



Reputation Management

Essential Steps for
Medical & Dental
Practices

A man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a white lab coat, stands with his back to the camera, looking out a window. His hands are clasped behind his back. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office or clinical setting.

The Review Conundrum

Few things are more helpful or more frustrating to a medical or dental office than online reviews. Recommendations are the lifeblood of your practice, but a negative review can drain morale and waste staff energy on self-defense. And who knows what damage the review inflicts outside the office.

If you've wondered where the "off" switch is, you're not alone. Often, the first question we get about reviews is whether we can simply turn them off.

The second is whether we can delete a bad review.

The short answer is, "No."

The longer answer is "No, and let's talk about why you shouldn't want to do that."

There are many reasons—starting with the two trillion local business searches per year—to embrace your online profiles and own your reviews. In this guide, we'll show you how to take control of your listings and start steering your business' reputation.

89% of consumers read reviews and the business' responses.

—BrightLocal 2018 Survey

**Google estimates that it conducts two trillion searches per year for local businesses.*

Are Online Reviews Worth My Time?

Today's patient is far more likely to use their smartphone to get a provider recommendation than they are to ask around the office or their neighborhood. They may turn to social media, a search engine, or a site like HealthGrades.

In all three cases, they'll be met with results powered by reviews. When you take ownership of your profiles, you gain control what potential patients learn about your business.

9 Benefits of a Google Profile















- Expose your practice to Google's 1.7 billion local searches daily.*
- Boost to your SEO efforts.
- Control what the public sees about your business.
- Offer mobile-friendly tools for patients to reach you faster—by phone and by car.
- Play up your strengths with star ratings, photos, service listings, amenities, etc.
- Advertise your special offers and events.
- Gain insights into your customers with analytical data.
- Manage your reviews.
- Access Google support.

94% of users that visit physician reviews consider them to be useful.¹

85% of patients won't see a doctor with 10% or more one-star reviews.²



Google also employs their photo-taking cars and satellite data. Finally, user data is added from mobile phone tracking and the manual entries of customers. When you're ready to take control of your profile, you'll need to prove you're the rightful owner. That's why we call this process "claiming."

	Google	Facebook	Yelp	WebMD	HealthGrades	Vitals	Real Self
Popularity*	1	3	48	180	1704	2184	3151
Medical/Dental Specific							
Notes	Works well for multiple providers and offices.	Multiple locations possible.	Strong domain authority but not where people look for doctors	Tricky to claim and maintain profiles currently.	Less popular domain than WebMD, but more popular place to find doctors	Recently bought by WebMD.	Cosmetic surgery specific.
Click to setup							



Start With Google, But Don't Stop There.

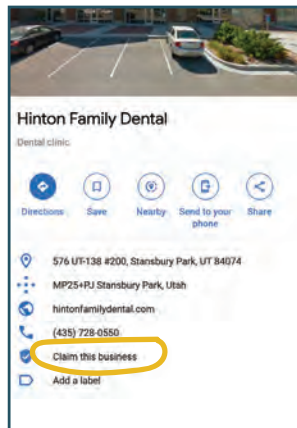
Sites like Real Self can look like a distant seventh place in popularity rankings. But keep in mind, being #3,151 is still an *incredibly* high ranking when we're comparing all websites across every kind of industry.

Being listed on the most popular site has a lot of benefits—especially for your SEO. But being listed on the right *niche* websites also has huge benefits—especially if that's where your patients spend time looking for good providers.

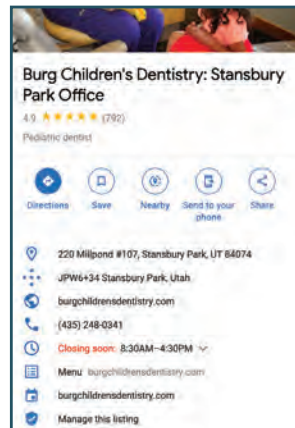
From here on out, we'll focus on claiming your Google listing. But don't stop there. When that is under control, circle back and use what you've learned to own your listing on other sites.

1. Claim Your Profile

Search for your business on maps.google.com. When you find it, determine if the listing has been claimed. Here's how:



Unclaimed profiles typically have a link that says “Claim this business” and have no photo or a Google car photo.

