Simple Strategies For Improving Your Online Reputation

It's important for dentists to monitor their online reputations (reviews) regularly so that people looking for a new dentist will find generally positive reviews. Read on to see how Dr. Kyle Roderick Hornby, DDS, BSc does this.

The majority of dentists will say that they find managing their online reputation a frustrating and onerous task. If you've practiced for a significant amount of time like me, then you have probably received negative or constructive online feedback.

Many of my dentist friends have rued that while they have many happy patients, their disappointed customers are far more likely to share their experiences. I agree with this and the phenomenon underscores the importance of getting involved with and taking ownership of your online reputation.

Before I explore simple and effective techniques for augmenting your reputation, I would like to answer the important question, "why does your online reputation matter?"

The Edelman Trust Barometer shows that 64% of consumers trust online search engine results and information (think Google) most when making purchasing decisions.

Ninety-seven percent of consumers say they use online reviews to select local businesses. Eighty-five percent of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations from family and/or friends, and 57% of consumers will only select a business if it has a four-star rating or better.

These statistics demonstrate that potential patients trust online information relevant to your business and judge your trustworthiness and quality using online reviews. Additionally, accumulating positive online feedback has been shown to drive improvements in your position on search engine results pages (SERPs).

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This monthly publication provided courtesy of Mark VanderWal, President of Bridge IT Support.

Our Mission:
To positively influence the quality of life in West Michigan by directing our God-given talent of fixing and maintaining computer systems to our loyal clients so they can deliver the same to their clients.

What's New in November

Congratulations to Chris on celebrating his third year with us this month! He came to BITS with many years of engineering and IT experience, and has grown to be an indispensable part of our team. His current position as a Systems Administrator finds him on our helpdesk line, designing systems, troubleshooting the "odd" computer problems, and going onsite to lead large project installations. One of the things our clients like best about Chris is his attention to detail and his drive to always find the root cause of a problem to make sure it is fixed and won't pop up again. Outside of his career, you might run into Chris at a local Grand Rapids comedy club supporting their technology, or providing an occasional visit to the stage to tell a few of his own pet jokes. He is also our office "foodie" (ask him for a restaurant recommendation in your town), lives an environmentally and socially conscious lifestyle, and is a tremendous member of our team.

Continued from cover

This is significant in light of Chitika's 2013 Insights Report, which suggests that 92% of traffic generated from a typical Google search visits to websites listed on the first page of results. So, in addition to fueling consumer impressions about your practice, online reviews can put you in a position to garner greater visibility and attention among online search engines.

The Techniques I Use

Now that I've established the benefits of developing a positive online reputation, I will share some techniques that I've developed for accumulating honest and legitimate online feedback from patients. Most dentists find asking patients for reviews or referrals awkward, tacky, or downright stressful. There are very proper and tactful ways to have these conversations. The key factor that increases success rate and diminishes awkwardness is that you have an excellent relationship with the patient built on trust.

I'm no expert with respect to reputation management, and I've never received any training or advice about how to build a collection of positive online reviews. I do, however, enjoy trying new things, failing sometimes, and refining my approaches. You can become very effective at things this way. If you respectfully ask a patient for an online review, the worst outcome is that they fail to follow through. You don't lose patients by doing this, so I would argue there is little risk or cost associated with asking. When done properly, the act of reaching out to a patient can strengthen the dentist-patient relationship.

How to Increase the Rate of Success

Here are different factors that increase the rate of success in garnering online patient reviews.

Timing is everything. When I started asking patients to leave online feedback, I would wait one to two weeks following a treatment appointment or cleaning. If you do this, your success rate will be low. I've played around with different post-appointment intervals and found that the sooner you ask a patient for feedback, the more likely you will be to receive it. How should you reach out to patients to ask for an online review?

Email or text is best. You want to make it easy for patients to help you out. Remove any barriers for them so that they can leave an online review quickly and easily. For most things, I believe that a personal touch works best. I like to talk to people face-to-face. In this case, however, if you ask your patient for a review in person you will be relying on them to remember to do so. When you use email or texting, include a link to your ratings page (i.e., Google My Business, Yelp, RateMDs). In contrast to a verbal technique, this strategy allows patients to see your request at the same time they're presented with an avenue for leaving a review.

Make sure you are building your reputation on websites that matter. Reviews on your Google My Business page are most readily viewable to prospective patients when they search for dental practices on Google. Additionally, Google My Business reviews contribute to your practice appearing in the local three-pack search results above the organic listings section. This is one way to position your business on the first page of Google.

Many experts suggest that reviews on other Google-trusted websites such as Yelp and Facebook contribute to local search rankings on Google. I would argue that accumulating positive reviews on these sites is also of value. With respect to Yelp, I've had several patients leave reviews here only to have Yelp hide or "un-feature" them because the patients were not regular Yelp reviewers. For this reason, I've shifted my attention to accumulating patient reviews on Google and Facebook. Lastly, be cognizant of the tendency for older adults to prefer online anonymity. I find that patients over 45-50 are happy to leave a review if it can be done in a way that preserves their anonymity. Given the popularity of RateMDs, I recommend offering this outlet (in addition to providing a link to your Facebook or Google My Business pages) as a second or third option.

