

Google or Bing? Neither! Find Healthcare Consultants, Vendors and Attorneys Faster at the Healthcare News Consultant Marketplace

By David Peel
Publisher
Oregon Healthcare News



Google and Bing are terrific search engines. We use them every day at the Healthcare News and can directly attribute their use to our success. However, they aren't well suited for certain types of web searches for several reasons:

- Results are generated by scanning millions of web sites across the web. Many web sites use text that doesn't accurately de-

scribe their services resulting in "garbage-in garbage-out" in Google and Bing search results.

- Many web sites contain coding errors that further compromise search results.
- Thousands of web sites are coded exclusively in Flash and other computer languages that can't be read by search engines.
- Very little Google and Bing search data is reviewed by humans.

A niche search engine is best when you need comprehensive and highly accurate search results for a specific subject.

An example of a great niche search engine is Angie's List®. This web site provides accurate search for a broad spectrum of services in specific geographic locations. They offer a *Home, Yard, Auto, Pets & More* list, a *Health & Wellness* list and a *Classic Cars* list. It's easy to search by category and name and

more information is provided when the search result is opened. In addition to great search results, you see customer reviews. The downside to Angie's List is the \$35 annual membership fee and the Home, Yard, Auto, Pet's & More list is the only one of the three that is currently comprehensive and usable. The others appear to be in development.

The Healthcare News *Consultant Marketplace*, our niche search engine for healthcare consultants, vendors and attorneys, provides most of the Angie's List features at no charge.

This article describes why you should consider using the Healthcare News Consultant Marketplace rather than Google or Bing when searching for healthcare consultants, vendors and attorneys.

Background

We started the Consultant Marketplace as a page on Healthcare News web sites in 2008. It was essentially an alphabetical list of 60 or so ven-

dors, consultants and attorneys serving the west coast healthcare industry. Participating companies paid a fee to be on the list. Search capabilities were limited...not a problem because there were so few companies! Many healthcare associations offer a similar list and call participating companies "preferred" vendors.

The downside for Healthcare News web visitors was the number of companies on the list. It wasn't representative of all consultants, vendors and attorneys serving the web coast health care industry. The Consultant Marketplace continued in this form for four years with a fairly consistent number of participants and web site visits.

Change for the Better

In early 2012, we decided to radically change the Consultant Marketplace. We wanted to make it the "go to" place for west coast healthcare consultants, vendors and attorneys but to do so meant adding every company we could locate in this niche. Search capabilities had to be improved. Like everything else on our web sites, it had to be free. The content had to be as near perfect as possible so the web site of every participating company had to be reviewed by a human. Finally, we wanted participating companies to review their listing before publication to maximize accuracy.

There are over 500 healthcare consultants, vendors and attorney organizations serving the west coast healthcare industry in our 45,000 person Healthcare News reader database. We went through each one and identified a contact person. We went to their web site and reviewed their "about us" page to build a list-

ing. Once the listing was prepared, we sent an email to the contact person and asked them to confirm the content. Emails that bounced were researched and correct contact names were obtained.

We incorporated three easy to use search features into the Consultant Marketplace. Web visitors can search by type of consultant, name of consultant or by using our general web site search feature. New consultants can list their company by completing a form on the site.

All of the listings are free to the participating company. Some wanted an enhanced presence and they purchased display advertisements. These advertisements aren't intrusive and don't affect a company's priority in search results.

We decided to *not* offer customer reviews for a few reasons:

- Our audience is sophisticated. We assume they would evaluate any company prior to selection and would request references independently.
- We don't maintain liability insurance for lawsuits from online reviews.
- We don't have the expertise to manage a customer online review service.

All considered, the new Consultant Marketplace is the most comprehensive of its kind and is a very valuable resource to the west coast healthcare industry.

Quality Control

Our database isn't static. We do

several things to maintain quality over content, ensure it grows to include new companies and removes those that are no longer in business.

- Each Consultant Marketplace contact receives a quarterly email asking them to confirm their company's information. Emails that bounce are researched to find the new contact or to see if the company is still in business.
- All Healthcare News readers receive a quarterly email with updated statistics of the Consultant Marketplace. For example, how many joined and how many left. Readers are encouraged to visit the Consultant Marketplace and, if applicable, report errors.
- All Healthcare News readers are encouraged to recommend consultants, vendors and attorneys. This "crowd sourcing" approach allows us to add new participants that wouldn't be found using our normal investigative processes.

How You Can Help

We will do our best to maintain this high quality resource for your use. You can help by asking your web master to place a link from a prominent page of your web site to the Consultant Marketplace. This helps raise the Consultant Marketplace ranking priority in Google and Bing and allows others in the healthcare industry to find it. Have them link to this page: <http://www.healthcarenewssite.com/consultant>.

David Peel is the Publisher of the Healthcare News. He can be reached at dpeel@healthcarenewssite.com.