



STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

# Guide to Healthcare Advertising

A Practical Framework for Patient Growth through Advertising in a Regulated Environment



**Orange 142<sup>®</sup>**

A Direct Digital Holdings Company

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# 1. Growth in Healthcare is Complex

Growth in the healthcare industry is increasingly difficult. Private equity-backed groups continue to [acquire practices and expand regional footprints](#), raising the stakes for everyone else. Sustainable growth now depends on reaching patients directly, not just relying on referrals.

At the same time, healthcare marketers operate under some of the strictest privacy expectations in the economy. From HIPAA's protections for individually identifiable health information to industry frameworks that require notice, choice, and, in many cases, opt-in consent, the rules governing how data can be used are far more complex than in most other sectors.

([source](#): HHS Summary of the HIPAA Privacy Rule.)

([source](#): NAI's 2020 Code of Conduct Expands Self-Regulation for Ad Tech Providers.)

Additionally, social media platforms, such as those operated by Meta, have rolled out new rules for sensitive ad categories. These rules put health, wellness, and healthcare in the most restricted bucket, limiting how advertisers can use detailed targeting, custom audiences, and conversion events that imply a medical trait.

Healthcare accounts for roughly 18% of the US's GDP, more than [\\$5 trillion annually](#), and much of that spending flows through patient care. A sector of this scale relies on sophisticated marketing and advertising. Still, the constraints on how organizations can engage audiences are significantly tighter than in industries such as retail or travel.

The result is a dual challenge: healthcare marketers must compete for attention in an increasingly crowded market while operating within clear regulatory boundaries.

Success depends on understanding how to reach both consumers and healthcare professionals in privacy-safe ways. For consumers, that means healthcare providers showing up when they begin their search for answers. For healthcare marketers, it means using contextual signals to target by specialty, all without relying on patient-level information.

## 2. The Shift in Patient Behavior

Patients approach healthcare choices as they do other purchasing decisions. They research, compare options, and scrutinize convenience, availability, and reputation prior to taking the first step. For healthcare marketers, that means your digital presence must answer the same set of questions any shopper would ask: Who are you? Why should I trust you? When are you available? What do other people say?

Search engines and AI-driven answer platforms increasingly shape these early decisions. Patients ask detailed, conversational questions about symptoms, conditions, treatments, and “best doctor near me,” and receive a curated set of answers and options before they consider clicking on a URL. In many cases, they form a first impression and even build a short list of providers, without visiting any websites at all.

This shift has two important implications. First, healthcare practices need to show up where these journeys actually begin: search results, AI overviews, map packs, local listings, and review platforms, not just your website. [See our GEO Best Practices Guide for Healthcare Marketers.](#)

Second, when your healthcare practice does appear, it needs to present as a clear and credible choice. Consistent business information, strong reviews, clearly defined services, and frictionless next steps (e.g., call, book, message) matter as much as brand awareness.

Despite the rise in AI, paid media still plays a different role in this process. Search and social are no longer mere traffic drivers; they’re integral to how patients compare options. A patient clicking a search ad is often evaluating multiple providers at once. A user who sees a paid social ad may check reviews or a Google Business Profile before ever visiting a landing page. As a result, the healthcare marketer’s objective has shifted from getting the click to earning a place on the patient’s short list.

In practice, this creates three core responsibilities for healthcare advertising:

- Be present wherever patients and caregivers begin their research, from search engines to AI assistants

- Be consistent, with clear, patient-friendly information across ads, listings, and landing pages
- Be persuasive at a glance, using messaging that quickly communicates who you help, what you offer, and why a patient should choose you

The next chapters focus on how to execute against these expectations in paid media and how to build a playbook to attract new patients to your practice.

# 3. Paid Media Still Drives Patient Growth, But It Works Differently Now

It is easy to assume that as search and AI evolve, paid media becomes less important. In practice, the opposite is true.

## **Paid Search: Winning the Moment of Intent**

Paid search remains one of the most important channels in healthcare marketing because it captures patients at the exact moment they're looking for answers. When someone searches for symptoms, treatments, or providers, their intent is clear, and your opportunity is immediate. What has changed is how that intent is understood.

