3 Ways to Outpace Your Competition Online

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Is your competition attracting new patients with their stellar online presence? Don't sit idly and watch other providers reap the benefits of a modern, tech-savvy practice. Instead, outperform your competitors by implementing the three core tenets of a great online presence: an optimized practice website, a strong online reputation, and easy-to-use online appointment booking technology.

1. Build A Modern, Optimized Website

In 2017, your practice requires more than the average website to impress potential patients. Websites that convert visitors to patients all use certain elements to ensure online success. Savvy practice owners optimize their pages for search engines and mobile users, build trust with visitors through testimonials and pictures, and offer easy ways to book appointments.

Create A Strong Search Result Listing

The first thing you'll want to do is ensure your website looks great when it pops up in a Google search result.

Your title is displayed as the link in the search engine results page and as the title of the active tab in your browser. A title should include your name, specialty, practice name, and location. Most people search for a need or specialty and their geographic location, so take that into account when deciding on your website's title.

You'll also want a concise, powerful, and targeted meta description for your page. Dr. Juliana Nahas, a Georgia pediatrician, has a well-optimized meta description. Let's say a parent is looking for a pediatrician for their children. What do they know without ever having to click on a single search result? They know that Dr. Nahas is a trusted pediatrician and that she serves the Covington, Georgia area. Plus, this parent has everything they need to make an appointment or find the office quickly, without even having to enter the Covington Pediatrics page.

Include Detailed, SEO-Rich Pages for Each Specialty

Ensure your practice website includes a separate webpage for each speciality and service you offer. After all, you never know what specialty or procedure your prospective patients are searching for, so describe everything you do.

There are three SEO-specific reasons that each specialty should be described on its own page:

1. **If all of your specialties are discussed on the same page, the content becomes scrambled.** Search engines such as Google have a hard time determining which topic the page covers, so Google renders the page irrelevant. You don't want that to happen to your website content.

2. **Rich, detailed information about each service** increases the chances that search engines will find your pages useful for local search.

3. **Google recently revealed the top three elements it considers when ranking websites[1].** Content is one of the top two! As you write about your services and qualifications, the related keywords you use give Google the confidence to determine your site is an authority on your subject matter and areas of specialty.

For an extra SEO boost we recommend you include an FAQ section on each specialty page. Thanks to smartphones, more consumers ask questions directly to their devices in traditional question and answer format. Give Google a hand by listing questions that your patients and prospects ask frequently on your website, and then provide thorough, keyword-laden answers.
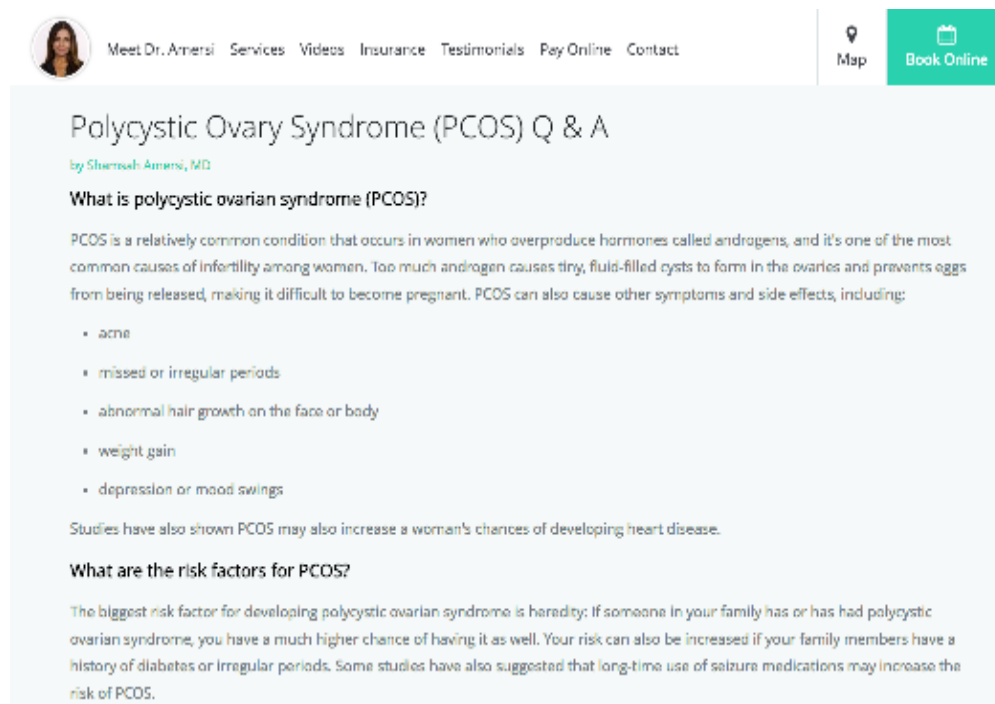
Here's an example of a great website FAQ section. Notice how Dr. Shamsah Amersi, a Santa Monica, California-based OB-GYN, uses her FAQs to answer common questions, which shows Google and potential patients that she is an authority on the subject.