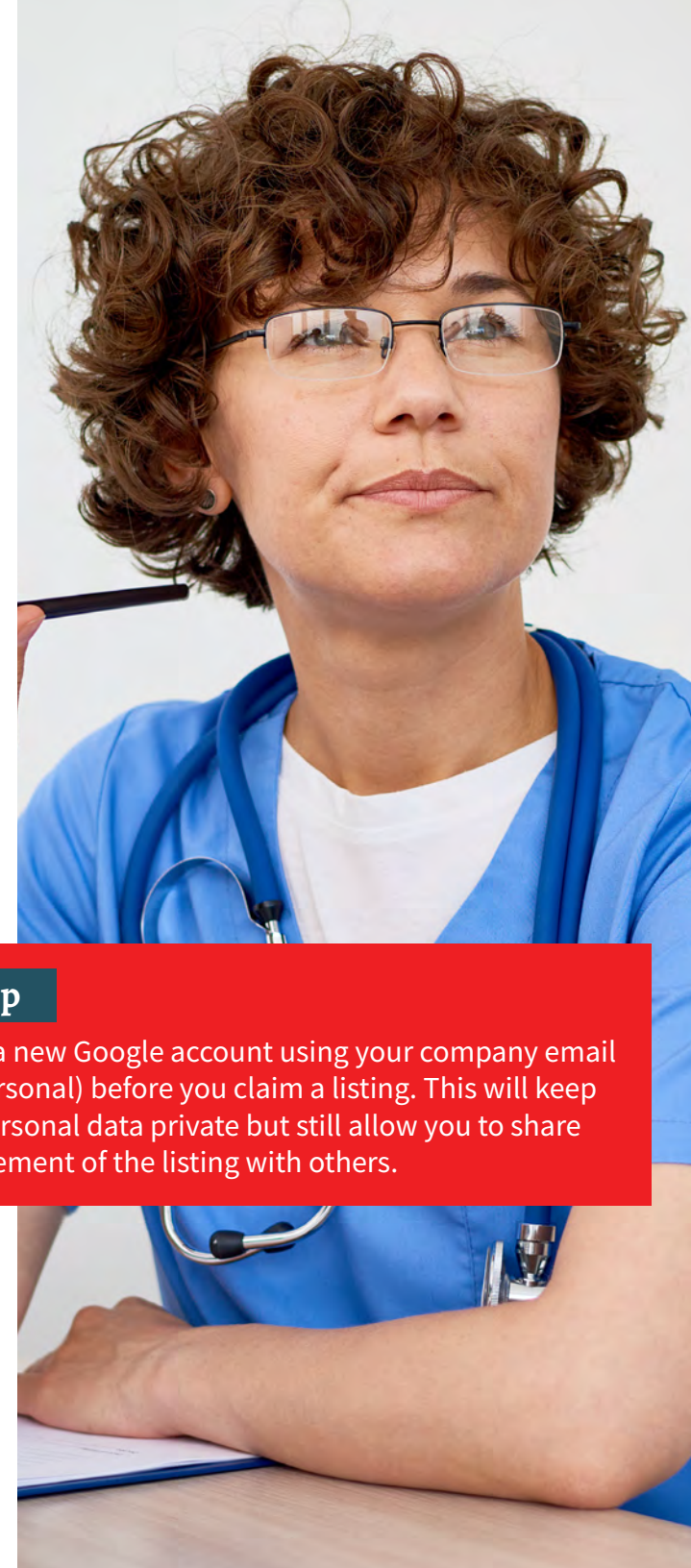


Claimed listings typically have better photos and more company information already on the profile.

- If your listing has been claimed by another employee or business partner, have that person add your Google ID as a user on the account.
- If you don't know who controls it currently, follow Google's instructions on verifying you are the owner of a business.

Google's Steps to Verify Your Listing

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/2911778?hl=en>



Pro Tip

Set up a new Google account using your company email (not personal) before you claim a listing. This will keep your personal data private but still allow you to share management of the listing with others.

Setting Up Your Google Profile

Once your listing is verified, you'll be able to add a wide array of business information in the "info" tab. Not every field will apply to your business, so ignore those that don't apply.

Focus instead on getting these four areas right:

Get Your NAPU Straight

As you complete your profile, pay close attention to how you type out your Name, Address, Phone Number and URL—this is NAPU.

Slight differences in how you enter these details will dilute the strength of your listings and weaken your local SEO.

- Make sure your information matches that given in other online directories like the BBB website, professional organizations, and public records.
- If you're not sure on the specific address or phone number syntax, start with the format Google suggests, as that tends to become the standard.

Acme Dental
123 Place St. Suite 309
Roseburg, Oregon 97470
(514) 679-6692
<http://www.acmedental.com>

In Google's view, these may
not be the same business.