How to Ask Patients For Reviews

Now that I've covered some important factors that can increase your success rate in gaining online reviews, you might be wondering, "what do I say when I ask a patient for a review?"

Explain why you want online reviews, how they benefit you, and use the opportunity to emphasize your dental practice's vision. When I ask patients to leave an online review, I send them an email within the first 10 minutes following their appointment. As a dentist, you learn about your patients and can gain a sense of which ones might not appreciate being asked to leave a review. Here's what I include in these emails.

I start by recapping post-operative instructions where necessary and reminding them of post-operative symptoms that they might experience (i.e., jaw stiffness, cold sensitivity, pressure sensitivity). With invasive treatment such as tooth extraction or a root canal I provide my cell phone number in case they need to ask any questions or voice any concerns. (They will almost never call you.) This provides value to them so they're more likely to want to do something for you in return.

Next, I ask them to let me know how I did. I emphasize that the relevant links for doing so are provided within the email and that leaving feedback will take only 30 seconds. Then, I communicate to them that the reviews help us to remain relevant and competitive online. I let them know that we seek new patients because we believe in our conservative, no-pressure approach to dentistry and that we believe patients value the transparency in treatment that we provide. You can communicate what makes your practice special and unique.

Here is the most important thing that you can include in your message. You should emphasize that you would like honest feedback and that negative or constructive feedback is always helpful. I believe that this removes the awkwardness associated with asking for an online review and that it is the most ethical way to proceed with soliciting online feedback.

Building a collection of positive online reviews can help you gain trust with prospective patients who search for your services through Google and other search engine providers. In doing this, you will have the indirect effect of improving your position or ranking on search engine results pages. I've found that asking patients for online reviews can be comfortable and productive, but it takes repetition and the willingness to continuously refine your approach. While there are a number of companies providing reputation management services, I believe that taking this into your own hands allows you to build goodwill with patients and to have control over the process. After all, you want to make sure that you build your online reputation both ethically and effectively.

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Easy Ways To Avoid Employee Churn

Hiring is one of the most important and tricky parts of owning a business. Ideally, you would only have to hire when you grow your business. But unfortunately, employee turnover is a painful and costly reality, so finding ways to retain employees is crucial.

Happy employees stay the longest. To improve your employees' lives, regularly provide positive feedback, encourage creativity and treat them with respect.

Additionally, provide them with chances to grow into new roles. That way, you show them you care about their professional growth. And don't forget to encourage a healthy work-life balance so they know you also value their personal lives.

Cartoon Of The Month

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"I'm *trying* to back it up, but I can't find reverse."

Hackers Could Read Non-Corporate Outlook.com, Hotmail for Six Months

Hackers and Microsoft seem to disagree on key details of the hack.

In April, some users of Outlook.com/Hotmail/MSN Mail received an email from Microsoft stating that an unauthorized third party had gained limited access to their accounts and was able to read, among other things, the subject lines of emails (but not their bodies or attachments, nor their account passwords), between January 1 and March 28 of this year. Microsoft confirmed this to TechCrunch on Saturday.

The hackers, however, dispute this characterization. They told Motherboard that they can indeed access email contents and have shown that publication screenshots to prove their point. They also claim that the hack lasted at least six months, doubling the period of vulnerability that Microsoft has claimed. After this pushback, Microsoft responded that around 6 percent of customers affected by the hack had suffered unauthorized access to their emails and that these customers received different breach notifications to make this clear. However, the company is still sticking to its claim that the hack only lasted three months.

Not in dispute is the broad character of the attack. Both hackers and Microsoft's breach notifications say that access to customer accounts came through compromise of a support agent's credentials. With these credentials, the hackers could use Microsoft's internal customer support portal, which offers support agents some level of access to Outlook.com accounts. The hackers speculated to Motherboard that the compromised account belonged to a highly privileged user and that this may have been what granted them the ability to read mail bodies. The compromised account has subsequently been locked to prevent any further abuse.

The support account would also have only had access to free Outlook.com/Hotmail/MSN-branded accounts and not to paid Office 365 email.

Motherboard's source also gave a reason for the hack in the first place. iPhones are associated with iCloud accounts, and that association precludes performing a factory reset. This in turn means that stolen iPhones become less valuable; they can still be salvaged for parts, but they can't be resold as complete working handsets because they're still tied to their original owner. However, with access to the iPhone user's email account, it's possible to dissociate the phone from the iCloud account and subsequently to reset the handset. In other words, the hackers aren't much interested in the email accounts per se; they just want to get their hands on those important reset-request emails so that they can boost the value of their stolen phones.

Article written by Peter Bright, published to arstechnica.com on 4/15/2019.

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Inside This Issue

Security Byte: Antivirus

If a virus, malware, or other malicious item makes it past your first layers at the Network Perimeter (i.e. the firewall), your next line of protection is on the individual computers themselves. This is where the antivirus protection runs, and anything entering your local computer gets scanned, and any detected threats are quarantined or removed immediately. Make sure you are running a "NEXT GEN" antivirus program as the threats are getting more complicated, and your antivirus needs to keep up with these changes. If you are on our antivirus program, we are managing your protection with a "NEXT GEN" solution, along with monthly verifications and updates. If you are not sure about your antivirus solution, give us a call for a free review.

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