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[1] *Now we know: Here are Google's top 3 search ranking factors. Search Engine Land. http://searchengineland. com/now-know-googles-top-three-search-ranking-factors-245882*

Design A Responsive Mobile Site

Do not underestimate the importance of a mobile-friendly site. After all, 50% of all searches take place on smartphones[2]. Google began prioritizing mobile-friendly websites in its search results and mobile visitors are easily frustrated by websites that don't look right on their devices.

Dr. Gabi's website is optimized for mobile devices. The site looks great on differently-sized devices and tablets, and is easy to navigate.

Include Pictures and Testimonials for Color And Feel

Pictures of you and your facilities show patients what to expect when they visit your practice for the first time, which ideally reflects a clean, state-of-the-art, modern experience. If you re-brand yourself or change your market, photos on your site can be the first step towards setting those new expectations and attracting your new clientele.

Finally, include glowing reviews you've received from patients right on your site. PatientPop recommends showcasing feedback in two places: First, add testimonials in a carousel graphic on the main landing page of your site, so patients can't miss them. Second, add all the kudos you've received on a separate testimonial page.
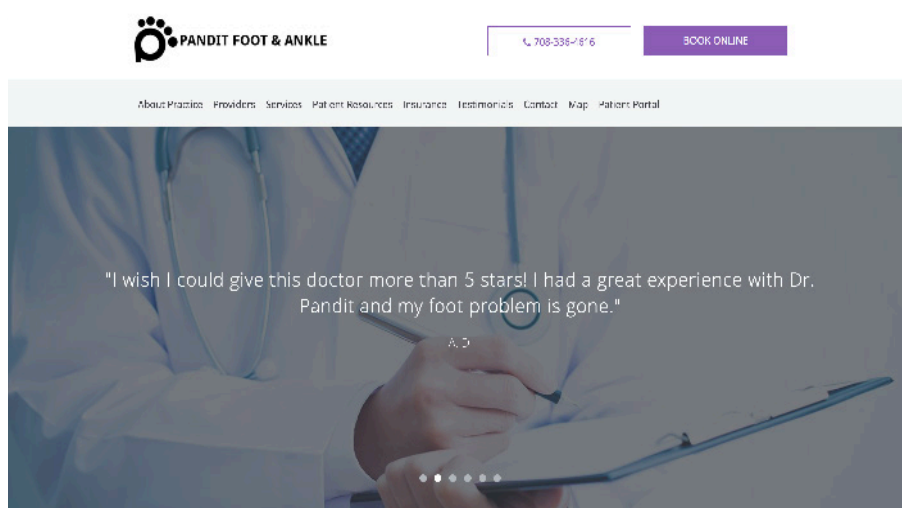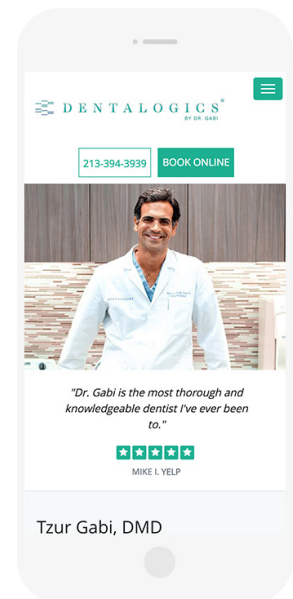
Dr. Bela Pandit, a Chicago-based podiatrist, features great reviews on her website. Above, she showcases a particularly positive review right on her landing page.

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[2] *It's Official: Google Says More Searches Now On Mobile Than On Desktop. Search Engine Land. http://searchengineland.com/its-official-google-says-more-searches-now-on-mobile-than-on-desktop-220369*

2. Use Review Sites to Grow a Great Online Reputation

Once you've put together a modern website, it's time to optimize your online reputation. Every practitioner dreams of happy, healthy patients – and lots of them! In the past, practices grew when satisfied patients spread the word directly to friends and family. Now, when the average American spends a whopping 10+ hours a day in front of a screen, traditional referral strategies alone aren't enough to ensure your practice thrives[3].

A consumer study indicates that 57% of consumers will visit a local business website after reading a positive review, while 72% of consumers will take some sort of action after reading a positive review[4]. The study also found that in no industry does an online reputation matter more than healthcare. In other words, a review of a provider carries more weight and influence than a review of any other type of business or service.