Historically, paid search campaigns were built around keywords that people typed into a search bar. Today, platforms interpret a broader set of signals to understand why a user is searching on a topic. Campaigns are no longer triggered solely by exact queries, but by patterns of behavior, context, and predicted needs.

This shift requires a different approach for paid search campaigns. It's no longer enough to match a keyword; healthcare marketers must align campaign elements with the underlying motivation behind the search. In practice, that means building campaigns around answer-based content.

Patients don't search in fragments anymore. They ask questions about symptoms, treatments, timelines, and options. High-performing campaigns reflect that behavior. Messaging such as "same-day appointment for back pain" or "treatment options for knee injury" align more closely with real patient intent than generic brand language. Ad copy should reflect this intent.

This principle extends beyond ad copy. Landing pages now play a central role in how platforms evaluate relevance and determine when to show your ads. Pages that clearly answer patient questions, include structured content, and reinforce the themes of your ads perform more effectively.

At the same time, AI-driven formats such as Performance Max (PMAX) are changing how ads are delivered. Rather than serving a fixed message, platforms dynamically

assemble ads from combinations of headlines, descriptions, and calls to action based on what they believe will resonate with a specific user at a specific moment.

This changes the role of the advertiser. You're no longer writing a single ad; you're providing a set of assets that the system can combine to deliver the most relevant answer. It also changes how success is defined. In many cases, your content may inform the answer a patient sees, even if they never click. The goal isn't just to win a position on the page, but to be present and useful when a decision is being formed.

Paid search still captures demand. But in today's environment, paid search rewards providers who can clearly answer the question behind the search, not just the words used to express it.

### **Paid Search: Navigating Platform Restrictions in an AI-Driven Environment**

While major social media platforms have introduced restrictions on healthcare advertising, it's important to note that advertising isn't prohibited on them. Meta and TikTok both allow campaigns for medical providers, services, and certain therapeutic products, provided they meet policy requirements such as age restrictions, appropriate disclosures, and the avoidance of prohibited claims. This means the opportunity to reach patients on these platforms still exists.

What's changed is how those campaigns are targeted and optimized. Platforms now classify many health and wellness topics as sensitive categories, which limits how advertisers can define audiences, use customer data, and optimize toward lower-funnel conversion events.

For instance, campaign elements that explicitly imply a medical condition or treatment may be restricted or flagged, and enforcement can affect delivery, spend, or account capabilities. As a result, many of the highly granular targeting approaches that healthcare marketers once relied on are no longer available in the same ways. Precise audience control has been reduced, particularly for campaigns tied to specific conditions or treatments.

At the same time, social platforms have become increasingly AI-driven. Rather than relying on manually defined audiences, platforms now use predictive models to determine who sees an ad. Systems such as Meta's Advantage+ and TikTok's automated targeting evaluate behavior, engagement patterns, and contextual signals

to identify users who are likely to respond. Audience inputs still matter, but they act as guidance rather than strict controls.

This shift changes the primary driver of performance. Paid social is now driven by how clearly and effectively your message connects within the platform's constraints.

AI-driven systems dynamically assemble and optimize ads by mixing and matching headlines, visuals, and formats based on what is most likely to resonate with each user. This makes creative variation, clarity, and relevance far more important than a single “perfect” ad.

It also changes the pace of execution. Creative fatigue sets in more quickly, not because audiences lose interest, but because platforms repeatedly expose smaller audience segments to the same assets while optimizing delivery. Without a steady flow of new creative, performance can decline rapidly.

For healthcare marketers, AI creates a new operating model. Campaigns must be designed with both compliance and adaptability in mind. Messaging must be clear, appropriate, and aligned with platform policies. Complicating the matter further, creatives must be developed in volume, with variations that can be continuously tested and refreshed. And targeting strategies must rely on privacy-safe signals rather than sensitive health data.

Paid social still plays an important role, particularly for awareness, education, and retargeting. But success now depends less on who you target and more on how effectively your message connects and remains compliant within an increasingly automated, policy-driven environment.

### **Connected TV: Scale and Performance Combined**

Connected TV (CTV) has moved beyond its role as a brand awareness channel. Healthcare marketers now use it to reach patients in specific markets and measure what happens next.

