What to do when faced with a bad review & why you can’t ignore it.

Responding To A Negative Review

For the Dental Practice that wants to STAND OUT
Make your online reputation part of your dental marketing plan

The old saying, “pencils have erasers for a reason” speaks about perfectionism and not always hitting the mark, but perfectionism is a lofty goal, and one that is largely unattainable. As professionals, we try to be the best that we can be for our clients, but sometimes they’re just not happy. We work hard to ensure all of our clients have a great experience, but we can’t control their perception or the story they are telling themselves or others. We have to recognize that some clients never will be satisfied, no matter what we do for them.

In today’s age of instant technology and smart phones, dissatisfied clients don’t get a chance to cool off before posting a review of your service online. This can result in reviews that don’t truly reflect the care and attention you and your team give your patients every day.

When someone gives you a negative online review, you might wish you could use an eraser on it, but with proper management of the situation and the review, you can turn it around to your benefit. And ...you need to address it. This is critical.
Here are 9 tips to make online reviews work for your dental practice

Online reviews give you the opportunity to start a conversation. The reviewer expects it, and so do the people reading the review – your prospective patients. Responding with a simple thank you to a positive review shows appreciation for your satisfied patients and addressing the concerns of an unhappy patient shows readers your willingness to see their comments as constructive criticism. If you don’t respond to a review, it sends another message – but not one you want to send. Ignoring a negative review comes across as reluctance to deal with conflict or refusal to make things right. Not responding to a positive review looks like you don’t appreciate your happy patients. People want to feel appreciated.

*When surveyed, 44% of people said they would go to an out-of-network dentist because of a more favorable review. Like it or not, online reviews affect your bottom line.*
1. Listen for truth and react mindfully

Look internally to see if the reviewer has a legitimate complaint. Most people faced with a negative experience will remain silent. They will just walk away from your practice, avoid your phone calls, and you may never know why. Look at this as an opportunity for growth – for you and your team. Decide to implement whatever training is necessary to ensure this does not become a habitual issue.

2. Address it publicly, deal with it privately, and do it quickly

If necessary, cool off, then assess the review, and comment on it. Apologize, even if you just acknowledge that you are sorry they were unhappy with their dental experience. If it was a valid issue, thank the reviewer for bringing it to your attention, and briefly mention you have taken steps to institute change. Mention the reviewer by name and encourage them to call or email you directly. This takes it offline, and at the same time shows readers that you and your staff are committed to making things right. What drives people to a business is great customer service when things don't go as expected. We all know customer service doesn't always go well and the last thing you want online is an argument, but when someone reads your online reviews, they want to know you are responsive. So, address the concern and invite the reviewer to contact you directly. Keep it short and simple, and even if you think the reviewer is totally out of line, don't let yourself respond defensively. It will reflect poorly on you every time. Be the bigger person.

Even though you can’t erase a negative review, you can STAND OUT as the caring professional you are by addressing it. People tend to withhold judgement until they see your response. When they see you address it quickly and respectfully, this will often put them on your side and may even drive them to your office. If your positive response results in more negativity from the reviewer, let it go. This will work against the reviewer and may even make them look petty. Think about your reaction to seeing an exchange like this. Do you put much weight on a review if the reviewer tries to keep it online, or is continuing to be disrespectful? No. You’re likely to think them trifling and move on. Your prospective patients are just as likely to discredit the original reviewer and move on too.

Here are the top reasons people cite for ignoring a negative online review:

- 34% – review seems exaggerated
- 29% – unreasonable sounding author
- 18% – doctor responded thoughtfully
- 16% – issue was irrelevant.
Responding to a positive review
Keep it simple. You want to acknowledge the review and reviewer, but don't go further than that... “Thank you for your review. We really look forward to seeing you at your next recare visit!” is ample and authentic.

Responding to a negative review
Even though a negative review can feel like a personal attack, when responding to these you need to stay objective. Again, it needs to be simple. First, if the review has upset you, calm down.

If the reviewer has made a valid point...
“Thank you for your review and for pointing out this situation. Please accept our apologies and be assured that this is not typical of our practice. We are taking steps to ensure this does not happen again. If you would like to discuss this in person, please call our office.

If the reviewer has overreacted...
“Thank you for your comment. We would like to work with you to resolve this situation. Please call our office at your convenience so we can resolve this.”