Online reputation refers to all the information that your potential patients see and consider when looking for a new provider online. Reviews on sites such as Google, Facebook, Healthgrades, and WebMD create an online word of mouth for your practice. If the reviews on these sites are positive, they'll create a free, online referral system for your practice. Great ratings send new patients to your office.

Even if you do receive true word of mouth referrals, many patients will head straight to Google to cross-reference your online reputation before booking an appointment. These review sites build valuable credibility for your practice, allowing potential patients who have never met you to already hold your work in high esteem.

Google local search considers three factors to determine your business rank: Distance, relevance, and prominence[5]. The prominence factor takes your online reviews into account, and determines up to 10% of your local search results performance. Plus, these reviews show up front and center in online search results, right next to your contact information, hours, and location.

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[3] *Americans devote more than 10 hours a day to screen time, and growing. CNN. http://www.cnn. com/2016/06/30/health/americans-screen-time-nielsen/index.html*

[4] *Local Consumer Review Survey 2014. BrightLocal. https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey-2014/#step*

[5] *2017 Local Search Ranking Factors. Moz. https://moz.com/local-search-ranking-factors*

When conducting a basic Google search for Santa Monica, California-based OB-GYN Dr. Shamsah Amersi, her aggregated Google reviews pop up front and center. Her strong online reputation makes a positive first impression.

Did you know that nearly half of respondents would go out-of-network for a doctor who has similar qualifications to an in-network doctor, but has more favorable reviews[6]? It's true: People will pay more to see a doctor with a fantastic online reputation.

Claim Your Listings

Begin by claiming your profiles on every review site out there. Even if you don't have a huge presence on every site, you should – at the very least – claim, correct, and optimize your profile in every business and healthcare directory. You never know where your patients might find you.

Consider the difference between an unclaimed profile and a claimed profile. An unclaimed profile features unverified and sometimes inaccurate contact information. These unoptimized profiles also lack photos and business hours, which means you miss the opportunity to build your personal brand to attract potential patients.

Fortunately, today new practice growth software can scan your online profiles for you, to determine which are accurate, and which need to be corrected. This type of audit can be completed manually but with 70+ online business and healthcare directory sites, you will likely want to use the more modern and efficient method, and have technology assist you.

When reviewing each profile check to determine:

- Is all contact information correct?

- Does the listing include my phone number, address, business hours, and website link?
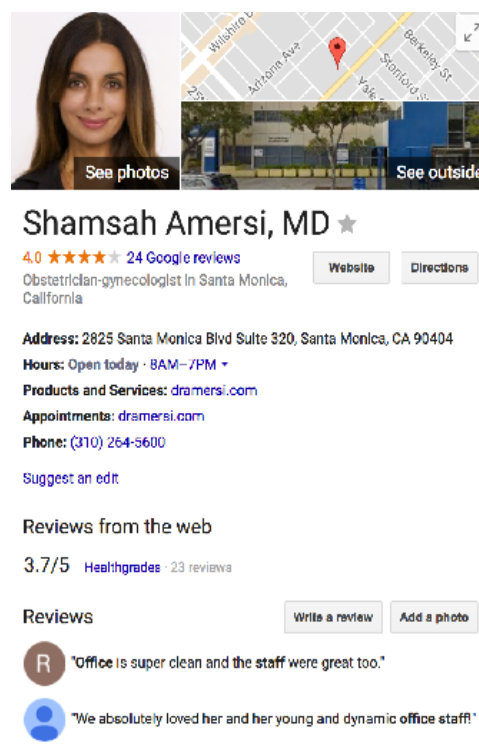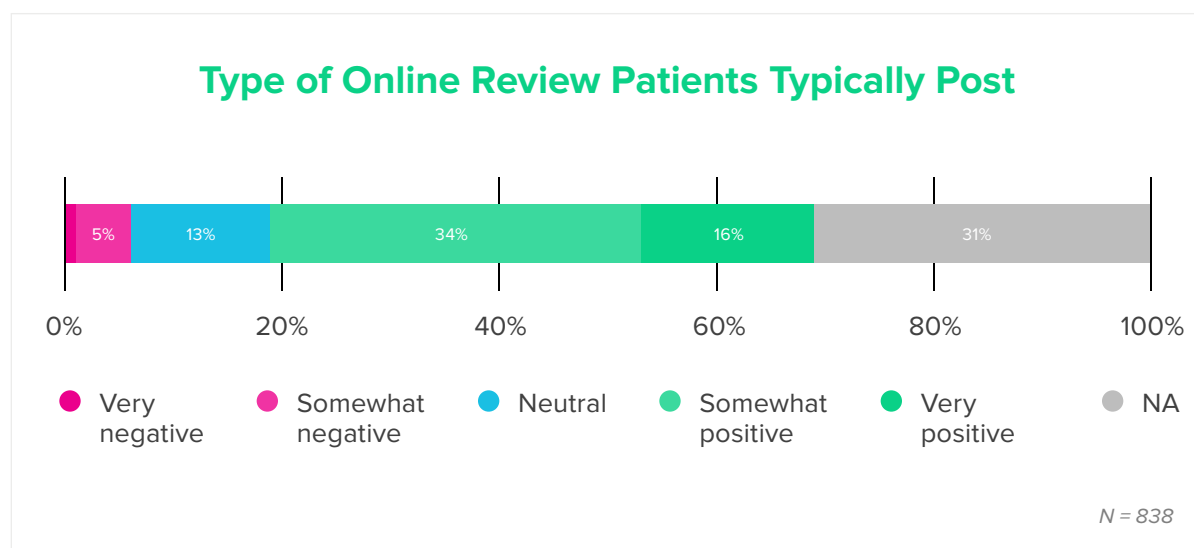

