

# GET MORE NEW PATIENTS BY WINNING THE ONLINE REVIEW GAME



by Kathy Jiamboi<sup>3</sup>

Let's face it, it's extremely important to have lots of five star reviews on Google, Facebook and Yelp. It's the practice who has the highest star rating with the most reviews that is getting the "motherlode" of new patients.

So how can you rig this game to win?

Before we talk about that, let's talk about what's happening online and why reviews have become so important. Over the last few years, when doing research before making a purchase many sites have led us to read the accompanying reviews on those products and services. Amazon is a great example of this with a vast amount of reviews on just about everything.

We have been trained then to use reviews as guides in our buying decisions. What other people have to say about a product or service matters. It lends credibility (or not) to a product or service, because what other people have to say is far more believable than anything you can ever say about yourself. Reviews are deemed "unbiased."

Picking a new dentist can be challenging. Think about this. People have no way of really knowing whether

you can do what you say you can. They didn't go to dental school. They don't know what you learned. So how can they evaluate your skills? One of those ways is through what other people say, whether that's from online reviews or a one-on-one referral.

Remember this then. When people search your name or practice, they are looking for what other people have to say about you. They're trained to look. They are trying to confirm that they are making the right decision in choosing you. If they can't find a lot of reviews, or find lower rated reviews (less than 4 stars), they're moving on to your competition.

The social proof contained within reviews helps prospects short-cut their research and make decisions faster with greater confidence than ever before. Here are two important stats:

- 85% of people trust online reviews as much as personal recommendation.
- 49% of consumers say they need at least a 4-star rating before they choose a business.

With the number of reviews and review sites growing,



# THE ONLINE REVIEW GAME

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it provides huge benefits to dental practices who fully embrace reputation marketing. The best part is your reviews work for you even while you're sleeping and can reach many more people than one-on-one referrals. So how can you "rig" the review game? Here are five ways:

### 1. HAVE AN EASY, AUTOMATED SYSTEM:

Asking for feedback needs to be easy on your team and effective. Handing out business cards with your Google page is not going to get you reviews. That business card is long forgotten as soon as they walk out your door. Even though they have intention, life gets in their way.

Some dentists use follow-up surveys but these comments end up only being seen by the doctor and team. This is no way to use all that fabulous feedback.

You want a system that sends patients a text and an email. People have their communication preferences. By sending both email and text you are increasing your odds of getting feedback.

Your automated system needs to push your feedback to the top three review sites; Google, Facebook, and Yelp.

You want a system that also works to build up the other review sites that are showing up on the first page of search for you. Lots of five stars in lots of places on that first page makes it a "no brainer" to schedule an appointment with you.

### 2. ASK AT THE RIGHT TIME:

The timing of your feedback request is critical to the kind of feedback you will receive. The closer you ask to the appointment the better the feedback. Their memory of the experience with you begins to fade as soon as they leave your office. When you ask close to the appointment all the good things you did are still fresh in their mind.

Your reviews will be detailed and evoke emotion. That's exactly what you want. When a prospective patient reads these heartfelt reviews it will create those same feelings in them and move them to pick up the phone.

### 3. HAVE FOLLOW-UP SYSTEMS IN PLACE:

You want to have a few follow-up mechanisms within your review system, such as:

The ability to send out more than one request for feedback. People are busy. They may want to leave you a review but you caught them at the wrong time. We like to ask three times. This maximizes the potential of getting feedback.

A "thank you for your feedback" email and a request to share their comments in other places online.

An "apology" email in case the feedback they provided was less than favorable. This lets your patient know you are aware of the situation and plan to take care of it.

### 4. RESPOND TO YOUR REVIEWS:

Don't leave your reviews hanging out there online without responding. Your patients should be acknowledged for taking the time to give you their feedback. It's also a perfect opportunity to up level what they said about you. Negative reviews absolutely need a response. No response looks like you are "guilty as charged."

### 5. SHARE YOUR REVIEWS:

Get your reviews on all your social channels, on the home page of your site (not buried on an inside page), on marketing pieces and advertisements, on the walls of your office. You worked hard for these! Share them with the world!

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# The Magic of "Failing Forward"



by Graig Presti<sup>2</sup>

In 2011, author Eric Ries released a book called *The Lean Startup* <sup>1</sup>. The premise of the book revolves around starting a business, or launching a product, before it's been fully tested and refined. The goal being to simply get that idea off the ground in a minimally viable way and then to improve it as you go.

This counter intuitive strategy flies in the face of convention. Many would ask, "Why would you take an idea to market if you assume it's only going to need to be changed?" Well, two reasons.

First, if you launch something that has merit and brings value to the marketplace (and has a fighting chance at commercial adoption), you can therefore assume that it belongs there.

Second, by launching as soon as possible, you're avoiding a phenomenon you may have heard before... or even encountered yourself... "analysis paralysis."