Keep these three things in mind about your reviewers as you prepare to respond:
- They have paid for the service they are reviewing. They are your customers.
- They are people with feelings and sensitivities, even if they are out of line.
- They have no issues with making their opinions known online.
You need to be sensitive and aware of these points. Be kind, be civil, and be gentle...like you are in your practice.
3) Bury the negative with positive
Positive reviews act like an eraser by pushing negative reviews down the list and they keep your star rating higher. A star rating increase on sites like Yelp or Google can result in a 5-10% increase in revenue. Who doesn't want that? People are less likely to pay attention to a negative review when they see you have so many positive ones. Most of us realize that nobody can please all the people all the time. What's important is that you please most of them. Family, staff, and patients who know your dedication to their comfort and care can help your star rating by leaving you positive reviews.

4) Review other dental professionals
You collaborate with other dental professionals regularly and like you, they work hard to provide a calm, relaxing, and comfortable experience for their patients. A positive review on your dental partner’s business page goes a long way to letting them know that you appreciate the care they give your patients or the referrals they give you. By reviewing them, you can often prompt a reciprocal review. If other dental professionals review you, make an effort to do the same for them.

5) Use existing happy patients for positive reviews
Use private notes and emails from happy customers to prompt positive online reviews. You can't post it yourself, but you can respond to their note or email by thanking them and requesting they leave an online review. Your loyal patients are your best source of referrals already. They already like sharing how great your team is, or how efficiently you were able to clean up their bite issues, or give them the smile of their dreams – they just sent you a note saying so. They would be happy to help you in return ... by leaving a positive review.
6) Ask your patients to write an online review

Your existing loyal patients are your greatest asset when dealing with a negative online review. Use your patient newsletter to ask your patients to leave an online review. Asking for reviews may seem pushy, but for many people, all it takes is a little nudge. They already refer their friends, family, and colleagues to your dental practice, and they'd be happy to give you a review too.

7) Use your patient newsletter

A small article in your patient newsletter outlining the steps to follow to leave a review on a specific site is more likely to drive positive reviews than a vague note at the reception desk. A patient newsletter mailed directly to their homes is on hand at a time when they are more likely to sit down to write a positive review about their experience in your office. Giving a systematic outline of how to leave a review makes it simple and easy. People respond more to “simple and easy.”

8) Use your website

Add a link to your chosen review site on your website to drive patients exactly where you want them to go. Link directly to the review page, not the home page. As you know with educating your patients about their oral health, the more information you give people, the more likely they are to respond favorably.

9) Get reviews on multiple review sites

Use multiple avenues for reviews – some people swear by Yelp, others by Angie’s List, but make sure one of them is Google. Google’s location reviews have a twofold effect. More reviews that are positive drive up your star rating and move negative reviews down the list, and they tie into search results. Having more positive reviews than negative reviews puts you above the competition in local search results.

A patient newsletter mailed directly to their homes is on hand at a time when they are more likely to sit down to write a positive review about their experience in your office.
WHY should soliciting positive reviews be part of your marketing plan?

There's benefits beyond pushing a negative review down the list

- More people read positive reviews than negative reviews. When you think about it, this makes sense. If a potential patient doesn't need implants and the reviewer is speaking to their implant experience, the negative review isn't pertinent, but if a potential patient reads a positive review that speaks to their immediate need for a gentle relaxing dental experience, that will speak to them much more loudly.

This also lets you tip the balance.

- If you look at positive vs. negative reviews on sites like Yelp and Google, there are typically more negative than positive reviews. It's human nature to complain more than compliment, but if you actively pursue positive reviews you create a subtle perception shift ... this practice must be good if there are so many positive reviews.

This makes you **STAND OUT** among the other practices reviewed online.

Studies show that Millennials will have more purchasing power by 2017 than any prior generation, and this group of individuals is less trusting. They will trust a stranger's review over what you tell them every day, so you need your patients to share their positive experiences.

They are also: 70% more likely to share feedback on their experiences, both good and bad ... but, if you do have a few negative reviews, for this group, which makes up 25% of the North American population, it can be a good thing. They tend to trust positive online reviews more if there are some negative reviews in the mix – and if you've handled those negative reviews in a timely responsive manner, they'll trust you even more. That's human nature too.

