

How to Protect your Practice's Online Reputation

29 Jun 2016 Naren Arulrajah [Todays Dental News](#)



Building goodwill and a strong dental brand reputation takes a lot of time and effort. Once your brand has a rock solid reputation, though, the benefits are numerous. Your practice enjoys more new and loyal patients in addition to an increase in your revenue.

But get one disgruntled patient with a smartphone and an immediate outlet to voice discontent, and your reputation can take a serious blow. What is truly unfortunate is that healthcare brands tend to ignore such voices. Eventually, multiple complaints can easily erode your good name.

Because of the nature of the digital space where things happen instantly, your practice's reputation runs a greater risk of being tainted or even destroyed. That's why dental brands need to proactively plan for any such potential crisis.

Have You Googled Yourself?

Google has become one of the easiest and the most accessible digital tools for consumers. In fact, [85% of consumers](#) use the Internet for research before making a purchasing decision.

Anytime patients want information about a healthcare provider or a practice, they simply need to do a Google search. Information about a dentist, a dental practice, and the kind of reputation the practice enjoys is easily accessible. Brand visibility is great when it is working for you. But it is critical that you constantly monitor how your brand is being represented in the digital space.

Getting ranked at the top of search results has become absolutely important for practices. Achieving a high rank is easy. Maintaining the top spot, however, takes work. Keep in mind that what currently ranks in Google for your name and your brand is going to be the basis for the kind of impression your audience gathers about your practice.

Your patients can find a lot of different information about your practice, including reviews, grievances, and even conversations about it. So if you haven't already Googled yourself, now might be a good time. The results may surprise you.

Preparation is Key

While [85% of consumers](#) say they read online reviews for local businesses, patients today read fewer reviews and are quick to decide whether or not they trust a business and if they want to go there. So practices not only need to focus on closely managing their online reputation, they also need to ensure their latest reviews are positive if they want audiences to form positive impressions.

And although consumers are reading fewer reviews, practices with more reviews will still benefit from a better overall rating simply because a practice with a higher star rating but fewer reviews will fall short of a practice that has a 4-star rating and more reviews.

When it comes to crisis management, the most effective plan involves preparing key messages that can be delivered quickly and with authority. Health issues have to be dealt with more carefully as they carry stronger legal and commercial implications.

Time is always of the essence, so having a dedicated crisis team that is trained to deal with any such issues as and when they occur helps immensely. Work and refine your standard operating procedures for dealing with negative comments and grievances. Constantly monitor your brand on all digital platforms. And, maintain communication with audiences when a crisis occurs. Radio silence does more harm as people can mistake it for admission of guilt.

Protect Your Online Reputation

There are a number of things you can do to protect your online reputation in the digital space.

First, secure a high Google search ranking and register your name as a domain. Brand authority is easier to establish once you have secured a leading position in search results for your personal name and practice brand.

A leading Google ranking also means your competitors will find it difficult to take over your market standing because patients looking for dental services will find you easily. Plus, another important step in protecting your personal and brand name is owning your own domain name, registering the .com, .net, and .org versions as well.

Second, register your practice with Google. Local search results are crucial to brand reputation, and Google is more focused in this area than before. Registering your practice with Google effectively informs the search engine giant of your presence and allows Google to favorably display your practice in search results.

Third, spread your brand reputation. Digital marketers constantly talk about how important it is for brands to build a presence on multiple sites. In addition to your website and blog, focus on building your reputation on social media and on review and rating sites.

Multiple brand profiles make it easier for your target audience to find you regardless of where they are searching. Also, each of these profile pages can be used to direct potential patients to your practice's website.

Fourth, keep a close watch on what is being said about your dental brand. In addition to search results, your practice's name can come up on social and news sites or in blogs and forums among other places. Conversation never stops on the web, so make sure you have online alerts in place that inform you anytime your personal and brand name gets mentioned and in what context.

Finally, build brand authority, which is a powerful tool in the digital space. Potential patients want brands that have an established reputation and are leading authorities in their market space. Use blogging, social media, news and media outlets, and press releases to showcase your authority and to expand your reach and following.

Conclusion

Ranking high in search results increases brand visibility and allows practices to have greater control over what people find in search results. However, brand visibility is just one aspect of building brand reputation.

It is equally important to ensure that potential patients find the best information about your practice in search results. The most effective way to achieve this is by

constantly monitoring your brand name for mentions online and by making sure positive brand mentions outnumber any negative conversations.

Naren Arulrajah is president and CEO of [Ekwa Marketing](#), a complete Internet marketing company that focuses on search engine optimization, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists. With a team of more than 140 full time marketers, it helps dentists who know where they want to go get there by dominating their market and growing their business significantly year after year. If you have questions about marketing your practice online, call 855 598-3320 to speak one-on-one with Naren.

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