This is essentially over thinking something to the point where you're no longer able to create forward movement or be productive on it. For example, let's say your team comes up with a marketing campaign where you're going to send out a postcard every month. You come up with the wording, the designs, and are ready to send them out.

At 2 AM the night before you're supposed to send the postcard designs to the printer, you're jolted awake. You think to yourself... "these postcards are never going to get patients to call us... we need to redo them." So you postpone the order and have your writer and designer go back to the drawing board. And again. And then again. Six months later, you still haven't sent them out, because they still aren't quite right. In the meantime, think about how many dozens (if not hundreds) of potential new patients and referrals you could have gotten on the books if you'd just sent them out the first time.

There's another, more subtle side effect of this inaction. I talk to thousands of doctors every year, and I can't tell you how many times I hear the same story... a doc either tries to market themselves or signs on with a marketing company. Then for whatever reason, the resulting efforts aren't successful.

We hear that as an objection all the time. "I don't like marketing, I was burned by XYZ marketing agency, so I won't market, etc." But in reality, that's the essence of marketing.

To "fail forward." To screw things up... until they work. As a 4X Inc. 500/5000 Magazine trusted business, people often ask me what my team does when we're putting together a new promotion. Do we spend months preparing a new mailer? Do we agonize over it?

We certainly put time and care into what we create and send out... without a doubt. But the whole process of good marketing is putting out a piece, measuring the results, then improving upon those results in future iterations. We never assume that something is going to win the first time - we know our best bet is to get it out there, then improve upon it as time goes on.

Next time you're preparing a new marketing tactic or a potential improvement to the practice, but aren't sure where to start (or when it's finished), realize that you might be wasting time and effort and potential results in analysis paralysis.

Be bold and try things. If they don't work, great - now you know they didn't work. Don't be afraid to try something else. Then, do it again and keep doing it. The most successful people in the world fail over and over again. Only they don't call it "failure"... Instead, they consider it the path to success.

If you'd like to learn more about how to "Fail Forward," check out our brand new web video series, Beyond The Chair, made in conjunction with industry thought leaders Chris Salierno, DDS and Joshua Austin, DDS. Visit [www.LocalSearchForDentists.com](http://www.LocalSearchForDentists.com).

<sup>1</sup> Ries, Eric. *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*. Crown Business, 2014.

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## **MISTAKES DENTISTS MAKE EVERY DAY!**

*by Dr. Michael Curtis<sup>3</sup>*

### **CROWN PREPS:**

#### ***Not Prepping Retention Grooves***

What can you do to improve retention on short or over-angled crown preps? Please consider adding retention grooves, mini-inlays and secondary walls to create more parallelism, greater resistance to rotation and superior retention. How do you prep these?

- After your prep is complete, add slots or boxes approximately 1.5 x 1.5 x 1.5 mm in one or more sections of your prep. Use a round-end tapered diamond.
- When possible, place these boxes within buildup areas so you leave as much natural tooth structure intact as possible.
- Keep retention elements short of your finish line so they do not affect your final seal.
- Make sure all preps are parallel (not undercut) so crowns seat properly.
- Round occlusals of these preps to eliminate sharp edges.
- Always advise your lab to not block these out when doing model work. Boxes will dramatically increase retention of your temporaries and final crowns.

### **BROKEN APPOINTMENTS:**

#### ***Not Referencing Bad Breath***

Do you want more hygiene patients and fewer broken appointments? Use the power of "bad breath." Patients are busy. Many lack strong motivation to prioritize small cavities that don't hurt, or gum inflammation they don't sense. However, most people are horrified at the prospect of "bad breath." Carious lesions, poor contours, broken fillings and periodontal issues trap food debris and bacteria. Please consider the following dialog:

- "Imagine the odor that rotting garbage causes on a hot, humid day. The mouth is 98 degrees with 100% humidity ... so imagine the breath odor that trapped food or bacteria create. You may want to fix these problems (or see the hygienist) as soon as possible."
- Bad breath is a great motivator that is under-used. Get your staff on-board.

### **LIMITED OPENING:**

#### ***Not Cutting Your Bur***

What can you do when your patient cannot open wide enough to fit your handpiece? One answer: shorten your bur to gain the room you need. Cut as much as half the shank off. A shorter bur will often provide the access you need. It will also give you better visibility in difficult to reach areas for a more controlled prep. How to cut your bur?

- Select your bur. Hold it in your hand and cut the 5-7mm of shank off with a course diamond. Round the edges of your cut slightly, so they are not rough.
- When shortening a diamond bur, you may also need to remove some diamond-coating to allow the shaft to seat and lock properly into your handpiece. To shorten a carbide bur, you may have to smooth the upper part of the flutes.
- There are short burs on the market. However, in some cases they are not short enough. Cutting existing burs is fast, easy and decreases the number of items you have to stock.
- Beware when purchasing hand pieces with mini-heads. Ask for the total measurement from the back of the handpiece to the tip of a standard bur before you purchase. Some small heads fail to reduce the total amount of room needed.