PUT YOUR REVIEWS TO WORK

Tips for choosing the right automated review software program for your practice.

BY DAVID EVANS, PHD, MBA

Reviews—also known as "user-generated content"—count for a lot these days. Fully 84 percent of patients use online reviews to evaluate physicians, and more than three-quarters of them use online reviews as their first step in finding a new doctor, according to data compiled by Software Advice.

This purchasing power can't be ignored. The best way to take advantage of it is to invest in automated review software tools. Choosing the right program for your practice starts with determining how the majority of your patients find you.

Is it predominantly via word of mouth? In this case, they search for you by name on Google and other search engines. For most surgeons, up to seven or eight review sites appear on the first page of the search results for these "name" searches. Prospective patients peruse review sites, evaluating the overall star ratings and the sentiment of the reviews. You need a far-reaching review strategy to capture these leads.

Are they searching for a specific procedure that you perform? In these cases, they enter the procedure in the search box. Typically reviews from Google Local and other review sites pop up on the first page of the search results. You need a strong local review strategy to convert these patients.

Are they searching review sites first? Many of these are destination sites, receive tens of millions—and in some cases, hundreds of millions—of visitors per year. For example, just HealthGrades and Vitals alone receive more than 400 million visitors per year, each. As a result, you need strong presence on all the main review sites.

Are they coming directly to your website? In this case, you need positive reviews from multiple sites published on your website.

Sometimes all of the above—or some combination—will apply to your practice.

THE ASK

If you don't ask, a happy patient likely won't review your practice. It is imperative that you choose review software that sends invitations to patients asking them to post a review.

A number of tools exist to automate the ask. The most effective ones will screen the patient, so that unhappy patients are not asked to post a review, solicit across a wide range of third-party review sites (up to 20 or more), determine which review sites need new reviews and then send the patients to those review sites via email or text invitations.

On the flipside, avoid tools that solicit three or fewer sites, ask the patient which site they want to post a review on instead of directing patients to the sites that are best for your practice, or solicit reviews only on your website.

An effective review publishing strategy can increase conversion and revenues by up to 18 percent, according to a study by Revoo. Positive reviews should be presented to prospective patients in a variety of ways. Manually searching for new reviews and then cutting and pasting them is very time consuming, which is why automation is a must. Well-known third-party review sites such as Yelp and Healthgrades provide additional credibility to user-generated content because they are perceived as a third-party endorsement of your services. A positive review on a well-known review site is worth much more than one that was only captured and published on your site. So, take advantage of this endorsement on your website and frankly it is better for patients to find positive Yelp reviews on your own site and read them there, than for them to visit Yelp, where a number of other doctors are listed and you could potentially have a negative review.

An automated publishing tool should:
- Post positive reviews to your website and social media.
- Pull reviews from the full range of prominent sites.
- Allow you to further filter reviews, in case you don't like what has been said.
- Allow you to publish a stream of combined reviews for individual doctors and multiple doctors in a practice.

On the flip side, beware of tools that:
- Publish reviews from only one source.
- Publish only reviews created on your website.
- Publish the actual text of the review on your site. If the text is duplicated from review sites, it can damage SEO.

Choosing an automation tool to help your accrue and publicize positive reviews is the way to remain competitive in the aesthetic space today. Try Real Patient Ratings (realpatientratings.com), Ceatus review manager (Ceatus.com), Birdeye (birdeye.com), or Demandforce (demandforce.com). ■

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