7 Steps to Boost Your Online Reputation
In a climate filled with increased competition and digitally-savvy patients, your practice's online reputation is more important than ever.

Online reputation refers to all the information that your potential patients see and consider when looking for a new doctor online. For instance, reviews on healthcare and business sites create online word of mouth for your practice while reviews on your own practice website assure prospective patients that are considering whether to book.

Here’s a quick look at seven key steps you can follow to build a positive online reputation.
1. Understand the impact of online reviews

Before the digital age, practices grew when satisfied patients recommended their doctor to friends and family. However, the average American now spends a whopping 10+ hours a day¹ in front of a screen, so word-of-mouth referral strategies aren’t enough to ensure your practice thrives.

Even if your practice does receive personal referrals, many patients will head straight to business and healthcare review sites to cross-reference your online reputation before booking an appointment. Review sites build credibility for your practice, allowing potential patients to hold your work in high esteem even if they’ve never met you.

Online review sites show up quickly in online search results, usually right next to your contact information, hours, and location - making it important for your practice to pay attention to what your patients say about you.

A basic Google search for Santa Monica-based Dr. Shamsah Amersi prominently displays her aggregated Google reviews. Her practice’s strong online reputation makes a positive first impression, while the option to book directly from her Google My Business profile makes it easy to convert.

2. Claim your online listings and review pages

To begin building your online reputation, the next step involves claiming your profile on business and healthcare review sites.

Even if your practice has only a few reviews on every site (or none at all), you’ll need to claim, correct, and optimize your business information and profile at the minimum. This entails verifying that you’re the practice owner, and ensuring your address, website, and other contact information is accurately listed on each review site.

What’s the difference between an unclaimed and claimed profile? An unclaimed profile often features unverified and inaccurate contact information. Unclaimed profiles usually also lack photos and business hours, inspiring little confidence in your practice for potential patients, especially those who use mobile devices to search for a new doctor. When on-the-go, people tend to search by distance on their phone or tablet, so whether your office is open while they’re searching is critical. If your hours aren’t listed or accurate, you’ll miss out on reaching mobile users.

When reviewing each profile, ensure that:

- Your contact information and description of your practice is accurate
- The listing includes your phone number, address, business hours, and website link.

Once you audit, claim, and correct your profiles, you can also improve them with professional photos. Show potential patients exactly what to expect with professional pictures of you, your team, and your office.
3. Monitor your online reviews

After ensuring the accuracy of your information in online review sites and directories, it’s time for maintenance. At least once a week, check the ratings across all review sites to monitor for any negative reviews. If your staff doesn’t have time to monitor all of these sites, platforms which monitor your online reputation can automatically alert you when a negative evaluation appears.

4. Immediately respond to negative reviews

Don’t let bad online reviews go without a response from your practice. The Harvard Business Review indicates that for every 1-star decrease in reputation, a small business can expect its revenue to decrease by 9%². Revenue and reputation are closely linked because negative reviews have the potential to turn off prospects, and even current patients. You can often amend the dissatisfaction, however, by responding empathetically to the issue and doing what you can to fix it.

Best review practices include:

- **Respond to negative reviews within 24 hours.** This shows potential and current patients that you are responsive. If you miss the 24 hour window, respond as soon as you can.

- **Assure the reviewer that their complaint was heard.** If a patient is upset, you can let them know their needs and opinions matter to your practice. However, do not admit fault for an alleged improper diagnosis or treatment. It’s okay to apologize for a long wait time in the lobby, but steer clear of expressing regret for anything that could point to malpractice.

- **Include a personal response to the negative review.** Avoid canned or automatic replies, which can make your practice seem less accessible and friendly. Show the reviewer and prospects that solving issues is a top priority for your practice. At the same time,

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Key tip: Ask the reviewer to call you directly to resolve the issue. Even if you don’t hear back from them, other prospects will see your dedication to finding a resolution, which goes a long way to build a positive reputation. Always keep HIPAA guidelines in mind, and don’t refer to any patient’s symptoms or diagnoses, even if the patient references these online.

- Thank the negative reviewer for their feedback. Although this might seem counterintuitive, it’s important to let the reviewer know you appreciate their feedback about how your practice can improve. Over time, any consistently negative reviews can help you determine which areas need attention.

5. Remain proactive offline

Many of the less-than-optimal patient experiences that occur in the office won’t be shared online if they are resolved face-to-face.

Ask your staff to spot situations, whenever possible, that they should address and resolve. Often a simple acknowledgement of a problem or annoyance will be enough to prevent subsequent negative online reviews. If a problem can’t be solved right away, record them in one place so you can follow up with a patient as soon as possible with a phone call, email, or letter.

6. Monitor for fraudulent reviews

Most reputable review sites offer some protection against fraudulent posts submitted by competitors or even disgruntled former employees. However, some of these reviews can slip through the cracks. During your weekly review site monitoring, scan for fraudulent posts from suspicious sources, and report them to the review site immediately if you see one.
7. Ask for feedback to improve your practice

Modern healthcare practice growth software enables you to setup automated post-appointment follow-up emails or text messages to all of your patients after they visit your office. It's good practice to request feedback promptly after the appointment, when their experience is still in fresh in their mind.

When your patients provide positive feedback, invite them to share their experiences on your practice website, further building your brand and online reputation.

Set up alerts whenever a critique comes through. That way, you can call or email patients and address any concerns or issues they had about their visit directly.

If you see any consistent problems, feedback from patients can change your practice for the better, whether it be that they want the option to book online or they’d like more communication before the appointment.
Keep Up The Good Work

You’re now totally versed in the basics of online reputation management. Get started today by claiming your review pages and optimizing your profiles. Then, remain vigilant: audit all of your listings, ratings, and feedback. Remember to address negative reviews head-on, and showcase reviews right on your homepage. Follow these seven steps, and you’re well on your way to a great online reputation!
Our Solution

PatientPop is reinventing the way physicians market and grow their practice. Our smart technology provides an automated, all-in-one solution to enhance your online visibility and reputation, patient acquisition and retention, as well as business insights.

Diagnose your practice’s online performance today with our free practice scan. This powerful diagnostic tool scours the internet for your practice’s online visibility, reputation, and directory profiles to show you how you’re performing and where you can improve.

If you’re interested in seeing how our platform can transform your marketing and practice growth, request a demo or contact our sales department.

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