

# Reach for Those Stars



Why online reviews are important to your dermatology practice.

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>> How many reviews does your dermatology practice have? How many stars? You might be asking, “How much does it really matter?” The answer is: a lot.

A successful dermatology marketing strategy can be summed up in two steps. First, you help people find you. Next, convince them to choose you. Online reviews play a crucial role in both phases.

## REVIEW ARE TRUST SIGNALS

It is often said that online reviews are the modern word-of-mouth marketing. Distrusting advertisements is natural because everyone knows the purpose of an ad is to promote a business. However, online reviews present unbiased opinions of actual patients. They are considered credible and authentic. In essence, people trust reviews—and so does Google.

## THE SEO BENEFITS OF ONLINE REVIEWS

The patient journey starts with discovery. A person cannot choose your practice until they know that it exists. That means you need to be visible wherever potential patients are looking. It’s not hard to guess where that may be: Like virtually anything else a person might search for, the starting point is Google.

More than 90% of people use online search to find local businesses, and more than 40% of local searches lead to Google Map clicks.<sup>1</sup> The key to getting your practice discovered lies in optimizing for Google local search.

Online reviews are among the ranking factors used to determine placement on Google Maps. Catching Google’s attention involves more than just a good star rating. What are they looking for?

- Quantity—If you want to conduct accurate research, you need to evaluate a large enough sampling to be representative of the population. A study with just a few participants could produce skewed results. Similarly, the average star rating of a business might not be reflective of its quality if there is a small number of reviews. Both algorithms and human searchers like to see abundant reviews.
- Frequency—Again, Google is interested in the same thing that searchers are interested in. And that is recent reviews. The quality of a business can change rapidly for many reasons, so older reviews might not be very informative. Google favors businesses with a reasonably consistent flow of new reviews.

- Diversity—The simplest way to review a business on Google (or any other platform) is to simply assign a number of stars. However, those reviews don’t tell the reader much. Comments, particularly narratives, provide the reader with more information, making them more useful.

## HOW REVIEWS INCREASE CONVERSIONS

Ranking on Google is probably the most effective way to achieve visibility. People in your area who are searching for a dermatologist will probably find you. The next question is: Will they choose you? Again, reviews play a vital role.

If your practice makes it to the coveted 3-pack (top three local results), it will be featured under “places” at the top of the organic search page. Directly under your practice name, Google will display the number of reviews and average rating. With just two clicks, they can easily read those reviews.

Now, imagine viewing those search results through a potential patient’s eyes. Imagine there is a dermatologist who has bad reviews or who doesn’t even have many reviews. Another dermatologist has 4.8 stars and hundreds of lengthy, love-letter-style reviews, the most recent being yesterday. Which one would you trust?

If you are wondering how effective reviews are compared to paid advertising, consider this: statistics show that 74% of consumers deliberately avoid digital advertising, while 91% seek out reviews. That means if you are buying ads, your potential patients are avoiding them. Meanwhile, those same people are most likely reading reviews. What are they looking for?

- Recent reviews—About 85% of consumers consider reviews older than 3 months to be irrelevant.<sup>2</sup>
- Timely responses—Negative reviews might not be great for a business. However, an appropriate response can actually help communicate your dedication to patient satisfaction. That is if it’s delivered quickly. One-third of people expect a response from the business within 3 days, and more than half expect a response within a week.<sup>3</sup>
- High rating—7 out of 10 people use a rating filter in local business searches, with the most common setting being a four-star minimum.<sup>3</sup> That means businesses with lower ratings are often hidden from search results.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

The first mistake many dermatologists make is assuming

that reviews are out of their hands. As a result, they make no effort to improve their review profiles and miss out on a golden opportunity.

**Tips for a great review acquisition strategy:**

- Just ask—The question is, how can you get more great reviews? The answer is very simple: Just ask. Only a small percentage of people will take the initiative to go online and leave a review. In fact, your happiest patients may think it is more sincere and meaningful to deliver their thanks in person while they are in the office.
- Set a goal—If the ask is difficult, motivate your team with a goal. For example, strive to reach at least 10 reviews each month.
- Make the most of the moment—When a patient tells you how gentle you were, how beautiful the results were, or delivers other compliments, ask that person to leave a review. You may be surprised to learn that many are more than happy to do so.
- Make it simple—Use automated tools or manual techniques to send a link to your preferred review platform, either by text or email.
- Monitor your reviews—Remember to reply promptly (and within the confines of privacy laws and policies).

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

Google retains dominance in the search world for very good reason. It does an excellent job of predicting what searchers want to see and delivering just that. Therefore, it is no surprise that what people seek and Google’s ranking criteria are very similar. If your practice has the most reviews, the best reviews, and the most recent relevant reviews of any dermatologist in your area, there is an excellent chance that Google Maps will bring you the most patients. ■

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