Acme Family Dental
123 Place Street
309
Roseburg, OR 97470
679.6692
acmefamdental.com

Business name	▼
Category	▼
Address	▼
Service area	▼
Hours	▼
Phone	▼
Website	▼
Attributes	▼
Photos	▼
From the business	▼
Opening date	▼
Menu/Services (limited availability)	▼
Check-in and check-out times (hotels only)	▼
Hotel information (hotels only)	▼

Setting Up Your Google Profile

Choose Your Categories

Select between 2 and 5 categories that apply to your business. If you only rarely delve into a certain service and don't plan to grow that area of your business, it's probably ok to skip it. But do take a few moments to pick the right categories for your practice.

Upload Quality Photos

Google's camera car and the users that visit you can all add photos to your profile. Sometimes they're flattering, sometimes not. Upload a wide variety of images that showcase your exterior, waiting area, staff, products, and especially your providers.

Define Amenities & Information

Google's profiles offer a wide variety of amenities and you can select—from wheelchair-accessible entrances and free parking to hours of operation, holiday hours and more. Work through the list carefully and honestly. Users can also submit their opinions of your amenities and pricing, so don't rely on wishful thinking.



Step 2: Get More Good Reviews

Survey Separately

You can do this through a service or even in the office with a postcard or an iPad. Follow up with unhappy patients to address their concerns. Follow up with happy patients by asking if you can text them a link to leave you a review.

Make it Easy

Place direct links to your review profiles on your website and in your digital communications.

Make it Personal

You may not be able to offer customers rewards for reviews, but you can still reward staff members for getting a review that mentions them by name. If the incentive is attractive enough, your staff will have no trouble remembering to ask for reviews.

Don't Ask for Reviews

Instead, ask for feedback with sincerity. When a patient remarks how happy they are, ask them if they'd be willing to share that experience on one of your profiles.

Each review site has rules about how you can ask for or reward for reviews.

One method that has become very popular is surveying your patients using a separate system, then redirecting them to leave a public review if they report a good experiences.

Caution:

If your system of surveying and redirecting doesn't give everyone the same chance to leave a review, you could be violating Google's policies. The practice of only offering the review link to happy users is called Gatekeeping.

Get Creative

Your patients are always being asked to leave reviews, so make your “ask” in a creative way.

- Give them five Starburst or five gold star stickers and ask if they’ll do the same for you.
- Put a sign in your exam room that says the staff all walk faster every time a review is left.
- Send them a card or email with a “five star review” of them as a patient and ask if they will return the favor.



Step 3: Maintain Your Profile



Google's free "My Business" app makes managing your account simple. Set notifications and avoid scanning emails for reviews. Stay logged in so you're always ready to respond to a message, post a notice, or update your hours.

Respond to All Reviews

Good reviews deserve your thanks for taking the time from their day to help your practice. Less stellar reviews still deserve your thanks and attention for bringing an issue to your attention. In both cases, potential customers will see that you're engaged and take service seriously.

