It is tempting to describe the digital revolution in healthcare marketing using either-or terms. Articles that want to compare and contrast TRADITIONAL marketing with DIGITAL marketing tend to make two columns, with one side VERSUS the other side. The purpose, place and applications of one are not in opposition to the other. Most often, they work together.

Traditional marketing—direct mail, brochures, print ads and broadcast media—are virtually indispensable in a complete and well-rounded plan. Plus, these tools provide distinct advantages, such as targeting a local audience and being personal and direct. External advertising has its place and works well. Tangible, printed materials tend to have a long useful lifetime. People can retain, recall, and refer to information kept at hand. Strategies like doctor referral building and internal marketing are crucial. They deliver the highest ROI for our clients, but they are hard to scale. We provide training about using them for the greatest effectiveness.
There’s really no debate. Traditional is not in opposition to digital. Traditional media brings considerable weight and impact to the overall marketing effort. It is alive and well…and it provides important options in the marketing toolbox. For a better understanding of this symbiotic balance, consider our perspective as a leading healthcare agency.

**The Digital Marketing Revolution – our first and best choice…**

Most service firms that claim to be full service are really traditional agencies that are trying to stay relevant. For us, digital is in our DNA and has been for years. It is our favorite (and strongest) area of expertise.

We know the power of digital marketing. Healthcare Success is an integrated, full-service marketing and medical advertising agency that is dedicated to growing hospital or physician practices. There are hundreds of options, with new developments regularly, including these examples:

- Blogs/Websites/Articles
- Content Creation
- Email Marketing
- Pay-per-Click Advertising
- Search Engine Optimization
- Social Media, both Paid and Organic

- Video Content and Distribution Channels

Digital marketing is almost always our first choice for doctors and hospitals. Here are some of the reasons that digital is amazing:

**Digital Marketing Revolution in Healthcare**

The Internet is where consumers are today. It has become healthcare’s front door for several reasons:

- Patients are increasingly empowered in provider selection and health decisions

- Broadband and WiFi services are widely available

- Smartphones and mobile devices are mainstream

- Society in general and important demographic sectors specifically access the Internet in expectation of immediate answers and information

- Universally, the public searches online for research information, health and disease particulars, hospitals and providers

**Production and media are affordable and cost-effective.** A devoted budget tends to be at a lower cost, provide a better cost-per-lead and acquisition, and ultimately a higher Return-on-Investment and profit.
Mobile device users are a first and effective consideration. The nature of healthcare needs—being urgent, important, immediate, convenient—are often answered first by way of a mobile device.

A digital campaign can be highly localized. Maintaining a focus on select geographic areas of cities and suburbs means little waste and greater productivity.

Precision-targeted campaigns can zero in on a specific audience sector and/or geography. Digital media and social media options can segment by consumer preferences and interests. The ideal buyer or customer can be targeted with precision.

Results follow quickly, often in real time, with digital marketing. It is one of the fastest ways for us to deliver results for clients.

Digital messages can have higher exposure and higher engagement. The nature of the Internet is that it can have as wide, narrow or audience-specific as it is designed to have.

Tracking, analytics and metrics are real-time, measurable and accurate. Digital marketing provides fast, accurate and easy to measure details that immediately reveal what’s working and what isn’t working. Testing, adjustments and changes are possible almost immediately.

Digital marketing can be interactive with audience segments. Advertisers can learn directly, and in real time, exactly what the audience needs and interests include. For that matter, as the audience changes, the advertiser can adjust and adapt practically on the fly.
Digital marketing messages are less intrusive. Individuals in the audience have some control over the online messages that they receive. A significant percentage of users are open to online advertising, perhaps in part because the subject matter appears to be timely and relevant to their needs and interests.

Social media engages the desired audience. Digital marketing content engages the audience and provides an opportunity to present compelling and influential social proof.

Most digital channels can be personalized. Unlike mass produced traditional methods, individuals can more easily be identified and personalized in the message or content.

Audiences are increasingly open to new technology. Online features, software enhancements, new consumer products and devices reach the public almost daily. Thus, the sophisticated and computer-savvy consumer accepts the new, convenient and useful pathways that make life easier.

Digital communications are a pervasive, persuasive and nearly indispensable part of daily living. Many people will feel uncomfortable if they find that their constant-companion smartphone was left at home (or anywhere out of immediate reach.)

It’s a new and level playing field. Competition in healthcare is fierce. But the nature of online advertising does not favor one company other another. The actual size of the business is less important, and each digital advertiser has an equal footing at the start. What’s more, the potential return has no ceiling.
Digital enhances brand awareness and reputation. One of the benefits of online visibility is that a particular brand can be seen in multiple locations for greater public awareness. Healthcare options and information can be found in directories, review and rating sites, as well as via Google maps.

The power of digital and traditional working together...

We practice what we preach. The concept and tools of digital marketing and advertising are how we build our own company. Digital AND traditional marketing methods are designed to work together in many healthcare plans. And when they do, the combined effect is a nearly unstoppable force in healthcare marketing and advertising. It is our first choice for hospital and provider marketing.

Stewart Gandolf, MBA, is CEO of Healthcare Success, a medical marketing and healthcare advertising agency. He is also a frequent writer and speaker. Most importantly, he is happily married and a "rock-n-roll daddy" to two wonderful girls.