

# ONLINE REVIEWS AND BUILDING A ROBUST BRAND: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Online reviews are a crucial aspect of your cosmetic surgery practice online reputation.

BY NAREN ARULRAJAH AND VIKAS VIJ

Consumer habits have changed dramatically in the last few years. Today, patients use their smartphones to compare and assess aesthetic practices, physicians, procedures, and prices. With the advent of social media and a highly connected digital space, online reviews have become an important currency. Moreover, with the right amount of time and effort, physicians can leverage online reviews to build transparency, consistent marketing messages, and increased brand reputation.



## ONLINE REVIEWS ARE INCREASINGLY DOMINATING BUYING DECISIONS

Online reviews can provide potential patients with a personalized understanding of your practice brand. Potential patients consider reviews from peers to be honest and impartial. Moreover, online reviews have great influence:

- A majority of US consumers rely on online reviews.
- 78% check the review section prior to making a purchase.
- 44% of Americans actively contribute to leading review sites.
- 87% of Americans who read online reviews consider reviewer star ratings to be important.
- While 34% consider them to be very important to their decision making process.

Online consumer reviews are the second most trusted source of brand information. It is safe to say that online reviews can to a very large extent sway the buying decision process either in your favor or against you. In our hyper-connected world, the only way to ensure that your brand enjoys a positive image is by managing your online reputation.



## PATIENTS WANT TO BE HEARD – ARE YOU LISTENING?

Consumers want to be heard and understood. Online reviews can provide you with fantastic insight into how your target audiences view your brand. You can use patient feedback to improve your brand image and to optimize the patient experience journey. Here are five ways in which you can incorporate the patient feedback loop into your cosmetic surgery practice:

- Monitor your listings across different platforms; keep a close eye on Google and Yelp reviews.
- Stay calm and composed while drafting a response to negative reviews; the last thing you want to do is get emotional and take a defensive stand.
- Look at negative reviews as constructive criticism. Use them to identify areas of improvement.
- Be authentic in how you respond and it will show your target audience that you care about their experience and

- are willing to work on improving a situation or to actively address issues.
- Good or bad, always respond to every review. You will find that sometimes the best and easiest way to fix an issue is by apologizing!

Don't fear negative reviews. If anything, they offer a certain sense of validity to all of your high-star ratings. The important thing is to have a response strategy in place. Prompt and timely responses can demonstrate your commitment to improving your brand image and more importantly show potential patients that you actually care about what is being said about your brand.



### BEAT NEGATIVE REVIEWS – BUILD AN HONEST BRAND IMAGE

It is estimated that by 2017, Millennials (1976-1994) will have the most spending power. This is a generation whose buying decisions are disproportionately affected by online reviews. Variables such as cranky patients and or disgruntled employees or even your competitors can sully your online reputation. And the unfortunate thing about negative reviews is that they tend to stand out.

- 45% of customers share their negative experiences over social media.
- 35% take to review sites to post their experience.
- 24% of consumers tend to change their buying decision after reading 2 negative reviews.
- 39% would reconsider their buying decision after reading 3 negative reviews.

Negativity can obviously damage your online reputation. Therefore, it is vital that you don't miss any opportunity to respond to bad reviews in an appropriate and prompt manner.



### 4 WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN PROTECT YOUR BRAND IMAGE;

- Focus on driving a stream of positive reviews from satisfied patients.
- Identify the top 20% of your patient base (based on the amount they spend) and invest in a loyalty plan to show your appreciation.
- Constantly test the waters; send customer satisfaction surveys periodically and work towards continually improving the patient journey.
- Ensure you provide your happy patients with links that make it easy for them to share their positive experiences over leading review sites such as Yelp.

## CONCLUSION

Building a robust online reputation for your cosmetic surgery practice is not going to happen over-night. Creating an honest and positive brand image means listening to what people are saying about your brand. Armed with this information, you can adopt a proactive approach towards improving your customer experience while displaying your sincerity. ■



Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete Internet marketing company which focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education and the online reputations of Cosmetic Surgeons. With a team of 130+ full time marketers, [www.ekwa.com](http://www.ekwa.com) helps doctors 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 Naren direct at 877-249-9666.

## RESOURCES

1. <https://today.yougov.com/news/2014/11/24/americans-rely-online-reviews-despite-not-trusting/>
2. <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2013/the-reviews-are-in--yelp-users-are-four-star-consumers.html>
3. <http://officialblog.yelp.com/2013/06/nielsen-4-out-of-5-yelp-users-visit-the-site-when-preparing-to-spend-money-at-a-local-business.html>