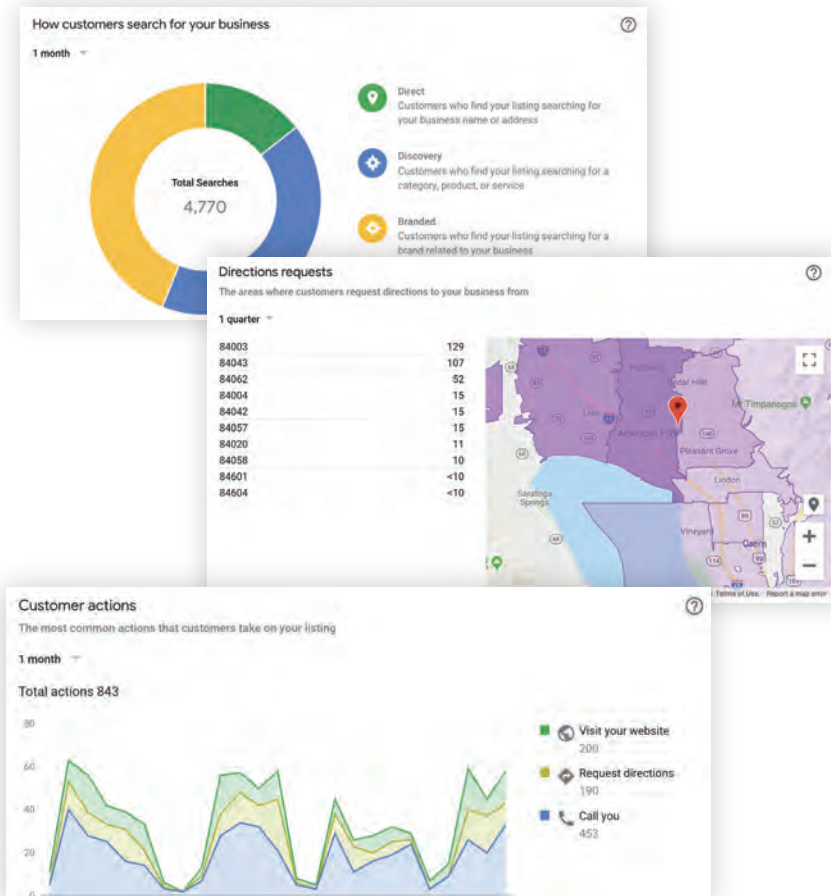
Keep the Details Current

Hours and service offerings change, offices move, staff turns over. Make sure to update your profiles as soon as these changes go into effect. Many people rely on the data they see on Google and never click through to your website.



Leverage Insights

Use the data Google gives you to find out where your customers are coming from, how they are finding you, and whether your optimizations are increasing your traffic.



Three example screens from the Insights tab of a Google profile.

Check for Questions

Google's "Questions" feature won't notify you when a user asks a public question. It's up to users to answer the questions. But you're a user too, so make it a point to check your public profile for questions. You can even log out and ask some great questions as an anonymous user, then answer them as the owner.

Turn on Messaging

Public questions have some uses, but it's always best if patients come right to the source. Consider enabling messaging so searchers can ask you these questions directly. Messages will be sent to your app, and your mobile number will not be shown publicly.

Post New Content

Your profile lets you create mini blog posts with text, images, and video. Use this to announce new providers, new hours, and special events like flu clinics or free screenings.



Step 4: Manage Negative Reviews

Negative reviews are an opportunity. Studies show that unhappy customers can come back more loyal than ever if their complaint is handled quickly and well. If nothing else, negative reviews give you the chance to show all your potential patients that you can handle criticism and use it to improve.

Here are four common scenarios and a sample response:

Guidelines for Responding

- Stay HIPAA-compliant.
- Thank them for bringing an issue to your attention.
- Apologize, for how they felt—even if you aren't at fault.
- Resist the urge to defend yourself.
- Let them know their feedback is being heard in the office.

Your Office Goofed

I love my doctor, but hate how long I have to wait sometimes. This morning we sat in the exam room for an hour before my Dr. Petersen finally appeared!
—Joan P

Joan, thank you for taking the time to let us know about your visit. I'm sorry you had a long wait this morning. I can certainly understand how frustrating that can be.

Please know that we hate to make our patients wait almost as much as they hate waiting. But, we also want to offer quality care and give each patient the time they need—especially if their health concern is critical. I'm sure that focused attention is probably what you love about your doctor.

Thanks again for your feedback. We'll keep working hard to deliver the quality care you've come to expect from our office.



They're unreasonable

I'm so done with this office. I keep telling them I don't believe in flu shots but they keep offering it every year when I have my physical. I take vitamin D and that's more effective anyway.

—Paul

Paul, thank you for sharing your feedback with us. We respect every patient's right to waive the flu shot and we apologize if our yearly offer annoys you. Many of our patients rely on the flu shot to stay healthy and we take calls each week asking if it's in stock yet. Our nursing staff isn't trying to be pushy—just informative. If you ever want to learn more about why we recommend flu shots, we'd be happy to share some study findings.

They're in the wrong place

Flag with Google

This office is a joke. They ordered an expensive ultrasound scan my insurance won't cover, all for my son's skin rash!

—Annie

Annie, I suspect you may have meant your review for another practice entirely. We don't treat children, as we're an OB/GYN practice. I hope your son is well and wish you luck finding quality care.



Poor rating, no information



—James

James, thank you for your feedback. We're sorry you didn't have a great experience, but we'd like to know more so we can fix it. Please call our office manager Denise at 433-555-1212.

How Do I Delete a Bad Review?

While we cannot delete a bad review on our own, business owners flag reviews for removal by tapping the review and following the prompts.

Spam

A salespitch packaged as a review, especially for a competitor.

Off Topic

Complaints about the validity of vaccines or their feelings on your practice's YouTube channel qualify as off topic.