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Surprising facts about today's online environment:

- 88% of purchasing decisions are based on online reviews
- 24% of people will chose another provider after reading two negative online reviews
- 39% of people will make a different choice after reading three
- To put it in dollars and cents ... one negative review in absence of positive reviews can lose you 30 new patients.

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42% of people tend to spend more after reading a positive online review, and who doesn't want that?
Consumer review sites have changed

The past 15+ years has brought intense change to the fabric of the Internet. In 1999, the first consumer review sites appeared, and in 2004, RateMDs.com was born. In the next three years, consumers posted over half a million ratings, and in 2008, two more review sites came to the table. Today nearly 12 million people visit websites owned by Vitals and Healthgrades ... every month!

Online review sites have become more secure

Gone are the days of hired professional writers posting reviews. The big sites have locked down on this to increase their credibility:

- You can’t delete an online review.
- There is no way to influence or change an online review.
- Review sites will only allow one review from the same IP address, so you can’t write new reviews yourself, nor can you have an iPad at your reception desk to solicit positive reviews.

Who are the big review sites for dental professionals? According to a 2014 study, the most popular sites are not always the most trusted, so you really do have to keep your eye out and manage multiple sites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most Popular:</th>
<th>Most Trusted:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthgrades – 43%</td>
<td>Yelp – 44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yelp – 34%</td>
<td>Healthgrades – 31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vitals – 14%</td>
<td>Vitals – 17%</td>
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<td>ZocDoc – 9 %</td>
<td>ZocDoc – 7%</td>
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<td>WebMD – 1%</td>
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Two additional sites that are increasing in popularity are, of course, Google and Facebook, and you don’t have to have a business page in order for consumers to review your practice. Patients can create a page for your business if one doesn’t already exist.
Delivering Consistent Customer Service

Customer service and reputation management work hand in hand. Once you've dealt with the online review, implement excellent customer service to help ensure it doesn't happen again. Here are 3 tips to help increase your team's customer service skills:

1) Be available and be friendly

Less than half of people surveyed about positive customer service resolution cited the outcome as the reason they felt it was a positive experience. That bears repeating. Less than half of people feel the actual outcome is the important part. What's important to the majority of people is that the customer service experience was fast or the person dealing with their complaint was pleasant. Excellent call handling is worth its weight in gold. Train everyone who answers the phone at your dental practice. Online complaints are not all about the moments reviewers spend with you. Billing, insurance, call handling, appointment scheduling, and recall follow-up are all essential parts to a well-rounded exceptional dental experience.

2) Employ great call handlers

Train your team and then follow up with call recording and scoring to ensure your patients are properly handled. If you've fostered a trusting environment with excellent customer service, when patients do complain, they're more likely to do it directly in person instead of passively online. This gives your team the opportunity to keep it offline and private.

3) Use feedback forms

Patient surveys compliment your customer service goals. Showing your patients that you care by asking their opinion will help you maintain that compassionate environment you work so hard to provide, and it will help you find out early where the potential issues are within your practice. The very act of sending a survey increases patient satisfaction. Surveys also increase awareness of the services you provide and can influence future behaviour. Since 70% of purchasing decisions are made because of how a patient perceives they are being treated, ensuring your patients are happy is crucial to your success. You can also use your surveys to identify these happy patients to use them as advocates for your practice by asking them to leave an online review. As with negative reviews, analyze the results and do what you can to address them before someone posts a negative review online.
Great customer service will increase patient loyalty. By establishing and maintaining a good customer experience for your patients, you will also create the sense of trust your patients need when referring their loved ones and friends to your office. By following these steps and using some basic marketing tools, you can create a consistent new-patient flow through positive online reviews and positive patient experiences.

Now What?

You worked hard to STAND OUT and develop a good reputation, and are still working hard to make sure it stays above reproach. You are dedicated to the oral health of your patients, and in such a competitive marketplace, you know reputation is king. In today’s online culture, your online reputation must be monitored. Regularly monitoring your online reputation and that of other practices in your neighborhood gives you the opportunity to compare yourself to your competition and create the niche that prospective patients are looking for in a dental office … and communicate these competitive advantages in your neighborhood newsletters.
Tips To Manage Your Online Reputation...

