

CASE STUDY



How Ghergich & Co. Helped NorthWestPharmacy.com Recover from a Manual Penalty and Grow Organic Traffic by 77.7% Year Over Year

1,098%

**INCREASE IN ORGANIC
KEYWORDS**

689

**EARNED ROOT
DOMAINS**

50 – 60

**FEATURED
SNIPPETS**



“Ghergich’s services have been a godsend. They guided us through the process of recovering from a Google manual penalty and improved keyword research and site content to increase rankings on a monthly basis. Their services have been a boon to our business.”

SUSAN MCKELLAR
SEO Manager, Northwest Pharmacy

Challenges

RECOVERING FROM A GOOGLE MANUAL PENALTY

Many businesses were hit hard when Google launched their Penguin update in April 2012, but few suffered as much as companies in the pharmaceutical industry.

Companies like Northwest Pharmacy are not allowed to advertise on Google to win new business, so they relied on robust link profiles to increase their exposure. When old link building methods were suddenly outlawed, they were one of the thousands of businesses slapped with a manual penalty.

Recovering from a manual penalty was a daunting task. Northwest Pharmacy would need to eliminate thousands of bad links, and untangle the good links from that web.

“The biggest issue we were having was recovering from a Google manual penalty,” says Susan McKellar, SEO Manager at Northwest Pharmacy. “We were penalized for some of the links we had built and needed help untangling that part of the business.”

Northwest Pharmacy also needed help rebuilding their SEO strategies and philosophies from the ground up. Where once they’d relied on buying links to win new business, now they needed to adjust to Google’s new guidelines and best practices.

NorthWestPharmacy.com is a leading Canadian pharmacy and global drugstore. They help customers find a wide range of prescription and non-prescription medications for a fraction of what they cost abroad.

HIGHLIGHTS

CHALLENGES

- Recovering from a Google manual penalty
- Removing thousands of spammy links
- Refreshing an outdated website in need of SEO improvements
- Earning organic links with few assets

SOLUTION

- Removed thousands of spammy links to recover from Penguin penalty
- Audited website for SEO improvements
- Created digital magazine from scratch to earn organic links
- Performed digital outreach to industry sites in client’s

RESULTS

- Manual penalty lifted
- Client now ranks within top 10 results for high-value keywords
- 77.7% organic traffic increase year over year as of Sept. 2017
- 93% increase in organic traffic from Sept. 2015–Sept. 2017
- Optimized landing pages earning 50–60 featured snippets
- Organic links from 689 distinct root domains since 2014
- 1,098% growth in organic keywords in 2 years

“At one time, we invested a great deal of our advertising budget into Google ads. Then Canadian pharmacies were banned from advertising on Google, so we started branching out into SEO strategies, such as link building,” Susan says.

“Our link building program was successful for a while, but we fell behind in terms of Google’s best practices for building links. We needed to readjust our thinking and philosophy relating to links,” she adds.

Recovering from Google’s manual penalty was no small feat. Northwest Pharmacy needed to weed out bad links, build organic links with reputable sites in their niche, breathe new life into their social media presence, and update their website.

Fortunately, Ghergich was there to help Northwest Pharmacy every step of the way.

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Solution

STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO SEO AND PENALTY RECOVERY

Northwest Pharmacy began working with Ghergich in December 2013. Since that time, Ghergich has helped Northwest Pharmacy solve a number of SEO concerns, including how they would bounce back from their manual penalty.

“In addition to guiding us through the steps to recover from a Google penalty, Ghergich & Co. assisted us in making a number of important changes to update the content and structure of our website,” Susan recalls. “They’ve done site audits and provided feedback while helping us launch a digital magazine.”

Content reviews and website audits were an essential part of helping Northwest Pharmacy recover from their penalty and grow their audience. After each SEO review, Ghergich explained to Susan and her team their recommended improvements, why they were necessary, and how to implement those changes.

“In terms of our approach, Ghergich & Co. has been incredibly understanding and flexible. We want to be involved in the SEO process and have input at each step. Their team provides the necessary instruction and support for our in-house SEO team, and they are readily available to answer our questions,” she says.

“Our staff worked directly with Ghergich’s at various stages, whether it involved removing links or monitoring content on the website. Their guidance throughout these stages has been invaluable,” she adds.

But Ghergich knew that finding and eliminating thousands of spammy links wasn’t enough—Northwest Pharmacy also needed to earn new, organic links before they could truly recover.

To that end, Ghergich helped Northwest Pharmacy optimize landing pages and create a digital magazine that would help them communicate their values to customers without product or brand mentions. Then they connected them to key industry influencers.

“Ghergich & Co. also reached out to contacts in the industry on our behalf in order to establish links on healthcare sites relevant to our work,” Susan says.

At every step of the way, Ghergich made sure they provided second-to-none SEO and content marketing services.

“One of the best parts of working with Ghergich & Co. has been their willingness to work with us and not just for us. A.J. and his team seemed to genuinely care about helping clients versus just selling us a service,” Susan says.

Ghergich & Co. and Northwest Pharmacy have been working together for over four years now, and they’ve established a strong partnership built on mutual trust.

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“In addition to guiding us through the steps to recover from a Google penalty, Ghergich & Co. have done site audits, provided feedback, helped us launch a digital magazine, and reached out to contacts in our industry to help us establish links on healthcare sites.”

Results

MANUAL PENALTY LIFTED AND A SURGE IN ORGANIC GROWTH

Susan has been with Northwest Pharmacy for eight years, and in that time she's witnessed firsthand the results of their partnership with Ghergich & Co.

"Ghergich guided us through the process of recovering from a Google manual penalty," Susan says. "We've also experienced a growth in ranking of keywords and terms that are vital to our business."

Northwest Pharmacy's growth stats are impressive. Their organic traffic increased by a staggering 93% between September 2015 and September 2017—a year-over-year increase of 77.7%.

This growth has been spurred by many factors. Northwest Pharmacy's optimized landing pages, for example, have earned approximately 50–60 featured snippets to date.

Plus, Northwest Pharmacy's digital magazine, Health Perch, has been featured on prominent sites such as Huffington Post, Bustle, MindBodyGreen, Food & Wine, Refinery29, and many more, earning organic backlinks from 689 root domains since 2014.

Thanks to proper website optimization, digital outreach, and organic link building campaigns, Northwest Pharmacy has experienced a 1,098% growth in organic keywords in the past two years alone.

"Ghergich's services have been a godsend. They guided us through the process of recovering from a Google manual penalty and improved keyword research and site content to increase ranking on a monthly basis. Their services have been a boon to our business," Susan says.

Northwest Pharmacy has made a strong recovery, and they now rank within the top 10 results for many high-value keywords. Susan attributes this success to Ghergich and Northwest Pharmacy's mutually beneficial partnership.

“Our success is a good example of how Ghergich & Co. can help a company grow their SEO experience and achieve positive results,” Susan confirms. “They have a tailored program to suit our needs, and they’ve been flexible enough to adapt as those needs have changed.”

The experience has been so positive that Susan recommends Ghergich to other companies in need of content marketing and SEO.

“Ghergich & Co. provides a wealth of knowledge, experience, and resources for any SEO team, no matter their level of knowledge or experience,” she says. “They listen to their clients and are responsive to their needs.”

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Learn how Ghergich & Co. content marketing cuts through the noise and connects you to your customers.

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