Healthcare marketers can target households within defined geographies, deliver high-quality video in trusted environments, and connect that exposure to real outcomes, such as website visits, calls, and booked appointments. CTV brings together the reach of traditional television with the accountability of digital media, making it a practical tool for driving patient growth, not just visibility.

TV has undergone radical changes in how marketers evaluate performance. Historically, television was measured by impressions and reach. Today, healthcare advertisers expect to understand what happens after the ad is seen. Site visits, location lookups, and patient activity are now part of the measurement framework, shifting CTV from a planning exercise to a performance channel.

This shift is reflected in investment. Healthcare advertisers continue to increase spending in CTV, as they now recognize that streaming environments can reach the majority of health-engaged audiences.

For many consumers, television and streaming influence awareness and consideration, often shaping decisions before a search ever happens. High completion rates are a baseline in this environment. The real question is whether that attention leads to action.

Effective CTV campaigns are designed to convert attention into measurable outcomes. That requires more than strong creatives; it requires alignment across audience strategy, media placement, and ongoing optimization.

Ads delivered within high-quality, brand-safe content tend to perform better, with stronger completion rates and greater influence on downstream behavior. Campaign performance also improves when marketers actively adjust spend based on what is working, shifting investment toward the audiences, publishers, and timing that are driving results.

This is where CTV differs from traditional television. Campaigns can be actively optimized, not just planned. Performance data allows marketers to refine targeting, reallocate budget, and improve outcomes over time.

For healthcare marketers, this creates a clear opportunity. CTV can introduce a brand, build trust, and influence consideration, while also contributing to measurable patient growth at the local level. Used correctly, it connects awareness to action, helping turn attention into appointments.

### **Programmatic Display: Reach the Right Audiences in Privacy-First Environments**

Programmatic display continues to play an important role in healthcare marketing, particularly for reaching and re-engaging audiences at scale. But in regulated

environments, how those audiences are defined and activated matters as much as the reach itself.

Healthcare advertisers can't rely on the same data strategies used in other industries. HIPAA requirements and platform policies limit the use of sensitive health information, which means targeting must be built around privacy-safe signals rather than personal medical data. This has led to a more deliberate approach to audience strategy.

Rather than targeting individuals based on known conditions, campaigns must be designed using a combination of contextual, behavioral, and geographic signals:

- Contextual targeting aligns ads with relevant health content, ensuring that messaging appears in environments where users are already engaged with related topics.
- Behavioral indicators, when used appropriately, help identify patterns of interest without exposing sensitive information.
- Geographic strategies, including geofencing and market-level targeting, allow providers to focus on the communities they serve.

These approaches make it possible to reach the right audiences while maintaining compliance.

Programmatic display is also well-suited for more tailored outreach strategies. Campaigns can be structured to reflect the needs and preferences of specific communities, with messaging that aligns with the publications, platforms, and environments those audiences already trust. This is particularly important in public health and multicultural outreach, where relevance and credibility directly influence engagement.

Execution requires ongoing oversight. Campaign performance must be monitored closely, with adjustments made to targeting, placements, and messaging based on what is working. In regulated categories, this process also includes ensuring that all campaign elements remain compliant as platform policies and requirements evolve.

Measurement follows the same principle. Success is defined not just by impressions or clicks, but by meaningful engagement, such as time spent with content, site interaction, and progression toward key actions.

Programmatic display remains a flexible and scalable channel. In healthcare, its value lies in the ability to combine reach with precision while operating within clear privacy and regulatory boundaries.

Across all of these channels, one pattern is clear: execution is more constrained, and outcomes are more dependent on how campaigns are structured from the outset.

The organizations that succeed are not those using more channels, but those using them more deliberately, aligning media, messaging, and compliance into a single, coordinated approach that supports patient growth.

# 4. How Compliance and Performance Can Coexist

Advertising in healthcare and other regulated industries requires a different approach, but it doesn't follow that such advertising is ineffective.

Campaigns can still reach the right audiences, scale across channels, and deliver measurable results. What changes is how those campaigns are designed, launched, and managed.

