CareTech CMS is highly optimized. The underlying architecture of the platform is coded so it's more accessible to the search engines and facilitates the robots doing their job.

### A Sampling of Results for the First Year

Before CareTech Solutions and Peak Positions became involved, 10,000 keywords had pushed traffic to Oakwood the year before. In one year that figure rose to 13,000 highly-focused keywords. Previously, physician pages were not even found in the top 300 Google results, and are now in the top five.

Among the many benefits the SEO program has delivered to Oakwood in the first year were these specific results:

- Total visits: up 20%
- Pageviews: up 40%
- Overall traffic from search engines: up 32%
- Overall ranking growth: up 90+%
- Previous keyword exposure by geographic area: Dearborn  
Current exposure: Detroit, Metro Detroit, Wayne County and all cities within

### Effective SEO – Collaboration of Content and Technology

At Oakwood, those ultimately producing the content benefitted from the expert advice they were getting, and produced substantive content. An optimum balance was achieved between using critical keywords and writing readable text. In other words, they had to write for the search robots mapping the website – as well as for the human users reading it!

As the success at Oakwood has shown, effective SEO is possible with a well-planned, collaborative effort. What is needed for it to work is an expert team who understands search algorithms and is flexible enough to adapt to them, along with marketing experts at the hospital who are committed to enhancing the site's content and design.

“ We concentrated our efforts on four key product lines that we focus on from a marketing standpoint: women's health, cancer, heart and vascular, orthopedics and neurosciences.

It was a great collaborative effort. I don't think we could've done it without Peak Positions working directly with CareTech and with us. It was a combination of the strategy, experience, and then the technical knowledge of making the changes that worked well together.”

DAVE STANIS  
OAKWOOD HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

To Learn More about  
the Oakwood SEO Team:

Oakwood Healthcare System  
[www.oakwood.org](http://www.oakwood.org)

CareTech Solutions  
[www.caretech.com](http://www.caretech.com)

Peak Positions  
[www.peakpositions.com](http://www.peakpositions.com)

\* Google Webmaster Central; [www.google.com/webmasters](http://www.google.com/webmasters)

