

Your Brand, Your Reputation

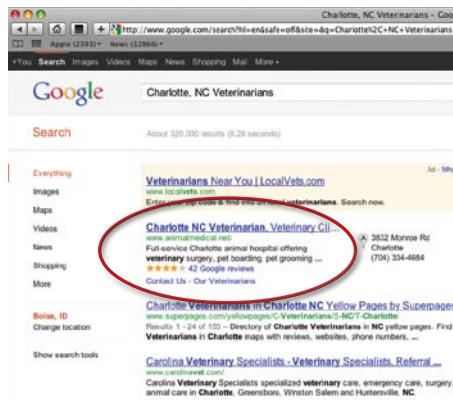


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Ten years ago, people perceived your brand and your business much differently than they do today. Now, people have choices and the ability to research information themselves before making a purchasing decision. In the past, we had to rely on businesses to give us information about themselves. Now, with a few quick taps of our fingers, a wealth of knowledge is available to us. What people find about your business and where they find it determines how they see your brand. Does your business seem trendy? Up to date? Resourceful and helpful? Can your customers find the information they need quickly on any device, at any time of the day or night? These are questions to ask when reviewing how your business is perceived online.

Today, people are using multiple touchpoints when making a purchasing decision. A touchpoint is a place where people start or go to when researching. A pet owner could start at Google, read reviews, jump over to a business website, click through to Facebook, follow on Twitter, read a blog post, and so forth. These touchpoints, when joined together, turn into a marketing circle. The goal is to keep an interested pet owner in your marketing circle. If there is a disconnect, that person might jump over to another business's marketing circle and you have likely lost the sale. Each of these touchpoints (or platforms) defines your brand in the eye of the viewer. Here are some key points to keep in mind.

1. Google now focuses on local search for a business. This local search feature gathers online reviews, Google+, Twitter "tweets," and blog comments. Google's goal appears to be to give us as much information about a business in one "snapshot." For example, take a look at Animal Medical Hospital in Charlotte, NC. You will see my picture listed under the search result because I +1 this brand or "liked" it, in other words. Google is providing social media information now mixed in with search engine optimization results. Why? To keep people using Google and not Facebook.



2. People will interact with your brand regardless of whether you are involved with the process. Pet owners can read and post reviews without your permission. They can like your brand on Facebook. No Facebook page? No problem. Many brand enthusiasts will create a Facebook page about the brand they love and the business has no control over that page except to interact with its own brand. The best way to minimize brand hijacking is to make sure your hospital creates all touchpoints of your marketing circle, and then actively engages and interacts with current and potential customers at each of those points.

3. Branding should be consistent within the marketing circle. This is a concept many vet hospitals struggle with. Many times, one person in the office manages the website, another updates the Facebook page, and a third person sends out emails/newsletters. Each person chooses a different topic on which to focus and uses different artwork, tone, and content. Sound familiar? One person should be in charge of a hospital's brand. Many people can implement the message, but only one person should create it.

4. Facebook and social media actually do work in brand recognition and engagement with consumers. A new study by www.aytm.com has found that people prefer to receive brand updates from Facebook and Twitter than by email. On Facebook, the study found that:

- 58% of Facebook users have liked a brand.
- 42% of people have mentioned a brand in a status update.
- 41% have shared a link, video, or story about a brand.

Managing your business's brand is crucial to gaining and keeping customers. It is an investment that takes work, time, and money but that pays off by keeping your clinic's doors swinging. The first step is taking an inventory of your brand on the Internet. For a list of questions to assist in this process, read our blog post at www.beyondindigopets.com/blog/?p=401. In addition, Beyond Indigo Pets/Equine is offering five webinars every Wednesday in February from 12:00 to 12:30 CST. They are:

- Why a Website Is Not Enough: Meet Your Marketing Circle
- Template vs. Custom Website: What Does Your Website Say About You?
- Is a Blog Right for Your Practice?
- Why Isn't Facebook Enough?
- Accentuate the Positive: Embrace Your Online Reviews

To register for these free webinars, go to www.beyondindigopets.com/ webinars. Want to hear Kelly Baltzell speak in person? Plan to attend her seminars at MVMA and WVC. At WVC she will be giving a half-day talk on the last day. And, for a free one-on-one consultation about your brand and online reputation, visit www.beyondindigopets.com/ contact.



Kelly Baltzell, MA is President and CEO of the Beyond Indigo family of companies, which she founded in 1997. Under her leadership, Beyond Indigo companies have developed all types of veterinary websites (small animal, exotic, specialty, equine, mixed animal) that now reach millions of people a year. Kelly's depth of experience, passion and visionary approach to the industry have made her an unparalleled leader in Internet marketing.

A true relationship builder who works to promote her clients and broadcast their stories to the world, Kelly speaks frequently about marketing trends and website design at national conventions and private functions. Before creating Beyond Indigo, she served as Site Manager for Online Psych, the mental health community of America Online, and designed customized mental health programming for the AOL Health Channel. Online Psych had up to 4 million page views per day and attained placement on AOL's Welcome Screen. After Online Psych merged with iVillage.com, Kelly became Director of Interactive Health and was later promoted to Executive Director of Health. She helped generate more than 18 million page views a month for iVillage.com.

Kelly was graduated from George Washington University with a degree in International Affairs & Economics and received her Master's degree in Counseling & Psychology from St. Mary's. Kelly is a proud parent, currently living with her family in Minnesota.