

Ethical Ways To Gain Favorable Online Reviews For Your Dental Practice

May 29, 2019

by Naren Arulrajah, Ekwa Marketing

They say that doctors serve a noble profession. Their hard work is truly rewarding when they receive appreciation from a satisfied patient. This is not just a self-fulfilling exercise.

If your patient is happy, it also means that they feel healthy. In addition, a review of approval from one healthy patient can influence at least three other patients to feel good about your dental practice, and willingly come to you for treatment. In that sense, it is a mutually rewarding exercise.

Of course, a dental practitioner may also need positive online reviews, in order to be recognized by more potential patients in their local area. Today, people are increasingly turning towards Google rankings and rate-your-doctor websites like CareDash, Healthgrades, RateMDs, Vitals, WebMD, Yelp, Zocdoc and other social media websites, for credible reviews on a dental practice.

In fact, patients often choose their dentist based on complimentary reviews from these websites. In this sense, your patients are a lot like business customers, making their feedback not only relevant, but also essential.

With this in mind, here are five conscientious ways in which you can reach out to your patients, for a favorable review.

1. Approach only your patients

One would think this is obvious. Yet, you will be surprised to know that some dubious dental practices are known to approach “fake patients” in order to garner supportive feedback. They may even approach known people who are obviously not their patients – like friends, family, co-workers – as they may have a personal or professional stake in your practice.

Fortunately, these dishonest reviews are easy to distinguish, as the faux patients tend to wax eloquently about the dentist without providing any facts or details. This is exactly the kind of review that seems “too good to be true”, and people are intelligent enough to spot them and stay away from them.

2. Invite your appreciative patients, gently

Yes, it is fair for a dentist to request your patients for a review. However, it is not okay to pressurize them into providing a favorable one. It is also not okay to oblige them with discounts, coupons, financial rewards, or other goodies, just so they respond with a glowing testimonial.

This kind of give-and-take approach towards reviews can even create irreparable damage in the long term, as the doctor-patient relationship is undeniably compromised. The patient may humor you for the moment, but will eventually step away.

The straightforward (and most effective) approach is to request your satisfied patients, courteously, for their valuable comments. Many dentists find it easy to coordinate this in a refined manner, when a patient has already reached out with a note or an email expressing gratitude for your services.

Make sure they understand it is perfectly acceptable to refuse, and to be candid in their assessment if they decide to accept. Your inputs should only be in the direction of helping them understand “where” they can share their comments (like rate-your-dentist websites), and not “what” they can share. This kind of authenticity will be appreciated by your patient, further elevating their regard for you.

3. Create opportunities for providing feedback

The reason many dentists struggle with generating positive reviews, is that they are often passive about it during the day-to-day operations. With this, they let go of plenty of opportunities for appreciative acknowledgement, and are surprised when a disgruntled patient’s views are publicly aired on the internet.

To avoid both situations, here are three simple tips to make feedback a timely affair:

- Begin each patient’s session with a five to 10 minute informal chat, on the effectiveness of the treatment provided so far. Here, they should speak while you patiently listen. This way, you become aware of their grievances well in advance, and have the time to reverse it before closure.
- Once you deem a patient’s treatment as complete, approach them with a painless feedback form. Also, encourage them to share their suggestions for improvement.

- When you receive positive remarks, graciously thank them, and gently direct them to an online site to provide a public review.

4. Address critical reviews publicly and graciously

Despite all your efforts, there will always be that minority of patients who refuse to take responsibility for their health, and hence fault your services. They may also be patients who have genuinely not benefited from your treatment, for various reasons. Be prepared for both in a public forum – be it a review website, or an individual’s social media page.

Here, you will be glad to know that people consider a collective review credible, only when it has both positive and the odd negative comments. They may even question the authenticity of the website if all they see is an exaggerated tribute. Conversely, people are also clever enough to spot a patient’s unreasonable tirade.

Regardless, here are a few tips to help you politely deal with public criticism:

- Do not thank them for their review, especially when it is negative. This will sound condescending and could further disappoint them.
- Instead, acknowledge them for taking the time to provide feedback. They may have done so in order to prevent others from suffering a bad situation, no matter if it is misunderstood.
- If it seems like a genuine concern that has inadvertently missed your timely attention, here is your chance at redemption. For instance, consider that they were charged twice on their credit card due to a clerical error. Help them understand that it was caused by a miscommunication (without discussing the details of their case), and invite them to continue with your practice. Refrain from offering discounts, especially in a public forum.
- If it seems like an irrational rant, again gently invite them to discuss in person. Here, make sure to re-iterate that you are interested in solving their problem.
- Finally, do not engage with trolls who are only interested in arguing with you in a public forum.

These efforts can help future patients recognize that you take responsibility for your dental practice and your patients.

5. Use your professional website to give voice to your dental practice

Patients visit your website for many reasons – to find out more about your practice and pricing, to book a follow-up appointment, even to provide feedback. This is also a safe forum to invite patient reviews, although potential customers may consider it less legitimate than a public forum.

On the other hand, when you provide your patients with a review link that directs to your professional website, or even your social media page, you have more control on the response, compared to other public forums or sites.

This is especially useful when dealing with trolls and other vicious reviewers. If required, you can even delete a deliberately slanderous comment. (Some may even be triggered by an unscrupulous competitor.)

Finally, encouraging patients to use your website for reviews will also increase traffic to your web page. In turn, this will enhance your digital visibility and strengthen the overall marketability of your dental practice.

About The Author



Naren Arulrajah is President and CEO of Ekwa Marketing, a complete internet marketing company that focuses on SEO, social media, marketing education, and the online reputations of dentists. With a team of 180+ full time marketers, www.ekwa.com 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.

RELATED ARTICLE: [Are You Using Online Reviews As A Marketing Strategy?](#)