Inappropriate Content

Hate speech, violence, or vulgarity—whether directed at you, your staff, or someone else.

Conflict of Interest

Competitors, terminated staff, ex spouses and anyone else with an ulterior motive.

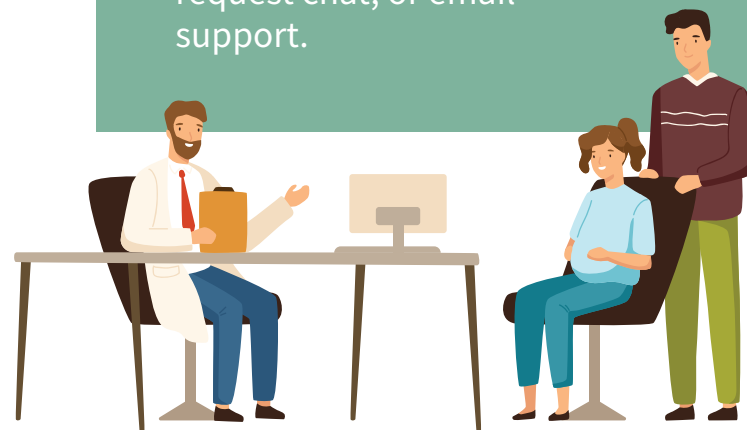
How to Flag a Review

<https://support.google.com/business/answer/4596773?hl=en>

Need Help Faster?

If flagged reviews aren't coming down, get help from Google.

1. In Google My Business, click Menu, scroll down and look for Support.
2. A flyout will appear, look for Contact Us, and click Need More Help.
3. Choose Customer Reviews and Photos, then Manage Customer Reviews.
4. Choose from three contact options: request callback, request chat, or email support.



Help, I Got a Negative Review!

Where do I go from here?



Let's remember H.I.P.A.A ⚡
Never divulge anyone's health details in a review response—even if they discussed conditions or treatments in their review.

Who messed up?

Us

Them

Neither

Do you have a way to contact the reviewer?

No

Yes

Is the Review Legit?

Does the review match up with your type of office and describe an event that is even remotely possible to have happened?

Yes

No

This is the worst lawyer ever.

Flag It!

Report reviews that aren't appropriate for your practice. If they are off-topic, contain hate speech, swearing, a sales pitch, or represent a conflict of interest they fail Google's content policy and can be flagged.

Reply Neutrally

Respond publicly with something brief and non-defensive. Always write like your other patients are watching (because they are).

Follow Up

It can take up to 3 weeks for a flagged review to come down. If yours doesn't budge, ask Google's support for a callback.

Reply with Sympathy

Maybe they didn't like your no-show policy, or that you wouldn't prescribe a specific medication. Reasonable or not, they want to feel heard. Your goal isn't to defend yourself. Lead with sympathy. Then reiterate the policy in question and how it benefits patients. Invite them to call the practice manager for a one-on-one conversation.

★★★★★
Get More Reviews

Put two or more strategies in place to get more positive reviews. One (properly handled) bad review is easily offset by five good reviews.

Follow Through

Prevent repeats. Make sure you update staff training and policies to fix areas where you promised to improve.

Seeing multiple complaints about your policies or practices? Consider changing those to better serve your patients or at least **communicate** them more clearly up front.

Did they edit or retract it?

No

Yes

Too bad it took a 75 minute wait to get into this 3 minute visit.

Reach Out

Call, text, or email them and express your sincere apology. If it's a problem you can fix, do it. If they seem mollified, ask if they'd consider removing the review.

Reply with Humility

You goofed. Own it, express your apologies, thank them for taking the time to give honest feedback, and explain how you're going to make it right for them or in your policies going forward.



When Bad Reviews Get Personal

If you get a barrage of negative reviews from accounts that lack a review history, real names, or profile photos, you might be the victim of someone's grudge. Recently departed staff members, unhappy patients, and even competitors have been known to leave fraudulent reviews.

Flag each review, then start a Google support request to alert them that your profile is under attack.

Some experts insist you should still leave a reply while you're waiting for help, but this can be tricky if the fraudulent reviews are making slanderous claims.

One good response is:

"What you've described is a serious concern. We'd like to know more, but have no record of anyone of your name in our patient database. Please call us right away so we can investigate this further."





Congratulations!

Now You're in Control

That doesn't mean there won't be questions and problems along the way. But, at least you're able to see and react to problems. If you're ready to get next-level on managing your reputation and marketing your practice, give us a call.



435.579.1755
sakkastudio.com