

# Brand Identity and Online Reputation of Your Dermatology Practice

All aspects of your online presence contribute to your reputation. Here's how to build and protect your brand.

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With the ever-growing influence of the Internet on a universal scale, it has become more important than ever for dermatologists to care about their online reputation. In a highly democratized online environment, particularly with the explosive popularity of social media networks, people are able to freely express their opinions and comments and share their personal experiences with others. The moment a message is posted over the Internet, it literally becomes accessible to the whole world.

In this scenario, while it is impossible to control the free-flowing Internet environment, it is still possible to manage your brand identity and your online reputation to a large extent. Online reputation management (ORM) for dermatologists involves a set of techniques to generate a distinguished, positive, and likeable image and presence on the World Wide Web.

This web presence essentially refers to any online content that includes a mention of the dermatologist. This content could be in the form of online news, blog posts, messages on discussion forums, comments on personal websites, reviews and ratings online, pictures, videos, and social media presence. In the case of a dermatologist, the average online commentator would be an existing or past patient or a professional review or rating website.

## PROACTIVE REPUTATION BUILDING

Professional search engine optimization (SEO) and ORM companies recommend a proactive approach to online brand and reputation building for dermatology practices. Their goal is to maximize the number of positive references appearing online about the practice. More importantly, these professionals employ innovative SEO strategies to ensure that these positive references are viewed by potential patients who actively search for a dermatologist on a search engine, or simply make a general search for "healthcare" or "dermatology" and eventually find the positive references about the dermatologist.

If the web presence of the dermatology practice is negligible or non-existent, except for a dermatology website, a professional ORM expert will try to build a positive online identity and image. Experts will also proactively deal with any specific issues with regard to the online reputation of a dermatologist. In case a review or rating website for a doctor has misrepresented the facts about the dermatology practice, or an individual's opinion online needs clarification, a professional will address such issues proactively, rather than brushing them off as aberrations.

## SEO AND ONLINE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

One of the key aspects of an ORM process is to enhance the quality and volume of online traffic to websites that contain positive content related to the dermatologist. This is where SEO comes into play to drive the targeted traffic toward targeted websites. The only difference in this case is that the primary keyword is the name of the dermatologist or the brand name of the dermatology practice.

The object of SEO in this case is not just the dermatologist's own website, but in fact all such websites that may carry positive online references about the dermatologist or the practice. Therefore, from an SEO expert's point of view, the goal here is more complex and includes achieving high rankings for as many targeted websites as possible when an average potential patient searches for the dermatologist's name or the brand name of the practice.

## REPUTATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS

One of the biggest emerging challenges for ORM experts handling online reputations for dermatologists and other doctors is to manage a positive image for the dermatologist on various social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Flickr, Orkut, and others. Messages posted on these networks have the potential of going viral and com-



mand a much higher readership due to the very nature of online networking.

Positive messages on social networks can be great publicity for a dermatologist because people are highly influenced by such impressions. Impression management—trying to create a positive impression about the dermatologist on social networks—is an area of prime concern to ORM experts today. The dermatologist who is proactive on social media can engage with potential patients on a personal level. This can boost the online image of the dermatologist and the practice.

### RISK OF MISINFORMATION ONLINE

The Internet allows users to operate anonymously or under pseudonyms, if they so desire. That freedom also gives rise to a culture of spreading false information, negativity with an ulterior motive, or simply unfair or irresponsible messages. Even professional review or rating websites sometimes carry one-sided versions or misinformation when they fail to scrutinize an issue closely or do not exercise due diligence. Such false information against a dermatologist or a dermatology practice can lead to an “echo chamber effect”: fragments of such false information may show up in search results when a potential patient searches online for the dermatologist or practice. A vigilant ORM company will constantly monitor the Internet for such issues and address them effectively to ensure the dermatologist enjoys a fair online reputation. You can see a video on reputation management at DermTube.com: <http://dermtube.com/video/how-to-deal-with-negative-online-reviews/>.

### TOP RANKING PERSONAL WEBSITE

At the end of the day, a strong website that presents the dermatologist and the practice in a positive light and backs up those claims with facts, figures, videos, and patient testimonials, still remains the best weapon to defend and build an online reputation. With great content and strategic SEO techniques, if the website continues to rank at the top of the search results, it can overwhelm all other forms of online impressions on the Internet.

Dermatologists may choose to hire a professional SEO services and ORM company with an exclusive focus on the medical profession. With the backing of such experts, it is possible to achieve a greater market share and dominate the Internet locally. With patients universally becoming Internet-savvy, it is time for every dermatologist to start an evaluation of his or her online reputation and web presence, or the absence of it. ■

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the practice's existence.

**Demonstrate authenticity.** The message a practice conveys to its patients and staff must be authentic. Otherwise, there can be little trust. But how, exactly, do physician-owners create authenticity and trust within their companies? Can they announce to their employees and patients that they are now authentic and therefore trustworthy? The obvious answer is, no. Authenticity comes from consistently doing what one believes in.

**Work amidst like-minded people.** Authenticity is also a natural outcome for practice leaders who surround themselves with people who have complimentary values. This begins by hiring staff members with common beliefs. To identify or reconnect with these beliefs, physician owners might consider the answers to these questions: Why did I start this practice? Why should anyone come and work for me? Why should a patient be loyal to my practice and refer friends and family?

**Operate from a shared passion.** A unique and memorable experience is available to customers when an organization or company provides services from a place of shared passion. That is why Starbucks, Patagonia, Apple, BMW, Harley Davidson, and even the US Marine Corps are highly successful. Operating from a place of shared passion requires starting from the “why.” This often takes a lot of courage and a strong vision because sometimes the concepts that best reflect the “why” are hard to measure—e.g., fulfillment, happiness, trust, culture, authenticity, and transparency. Sometimes this path may even require turning down money in the short term to stay focused on the core beliefs of the company.

**Embrace transparency.** Transparency is a quality that helps develop internal and external trust and has been identified as a vital business component in developing loyal leaders and consumers. Make sure employees know what is going on with the practice and where it plans to go in the future. Be open to feedback. Transparent practices have open-door policies that boost staff buy-in and promote honesty and openness with consumers. When a practice's motives are aligned with the greater good, relative transparency is possible because it has nothing to hide.

### PAVING THE WAY

Creating a practice environment based on shared passion helps create a culture that is conducive to building a foundation of both satisfied employees and loyal consumers. Growing and developing a practice and its leaders will happen organically when you use these guidelines as a roadmap for success. ■

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