



# TAKING ACTION TO CAPITALIZE ON REVIEWS

MEMBER ARTICLE | BY DEBBIE GABBARD, MAADOM

The internet can be an influential tool in your practice's decision-making. The freedom to openly express experiences will impact your practice's reputation. Social media is highly influential and the most utilized platform for consumer interaction. We are busy people with multiple responsibilities that limit our time. Therefore, the ease of accessing information via the internet has proven to be the reason why many consumers make decisions. Unfortunately, an unfavorable review typically results in a missed opportunity for many businesses.

How are negative reviews handled in your practice? What system do you have in place to monitor what may be the largest and most influential referral base for your practice?

Recent studies show that 84% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. As a healthcare professional, you are responsible for maintaining a positive reputation for your practice. A business with a higher number of negative reviews than positive ones often sees a decline in its search engine ranking, which can significantly impact its visibility and credibility.

## WHAT HAPPENED?

In my 39 years of dental experience, I constantly reflect on our day. Did our patients leave today receiving an exceptional dental experience? Did we establish a relationship of trust? If asked by a friend, relative, or co-worker, what would our patients say about us? And, of course, did anything happen today that could generate a negative review? I care because I am part of the office's reputation, and what people think about us matters to me.

## HOW TO RESPOND

How we respond, how quickly we respond, and how the patient's concern is resolved often changes how the reviewer and others perceive our level of integrity. Reacting swiftly to a review lessens the appearance that a patient's problems don't matter. All reviews are dated, so patients can see how long it takes for you to respond. Ideally, having a designated team member assigned to monitor reviews daily reinforces the exceptional customer experience we strive to achieve. A quick response adds value to your current patient relationships and those seeking a new provider. Twenty-four to forty-eight hours is considered a reasonable response time. Don't be afraid to respond to a negative review. As a business owner, it is your responsibility to remedy the situation and protect your practice's image.

## IT'S NOTHING PERSONAL

Although it is not always easy to respond to a review, it is essential not to take the review personally. The author and thousands of others see how we respond to the review. Reacting emotionally and defensively adds dimension to the already negative experience. Stay professional, empathic, and accountable.

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## ...REVIEWS CONTINUED

Valid or not, the review's author wants you and everyone else to hear what they have to say. More often than not, the initial review may not be about what "may" or "may not" have occurred.

### HOW TO SAY IT

When responding to a review, introduce yourself and the role you hold in your practice. This simple introduction humanizes the interaction. Thank the author for their review and respond with kindness, empathy, and commitment to a resolution. Be open to meeting in person if necessary. I find this to be an effective step towards a favorable resolution. The disadvantage of interaction via email or text is that the tone of the conversation may come across as misconstrued. If your response is sent via email or text, remember to keep your response unique to the author and the nature of the concern. While you should publicly respond to any negative review on the platform where it was posted, you should also continue the conversation on your terms and within HIPAA compliance.

### USE THE REVIEW AS A TOOL

There are many advantages to online reviews. A review offers visibility to your practice and the ability to expand the conversation about you. Using a negative review as an opportunity to work on areas that need attention only benefits the patient's experience. Your positive reviews will always outweigh the few negatives that may appear. Regularly acknowledge and thank those who leave a positive review.

A negative review equals an unhappy patient. How are you going to protect your business reputation? Create and implement a review program designed for your practice that encourages patients to leave a review that captures their respect and confidence in you and your practice. The best way to offset a negative review is to have the original author write a personal testimony acknowledging your commitment to their concern. ■



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## MEET THE MEMBER

In 1985, I answered a help wanted ad for a receptionist at a dental office in Phoenix, AZ. Within a few weeks I knew that dentistry was my passion. Fast forward to 2024, thirty-nine years later, I am the

Practice Manager of Toothologie, A Smile Studio, a booming dental practice in Union, KY, with one of the best teams around. I have dedicated my professional life to building successful practices and doctors within the dental community. I have led 4 practices to be recognized as the top Dentist in the region as well as 2 practice sales and doctor transitions. In my spare time I enjoy cooking, weekends in Gatlinburg and spending all the time I can with my grandchildren.