



5 Ways to Kill Your Online Reputation



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In a climate of increased competition, with patients who thoroughly research their care options on multiple sites, your practice's online reputation is more important than ever.

For instance, a recent survey showed 84% of respondents said they use online reviews to evaluate a physician, and 77% use reviews as their first step in finding a new health care provider! With 37% of those surveyed reporting they were wary of a provider with negative reviews, it's a must to stay vigilant to online criticism.¹

Online reputation encompasses all the information potential patients see and consider when looking for a new doctor online. Reviews on healthcare and business sites create an online word of mouth for your practice, while reviews on your practice website assure prospective patients you're a great choice before they book an appointment.

Here are five key missteps that keep practices from building a solid digital brand to win referrals, increasing patient volume, and growing revenue. Are you making any of these reputation-killing mistakes? Read on to find out.

¹ *The Importance of Online Reviews. BrightLocal. <https://www.brightlocal.com/2017/03/15/the-impact-of-online-reviews/>*

1. Disregard 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 day² in front of a screen, so word-of-mouth referral strategies aren't enough to ensure a practice thrives.

In fact, a 2016 survey showed that 91% of consumers regularly read online reviews, with 84% of consumers trusting online reviews *as much as word of mouth referrals*.³

And even when prospective patients get word-of-mouth referrals, many head straight to business and healthcare review sites to cross-reference your online reputation before booking an appointment. Why? In an age of ad-blindness, third-party review sites build credibility, allowing potential patients to get objective insight into your practice.

Review sites show up quickly in online search results, usually right next to your contact information, hours, and location. 60% of consumers say that negative reviews make them not want to use a business. 87% of responders will only patronize a business with a 3-star rating or better. So don't let a potential patient's first impression of your practice be negative reviews or ratings.

Best practice: After ensuring your practice is listed accurately on review sites and directories (see below), check your review ratings across all of these sites each week to monitor for any negative, inaccurate, or fraudulent reviews.

If your front office doesn't have the time to monitor all of these sites, there are practice marketing platforms available that can automatically alert you when a negative or potentially fraudulent review appears.

² *The Total Audience Report Q1 2016. Nielsen Insights. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/reports/2016/the-total-audience-report-q1-2016.html>*

³ *Annual BrightLocal Local Consumer Review Survey 2016. BrightLocal. <https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey/>*

2. Leave your online listings and review pages unclaimed

If you fail to claim your profile on healthcare review sites, you're missing out on one of the first steps to building a positive online reputation.

At a minimum, practices now need to claim, correct, and optimize their business information on healthcare review sites. This entails:

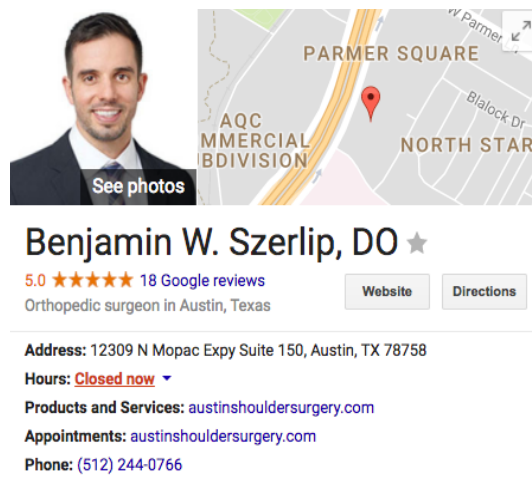
- Verifying that you're the practice owner on your profile, and that the description of your practice is accurate.
- Ensuring your address, website link, phone number, and business hours are accurately listed.

The difference between a claimed and unclaimed profile can be dramatic. An unclaimed profile often displays inaccurate contact information, lacks photos and business hours, and inspires little confidence in potential patients that you're a trusted, reputable doctor.

Mobile users are the most likely to count on review site listings when searching for a doctor. When on the go, they tend to search for a doctor by proximity to their current location - so an accurate address and hours of operation are essential.

Best practice: Once you find, claim, and optimize your online profiles on review sites, consider improving them with professional photos. Show potential patients exactly what to expect with engaging pictures of you, your team, and your office.

Austin, Texas-based orthopaedic surgeon Dr. Benjamin Szerlip enjoys a fully-optimized Google listing. Notice how his professional photo, accurate hours, and top-notch ratings all boost his online reputation instantly. If your profiles are left unclaimed and bad reviews are left unanswered, you won't reap the benefits of a great online reputation - and potential patients will likely look for a better-reviewed practitioner.



3. Ignore negative online reviews

Negative online reviews shouldn't go without a response from your practice. A study shows that four or more negative online reviews may deter up to 70% of that business's potential customer base. And, on average, a single bad review can cost you 30 customers!

You can often amend the dissatisfaction by responding empathetically to the issue and doing what you can to fix it.

Best practices when responding to negative reviews include:

- **Respond 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 their complaint was heard.** If a patient is upset, you can let them know their needs and opinions matter to your practice. Do not, however, 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 inaccessible and unfriendly. Instead, demonstrate that solving issues is a top priority for your practice. At the same time, keep the response short; if it's too long you'll appear more defensive. *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 helps 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, let the reviewer know you appreciate their feedback. Over time, any consistently negative reviews can help you determine which areas need attention and improvement.

4. Overlook immediate solutions to an issue

Many of the less-than-optimal patient experiences that occur in the office are less likely to be shared online in a review if they are resolved face-to-face during a patient visit. Don't let a clearly unhappy patient go without trying to ascertain what they're upset about!

Best practice: Ask your staff to spot situations, whenever possible, that can be addressed and resolved in person. Often a simple acknowledgement of a problem or annoyance will be enough to prevent subsequent negative online reviews. If an issue can't be solved immediately, record them in one place so you can follow up with a patient with a phone call, email, or letter.

5. Fail to celebrate positive patient feedback

When a patient provides positive feedback, many practices forget to invite those patients to share their experiences on their practice's website. As a result, a practice can miss additional opportunities to build its brand and online reputation.

Lindsay L.



Submitted 05/01/17

Can't say enough great things about Dr Amersi and her office! Always super quick to get in and out. She is beyond caring, warm and truly invested in your personal life as it relates to your appointments and inquiries.

Dr. Shamsah Amersi, a Santa Monica, California-based OBGYN, features glowing testimonials on her practice's website. If your website fails to showcase happy customers, potential patients might click away and find another provider. Prove to on-the-fence prospects that you're the perfect doctor for them with plenty of vivid, positive examples.

In addition to positive feedback from your patients, look out for any consistent requests or suggestions from patients. That feedback can help your practice stay up-to-date with consumer expectations. For instance, you might find more patients want the option to book online, or need more reminder alerts before their next appointment. Patients can highlight the little things that make a big difference in their day—cater to them, and you'll improve your reputation in the long term.

Best practice: Modern healthcare practice growth software from PatientPop enables you to setup automated post-appointment follow-up emails or text messages to all of your patients after they visit your office.

Start Improving Your Online Reputation Today

Now that you know the top five threats to your online reputation, put your new knowledge into action. Claim your review pages and optimize your profiles. Then, remain vigilant: Audit all of your listings, ratings, and feedback. Address negative reviews head-on, and showcase your best reviews right on your homepage. Follow these steps, and you're well on your way to a great online reputation!

If you'd like to know more about improving your online reputation, our Digital Marketing Consultants are available to perform a free online reputation assessment. During the assessment, your consultant will show you exactly what you can do to become more visible and competitive online.

Schedule your assessment today.



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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