Correcting inaccuracies matters even more for mobile search. On-the-go potential patients narrow search by distance and whether you're open at the time of search; so they might miss you if your hours are unavailable or incorrect.

Monitor Online Reviews

Monitor all of your listings for negative or inaccurate reviews at least once a week — and ideally, daily. If you worry about finding the time to track these reviews manually, again, modern practice growth software can help remove this task from your workload. This type of software can even alert you when a negative review pops up, so you can respond right away.

Type of Online Review Patients Typically Post

| 5% | 13% | 34% | 16% | 31% |

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

● Very negative ● Somewhat negative ● Neutral ● Somewhat positive ● Very positive ● NA

N = 838

Remember, most of the reviews posted on your site will be positive. According to the Software Advice survey, half of patient respondents reported providing either "very positive" or "somewhat positive" feedback online[7]. Only 6% said they left negative feedback.

You won't be drowning in a sea of bad press. But bad reviews will happen occasionally, and you need to be prepared for them.

Respond to Negative Reviews Immediately — And Appropriately

When a negative review appears, respond ASAP. The Software Advice survey noted that early two-thirds of respondents said they feel it's "very" or "moderately important" for doctors to post a response to negative evaluations[8].

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[7] *How Patients Use Online Reviews. Software Advice. http://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/*

But how exactly should you respond? Online, and head-on, without violating HIPAA privacy laws. Some guidelines:

- DO respond right away.

- DON'T get defensive. Keep your responses short and sweet.

- DO tell the patient you understand their frustration and thank them for their feedback.

- DON'T admit fault or apologize for improper diagnoses – this could be construed as malpractice.

- DO request the patient call you to discuss the situation.

- DON'T reveal symptoms, diagnoses, or medical history online – even if the patient does.

Simply offer a brief, personalized response and ask the patient to call you directly to discuss resolving the issue. Hopefully you'll hear from the patient, but even if you don't, others will note your dedication to finding a resolution.

3. Convert Patients Immediately With Online Booking

Finally, convert website visitors with the option to book online. A Google/Nielsen study shows that more than half of customers want to complete the transaction within an hour of starting their research[9]. Don't make your patients wait until the next day to call you as you might lose them within that time.

Booking appointments online means your patients will always have a pleasant, brief, and successful experience when they need to see you. This cuts down on time they spend on hold, trying to find the opportunity to call during business hours, and any other variable you can't control.

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[8] *How Patients Use Online Reviews. Software Advice. http://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/*

[9] *Mobile Path to Purchase: Five Key Findings. Think With Google. https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/advertising-channels/mobile/mobile-path-to-purchase-5-key-findings/*

Plus, if they are able to complete the transaction with you, they'll have little motivation to continue researching your competitors.

Other online booking best practice considerations:

- Top-performing practice sites also use call-now buttons for mobile users. This prevents patients from having to write down your number. They can take action as soon as you've convinced them that you are the right doctor for them.

- Create a separate contact page listing all of the ways patients can reach you, along with a map so they can get a feel for where your office is. Also, Include your address and phone number in the footer or bottom of your site, where it's "sticky" — and visible no matter which page they're on.

- Finally, list which types of insurance you take. It's convenient for the patient and streamlines your front office operations as it cuts out unnecessary calls.

Start Today: Crush Your Competition

The keys to outdoing your online competition aren't necessarily simple, but they're worth it. (And practice growth platforms like PatientPop provide all three elements of success in one platform.) First, build a modern, SEO-rich website. Create an enviable online reputation through vigilant review management. Ensure website visitors convert to patients with seamless online booking technology… and watch as new patients stream through the door!

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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