

## Manage Your Online Reputation Before Someone Else Does

Do you have a positive online reputation? An online reputation is a collection of reviews, comments and stories written by the public about you (or your practice) on review sites like Yelp and YellowPages.com, plus social networking sites like Facebook® and Twitter® and personal blogs. Collectively, these online discussions can work in your favor – if you proactively monitor and manage them.

With over 75% of the US adult population going online every day, there's good reason to pay attention. Consumers don't go online just to write about businesses – a recent study by Opinion Research Corporation revealed that **84% of consumers also check online reviews before they make a purchase of a product or service**. So ignoring online negative reviews is like ignoring bad PR; it can damage your reputation if you don't respond. On the other hand, closely monitoring and carefully cultivating your online reputation is one of the most effective, low-cost ways to attract more patients to your practice.

With just a little bit of effort every week, you can start building a stellar online reputation in no time. Start by following these 5 key steps:

### 1. Monitor What People Are Writing

**Google® yourself.** More people use Google than any other search engine: It is the top-ranked search engine in the world, handling 64.8% of the world's searches, according to comScore. By typing you or your practice's name into Google, you'll get a birds-eye view of what consumers are writing on Yelp, Facebook, personal blogs and more. Do this on other top-ranked search engines such as Yahoo, Bing and Ask.com. Oftentimes, search results differ greatly from search engine to search engine, so this will give you the total picture.

**Set up online alerts.** Search engines like Google allow you to set up daily alerts that advise you when something new about you or your practice appears online. This is one of the most useful and convenient ways to stay on top of your online reputation. Set up your Google alert here:

<http://www.google.com/alerts>.

**Check online review sites.** It's tempting to dismiss online reviews as nothing more than irrational rants. But **82% of consumers consider online reviews extremely valuable**, according to North American Technographics. The smart thing to do is to check top online review sites like Yelp, InsiderPages and Citysearch at least once a week. This way, you can respond in a timely manner and prevent potential problems from getting worse.

### 2. Respond to Negative Reviews

Negative reviews can actually boost your credibility. Study after study shows that people perceive a mix of positive and negative reviews as a sign of authenticity and transparency. However, it's *how you respond to negative reviews* that has the greatest impact. Approach your role here as part customer service, part moderator. Here are some recommendations:

# 1-800-DENTIST®

**Respond quickly.** Try to respond to negative reviews within 24 hours, especially if they are particularly inflammatory or if they mention pricing.

**Be sincere.** If a reviewer's complaint is genuine, apologize and offer a solution. Be sure to tell your side of the story if there are circumstances that weren't mentioned in the review. But don't be defensive or point fingers.

**Talk like a person, not a dentist.** Avoid using technical terms that consumers don't understand. Remember, your response will be read by the general public – not just the reviewer. Keep the tone friendly, but professional.

**Be calm.** It's easy to misinterpret tone online, so be sure to respond to a negative review when you feel calm. If you need time to cool down, take it. But make it a goal to respond within 24 hours.

**Contact the reviewer privately, if possible.** Send a direct email to thank the reviewer for taking the time to leave feedback and then offer a solution to the problem. If you're able to resolve the issue offline, ask the reviewer to provide an online update describing the positive outcome.

### 3. Publish Positive Reviews

A wealth of positive reviews far outweighs a few negative reviews. This is where **Patient Activator** is key. As a member of 1-800-DENTIST®, you get Patient Activator's text and email reminders for free, plus a free reviews site (and much more). With Patient Activator, you can request reviews from patients after their appointment automatically. Patient Activator will publish them to your reviews website. This site can even be linked to your Facebook page so that you can easily share positive feedback with your Facebook followers. **Call 800-518-6875 to set up your free Patient Activator account today.**

### 4. Claim Your Local Directory Pages

There are countless directories online, but not all of them have the same authority. Listing your practice in the top directories adds credibility to your online reputation, improves your search engine ranking and makes it easier for potential patients to find your practice. Start by claiming your free directory pages on the following high-traffic sites:

<b>Yelp</b>	<a href="https://biz.yelp.com/support/unlocking">https://biz.yelp.com/support/unlocking</a>
<b>Google Places</b>	<a href="http://www.google.com/places/">http://www.google.com/places/</a>
<b>Yahoo Local</b>	<a href="http://listings.local.yahoo.com/basic.php">http://listings.local.yahoo.com/basic.php</a>
<b>Bing</b>	<a href="http://www.bing.com/businessportal/">http://www.bing.com/businessportal/</a>
<b>Local.com</b>	<a href="http://www.local.com/">http://www.local.com/</a>
<b>YP.com</b>	<a href="http://listings.yellowpages.com/Services/ServiceClaimSearch.aspx">http://listings.yellowpages.com/Services/ServiceClaimSearch.aspx</a>
<b>InsiderPages</b>	<a href="http://www.insiderpages.com/session/new">http://www.insiderpages.com/session/new</a>

As part of your Patient Activator membership, your practice's information will be automatically fed to top directory sites. Set up your account today to save time and take advantage of Patient Activator's free services.

## 5. Use Feedback to Improve the Patient Experience

Take the time to give negative reviews a thorough read. Look for clues about areas that need improvement; recurring themes indicate areas where you need to take action. A good example to follow is QVC. QVC reaches out directly to dissatisfied customers and uses authentic negative feedback to improve customer service, fine-tune merchandise and improve product manufacturing. Negative reviews are also treated as an integral part of QVC's business, with regular meetings held company wide.

## Conclusion

Today's successful practices understand that an online reputation is a fact of modern life – and a huge opportunity to promote their practices. With more than 40 Americans going online every day, there is an unprecedented ability to capture a wider audience's attention in a matter of minutes. These 5 best practices in online reputation management put you in the driver's seat. By dedicating a bit of time every day, you can create an online reputation that showcases your practice's excellent customer service and care.

As your chosen dental marketing expert, we're here to help ensure you build a strong online reputation. We'll be providing you with the most up-to-date information to help you maximize your online reputation and attract more new patients. For more information about online reputation management, please visit the resource library in your member site dashboard at [members.1800dentist.com](https://members.1800dentist.com) or call Member Services at **800-552-1616**.