



Five Steps to Five Stars How to Get Great Online Patient Reviews

“ Thanks to rapid advances in digital technology, your reputation will become ubiquitous, permanent, and available worldwide—whether you like it or not.” * ”

* Michael Fertik, *Welcome to the Reputation Economy*

What do patients say online about your practitioners, hospital, clinic or care facility? How closely do their reviews reflect the standard of care you provide?

Whether you ask for feedback or not, patients share their experience online. **Those patient reviews play an increasingly critical role in the reputation and financial success of your healthcare organisation.**

Reviews not only impact the visibility of your physician and location listings, they can either convince patients that you offer the right service for them or lead them to call someone else, with better reviews. Patients and their families want information that helps them feel confident they're choosing the right doctor, healthcare facility or treatment center. Reviews provide the social proof they're looking for—and are becoming critical to patient marketing and retention.

- **77% of online health seekers began their session at a search engine¹**
- **61% of patients surveyed use online reviews as a first step to find a new doctor²**
- **60% of readers of online reviews pay most attention to star ratings³**

As a marketing professional, one of the single most important things you can do for your organization's reputation is develop an online review generation and monitoring program.

Here are 5 steps you can follow to develop a systematic approach with the power to:

- **Improve awareness on Google, social media and third party review sites**
- **Enhance patient experience and satisfaction**
- **Grow admissions and revenue**

¹Source: PewInternet.org

²Source: SoftwareAdvice.com

³Source: BrightLocal.com



Step 1. Claim and manage business listings on third party review sites

There are hundreds of healthcare-specific review sites online. Unless you have the resources to claim and manage listings on each site for each of your physical locations, **you'll need a way to ensure your Google and Bing listings are claimed and accurate.**

This will give you maximum exposure and top search ranking on these major search engines. Then consider a few others relevant to your organisation.

Make sure all information is accurate and consistent across all review sites where you have listings.

Bonus Tip:

Many sites let you customise your listing pages with a brief business profile, photos, office hours, lists of services, categories and other extras. The more complete your profile is, the more likely it is to appear in search results. This is especially important for sites that feature glowing reviews you want to highlight.

Key Fact:

Recent research on the correlation between number of reviews and SEO visibility showed the first 10 reviews that a location gets can boost that location from a second page or bottom of the first page ranking to the top half of the first page. Additionally, it demonstrated that having 50 reviews can increase the expected click through rate (CTR) by 266% compared to a baseline location¹.



Step 2. Develop a system for generating reviews from satisfied patients

An abundance of good reviews gives patients a positive perception of your organisation and helps ensure you get a fair chance online. Your physicians and staff may be uncomfortable asking patients for their feedback. Don't leave reviews to chance. **It's important to generate patient reviews on a scalable and scheduled basis**—not all at once. The power of reviews is cumulative. **Both patients and search engines want to see that you've earned accolades for your service and care over a period of time.**

Bonus Tip:

When you ask your patients to review you, they overwhelmingly write positive reviews. However, how you ask will make a big difference. You want to generate several reviews per week consistently by sending requests in a steady trickle, not all at once. Prospective patients will look more favorably at positive reviews posted over time. Request reviews from patients who frequent your facility and are in a position to say something meaningful about their experience. Honour your patients' trust by asking for their honest feedback as a way to improve the service and care you provide. Authentic, longer reviews are considered the most trustworthy.

Example:

A national post-acute healthcare provider with over 2,700 locations in the U.S. created a campaign to request feedback from their patients. The program generated over 4 times as many online reviews, increasing the number of positive reviews by 193%. Additionally, their average star rating jumped from 3.0 to 4.3, contributing to a 5-9% increase in revenue (Harvard Business Review research, 2011).



Step 3. Monitor review sites and look for ways to improve patient experience

Online review sites are one of a marketer's best listening resources. Systematically monitoring gives you important data about the quality of your service and common concerns. Conversely, without continual and thorough monitoring, you're left with a serious blind spot. **Reviews contain a wealth of patient experience data, which properly mined can lead you to uncover and address recurring quality of care, parking, personnel, food, or pharmacy issues, just to name a few.** To use this asset most effectively, you'll need to schedule time every day to review all listings across all locations.

Bonus Tip:

Consider all feedback constructive. It's often valuable advice. Sometimes negative comments are warranted and you can use the information to correct issues that may be genuine shortcomings in the way you deliver patient care. While getting great reviews is a primary objective for marketing, the operational goal is improving patient experience and outcomes.

Example:

For one Fortune 500 healthcare provider, online feedback from negative patient reviews showed a big offline impact on its hundreds of care centers across the United States, with an average loss of \$3,000-\$50,000 in lifetime revenue per patient. Actively promoting and monitoring their review program over two years resulted in 50% more reviews per month, 477% more positive reviews and an average increase in star rating of 1.4 across all locations.



Step 4. Respond quickly and appropriately to reviews

You don't need to respond to all positive reviews, but you should have a system for acknowledging them periodically. It helps maintaining good relationships with your satisfied patients.

When you see negative reviews, make sure you address concerns promptly. People post complaints because they want a quick response and because they want other people to see how you handle the situation.

Bonus Tip:

When someone complains—whether because of a long wait, a rude receptionist or a misunderstanding—you owe it to them and your business to investigate fully. From time to time, someone in your organisation may make a mistake – and you can generally fix it by owning up. At other times, it may be necessary to take the discussion offline to resolve the problem or keep an argument from escalating. Your responses should comply with your organisation's policies and CQC standards. And remember that the best response to a negative review is the presence of a lot of positive ones.

Example:

When a marketing staff member in a major healthcare organisation noticed a negative, 1-star comment from a patient, they turned it over to a care facility manager who immediately called the patient and resolved the problem. The patient not only removed the comment but gave the facility a raving 5-star rating.

Step 5. Leverage positive reviews to encourage increased participation

Many people like to see what others have written before writing their own reviews. Plus, often loyal patients who see positive reviews are inspired to add their own.

Consider promoting them on your website and social media pages. Most review sites allow you to quote reviews, as long as you reference them. You'll need to check on specific usage rules for each site. When you quote reviews online, link back to the originals. This not only drives prospective patients to the review sites to view more positive reviews but it also adds more authenticity to the reviews.

Bonus Tip:

When you ask for feedback in your waiting rooms, consider investing in computer tablets that you use to collect reviews and automatically publish them to your website or social media pages. Patients can also be directed to post on specific review sites.

Example:

An increase in positive reviews gives new patients proof of the quality of your service and can improve the star rating of your business. One US medical facilities network saw their star rating grow from 3.6 to 4.4 in just one year after actively generating reviews.



A difference of one “star” in the average rating can lead to a 5-9% difference in revenue.

Harvard Business Review

Conclusion:

Following these five steps is the beginning of an effective strategy and system to help you take control of your patient reviews. Your efforts will pay off. In the past several years, hospitals and other care centers with active programs have not only enjoyed increases in their star ratings and search ranking, but have used the feedback to improve patient experience, employee morale, pricing power and revenue.



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