

Why Your Reputation Matters Now More Than Ever

Stephanie Beck

We are finishing up the second quarter of 2013. How are your new marketing plans going? Hopefully, you have added an online referral and review program. Whether you are incorporating reviews on Google, Manta, City Search, social media sites or your own website, your customers leaving reviews and recommendations is so much more powerful now than ever.

Why? Let me share some interesting stats with you from an April 2012 Nielson Report regarding believability and trust by consumers.

The Informational Age

People search online before they buy and they also put a lot of stock in what they read online. How to know what you are reading is credible is another story; that is why recommendations and reviews have been making such a strong impact on consumers' buying decisions. Studies show that 74 percent of U.S. consumers choose to do business based on online feedback ... even when that feedback is from total strangers!

According to the report, "Global Trust in Advertising and Brand Messages," 92 percent "trust completely" or "trust somewhat" recommendations from people they know, and 70 percent trust consumer opinions posted online. This is opposed to 47 percent who trust ads with TV, magazine and billboards (which, by the way, was a 24 percent decline from 2011). Even branded websites (58 percent), editorial content from newspaper articles (58 percent) and e-mails they signed up for (50 percent) showed a higher level of trust than any traditional paid-for advertising.

What is even more surprising is that 90 percent believe recommendations from people they know and 75% percent believe consumer opinions online were the most relevant when looking for information about the products they want and need. The next three most believable are branded websites (59 percent), editorial content such as newspaper articles (55 percent) and e-mails they signed up for (51 percent). All of these still rank higher than any traditional or online paid advertising.

What does this mean for your practice? It means you need to get all the customers who "love" what you do to post written referrals and reviews online for you! Select two or three review sites, create your account and then encourage your customers to leave a review. My top 10 review sites are:

1. [Google+](#)
2. [City Search](#)
3. [Insider pages](#)
4. [Kudzu](#)
5. [Local.com](#)
6. [Super Pages](#)
7. [Yellow Bot](#)
8. [Yellow Pages](#)

9. [Judy's Book](#)
10. [Yahoo Local](#)

You may have noticed I didn't mention the one that starts with "Y" and rhymes with help. That's because Yelp recently implemented a really difficult filtering process that many customers and businesses are not pleased with. When Yelp finally gets things working properly, I might consider recommending it again.

For now, I would stay with the more friendly review sites. Keep the process simple to start; choose two to three, maximum, to begin with. Otherwise you might find yourself overwhelmed and confused. This isn't a "set it and forget it" process. Be complete: add your photos, product descriptions, and all your contact information including your address, phone, e-mail and website. Be creative and, if given the option, always take advantage of offering some sort of coupon toward your products or services.

How to Get Patients to Review You

Here are some ideas for creative ways to make it easy for your customers to leave you a review online:

- Set up a computer, iPad or laptop at your front desk that has your account open, so customers can leave a review right before they leave your facility.
- Add a link to your site directing them to review you / your office. Run a contest in which one in 20 reviews wins a gift certificate for products or services.
- Print business cards or postcards that contain the shortened URL of the review website you've selected, asking for review.
- Set up endorsement and review apps on your social media sites.
- Email requests for recommendations.
- Establish a reward / referral program.
- If customers don't have time to type a review out, grab your mobile phone or digital camera and switch to video so you can get an immediate video review.

Video Reviews

Video reviews and video marketing in general have increased in the past few years, and now review sites are implementing video web forms for reviews. If video reviews are a little intimidating because you don't know how to structure them, here is the information I recommend your patients include:

- Who they are
- Where they are from
- What benefits they received from you
- Why they would recommend you to others

Now take the video review and post it, as is, to your review sites, add it to your website, post it on your social media sites, and even have it on a replay loop on a screen at the front desk of your clinic.

Make a customer appreciation day out of it and have a little video session set up. Invite all your patients into your facility and set up a video camera and microphone for your patients to share their feedback.

Be sure to have a general video consent form available for all patients to sign. You can get a free consent form for your state online at www.rocketlawyer.com.

If all this sounds a little too complicated, remember, you don't have to do it all at once. You can still benefit by implementing several of these ideas in your practice today.

Start by asking your best customers for reviews. We're halfway through 2013, so now is the time to get started.