In regulated environments, compliance is built into the process from the start. Campaigns begin with a clear definition of category-specific requirements, including what can be said, where ads can run, who can be targeted, and how results will be measured.

Audience strategies are structured around eligibility and privacy-safe signals, using geographic controls, contextual alignment, and approved data sources to ensure campaigns reach appropriate audiences without relying on restricted information.

Creative and messaging are reviewed against regulatory standards before launch, with approval workflows in place to ensure that all content meets legal and platform requirements.

Once campaigns are live, they require ongoing oversight. Performance is monitored alongside compliance, with adjustments made in response to platform feedback, policy changes, and evolving requirements.

This level of structure allows campaigns to move forward with confidence. Rather than slowing execution, it creates a predictable framework where targeting, messaging, and measurement are aligned from the outset.

The result is a more disciplined form of marketing. Compliance doesn't limit performance; it shapes how performance is achieved.

# 5. The Healthcare Marketer Playbook

- 1. Prioritize High-Intent Channels.** Start with channels that capture active demand. Paid search and high-intent placements allow you to reach patients when they are looking for answers, providers, or appointments. These channels consistently deliver the most efficient path to patient acquisition and should anchor your strategy before expanding into broader awareness efforts.
- 2. Build Answer-Based Landing Pages.** Landing pages are no longer just conversion points. They're part of how AI-driven campaigns select which paid ads to show and how patients evaluate providers. Pages should clearly answer common questions, outline services, establish credibility, and make next steps obvious. Strong alignment between ad messaging and landing page content improves both performance and patient confidence.
- 3. Use CTV to Establish Trust Early.** CTV allows healthcare marketers to introduce their brand, communicate expertise, and build familiarity before a patient takes action. In healthcare, where trust is critical, CTV helps reduce uncertainty and improve the effectiveness of downstream channels.
- 4. Maintain Consistency Across All Touchpoints.** Patients often move between ads, listings, reviews, and websites before making a decision. Messaging, services, and contact information should align across all channels. Consistency reinforces credibility and reduces friction, making it easier for patients to choose and act.
- 5. Design for Compliance Right from the Start.** In regulated industries, compliance isn't a final check. It's part of the foundation. Campaigns should be built with approved data strategies, compliant messaging, and clear activation rules from the outset. This ensures campaigns can scale, perform, and adapt without disruption.
- 6. Optimize for AI-Driven Discovery.** Patients are increasingly turning to AI platforms and search engines to ask detailed questions and evaluate providers before visiting a website. Optimizing for this behavior means structuring your content so it can be easily understood, extracted, and recommended by these systems. Clear service descriptions, well-defined specialties, consistent business information, and answer-based content all improve how your brand appears in AI-generated responses.

## 6. How Orange 142 Can Help

Healthcare marketing requires more than strong media execution. It requires a clear understanding of regulation, patient behavior, and how to operate effectively within both. Orange 142 is built to support that reality.

We maintain a [dedicated high-compliance practice for advertising](#), designed specifically for regulated industries, including healthcare. This isn't an add-on service; it's a structured approach to campaign planning, execution, and optimization that ensures all activity aligns with HIPAA requirements, platform policies, and internal compliance standards.

At the same time, we bring deep, [hands-on experience working with healthcare organizations](#) across a range of use cases. Our work includes [patient acquisition](#), [public health outreach](#), and [recruitment marketing](#). These programs are grounded in real performance, with campaigns that have driven measurable outcomes such as increased patient volume, stronger engagement, and improved return on investment.

Just as important, Orange 142 operates as an integrated partner. [Marketing strategy](#), [media solutions](#), and [web development](#) are managed under one roof. This ensures that messaging, targeting, creative, and conversion paths are aligned from the start. There are no gaps between strategy and execution, and no disconnect between what is promised and what is delivered.

This structure allows healthcare marketers to advertise with confidence. Campaigns are designed to meet regulatory requirements, adapt to platform changes, and scale over time without needing to be rebuilt at each stage.

Healthcare marketing is complex, but it does not have to be fragmented. With the right structure, the right expertise, and the right partner, it is possible to reach the right audiences, communicate clearly, and drive measurable patient growth while staying fully compliant.

[Contact Orange 142 today.](#)