1) Set up Google My Business

If you do only one thing, do this one thing. Google My Business connects you with prospects regardless of where patients are looking for you – on search, maps, or Google. Typically, this is where a prospective patient will see the first review of your practice. Containing your practice name, address, hours, phone number, and patient reviews, Google allows patients to leave (and read) reviews directly from the sidebar on the search page.

Claiming your business listing is simple, free, and an easy way to monitor your online reputation and engage patients and prospects. Make it a routine to check your Google My Business page every morning when you turn on your computer. It takes just a few minutes.

Notifications let you know when someone comments on a post or reviews your practice. Keep your site updated ... make it yours, check the reviews, and manage them. Keep your presence and build lasting relationships with your patients and neighborhood prospects.
2) Increase your social media presence

83% of North American Millennials use social media to connect to the businesses they frequent. They touch their smartphones 45 times per day. You need an online social media presence. Giving your patients a place to connect with you online gives them an opportunity to ask questions and publicly receive excellent customer service from your office.

Start with Google and Facebook, and add to the list as time permits, but start with these two. It gives you the added benefit of being able to socially engage your current and prospective patients, and keep yourself in their minds. You can even take photos of your patients with their phones so they can update their own social media accounts with pictures – and tags – of your dental practice.

As with online reviews, comments on your social media pages, like Facebook, Google, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn require timely responses. People are more likely to trust you if they see you are reactive to posts – driving new patients to your practice and retaining your patients of record – and putting more money in your pocket.

3) Claim your business on the big review sites

If you haven’t done this already, add it to your to-do list. If your practice isn’t listed, reviewers can make a listing for you. It’s not a dedicated business page until you claim it. Until then it has a presence, but it may not be your presence. Claiming your business is easy. Simply go to the appropriate site and click on the link and follow the steps. You can then update contact information, post pictures, and be aware of, and reactive to, comments and reviews – and answer questions from prospective patients, making you their new expert of choice.
BONUS for tekkies...

Use Google Alerts

Google Alerts is a handy tool to help you keep up-to-date on whatever topics you choose. You then receive emails whenever the key words you choose show up online, whether in blogs, webpages, or newspaper and journal articles. Using specific search terms you can set it up to automatically tell you if there is any activity surrounding your name, practice name, or any other topic you choose.

The first two alerts you need to set up are your name and your practice name. Another alert – or more depending on how it applies, are common misspellings and smartphone autocorrect options for your name and practice name. When setting up your alerts you can set the frequency, how the alerts come to you, and what you are being alerted about. If you have a common name or there are numerous hits when you do a quick online search of yourself, use “Boolean search terms and operators” to filter out some of the irrelevant web pages. Google has some great tips and instruction pages to give you more information.

Ensure that you include alerts for your competition and the big review sites, Yelp, Google, Healthgrades, RateMDS, Vitals, ZocDoc, and Angie’s List. If there are other review sites commonly used in your area and add those to your alerts list too.

How To Set up a Google Alert

In 3 Easy Steps!

1. Go to www.google.com/alerts and log on to your Google account. Don't have one? Set one up.

2. Set up your alerts using the keywords you want to track. Set your preferences for how frequently you would like to see alerts, the language, and region. Google will preview the alert results for you so you can tell how much you need to filter out with additional unique terms and operators.

3. Manage your alerts. In your email program set up a filter to move all of Google alert results into one folder so they are easier to manage, or set up an RSS feed.
A dental marketing firm like Patient News can help you communicate with your patients and recover gracefully from negative reviews, increase your practice’s customer service delivery, and keep a steady flow of new patients walking in your door. Call one of our account executives today and get started with a free consultation. With call tracking, recording, and scoring, training tools for your frontline staff, and communication venues such as patient surveys, social media posts, and reputation enhancing quality patient and neighborhood newsletters, our business intelligence tools help you take the guesswork out of marketing and make your practice STAND OUT in your neighborhood.
Get Started Now!
...with a FREE CONSULTATION
When you call, you'll also get these reports free:
1. FREE MARKET AREA ANALYSIS
2. FREE COMPETITOR BREAKDOWN
3. FREE PATIENT CLUSTER REPORT.

Our team of dental marketing intelligence experts will be pleased to share with you how our documented, analyzed, and expertly created dental marketing process will virtually guarantee practice growth.

With your FREE CONSULTATION, you'll see these reports and more, absolutely free... then you can decide if our solutions suit your practice.

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