

# 4 STEPS

to Building and Managing  
Your Practice's Online Reputation



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## Your Online Reputation Matters



Whether you know it or not, you have an online presence (take this out of the separate box). And it may be growing without any input from you. It's time to take control of your online presence, engage with patients online, and manage your reputation. When you do, you'll be able to:

- Improve your online reputation
- Ensure that new patients can find you online
- Grow your practice through your referrals

Your current and future patients are online, and they are listening to what others have to say. Review sites such as Yelp and Healthgrades are making more of an impact on patients' perceptions of potential providers than ever before so if your practice has little to no presence online, you are most likely losing out on many new patients.

According to research conducted by Software Advice, the number of patients using online review sites and searching for medical providers online is growing. In 2019, only six percent of those surveyed said that they didn't use online reviews to evaluate physicians. Here are some other key findings:

- Seventy two percent of patients use online reviews as their first step in searching for a new healthcare provider. This is a dramatic increase from 2013, when only 25 percent of patients said they used online reviews to evaluate doctors.
- If your practice has a positive review history, nearly half of the patients surveyed said that they would visit an out-of-network provider that had positive reviews if they felt they would receive better care from that practice.
- Seventy percent of survey participants felt that it was very or moderately important for a healthcare provider to publicly respond to a negative online post or review. This speaks to the importance of addressing complaints in a timely and straightforward way because yes, others are watching (or reading).

Staying competitive means being online, listening to what people are saying, and engaging in the conversation. Follow these four steps that we elaborate in this guide, to successfully build, enhance and manage your online presence and reputation.

1. Enhance your website
2. Engage with patients on social media
3. Own your online listings, rankings, and reviews
4. Be responsive to comments and reviews

Patients are increasingly looking for healthcare services online, and they expect you to be there and to be actively engaged. In 2019, patients continue to seek referrals from friends on social media to help them with their selection of doctors, specialists and hospitals. Patients are now more inclined to spread the word on social media of providers they especially like or dislike to help or warn others needing similar healthcare services. You do not want to be left in the cold while other providers are active on social media, providing accurate information and connecting with potential patients.



**247 million internet users in US as of 2019** –in 2019 only 10 percent of US adults said that they do not use the internet.

(Source: Statista)

## Step 1: Enhance Your Website

Your website is an excellent way to establish your online brand and build trust for your practice. It can help tell your branding story, which can set you apart from your competitors. If it has been awhile since you refreshed your website or if you don't have one at all, check out these website tips shared on Create180design.com, a website branding company. Here are some best practices for enhancing your medical practice website, regardless of your specialty:

- Make sure the look of your website design is fresh, modern and easy for visitors to navigate. You want your website to convey a positive and professional image of your brand.



- Share your mission, philosophy about health in general, how you approach the doctor-patient relationship and personal information about your passion for healthcare. Patients like knowing more about their medical providers, so take the opportunity on your website to share more about yourself.
- Include all information that establishes your credibility as a medical provider. This can include awards, recognitions, education and degrees. Also include where you did your residency and any papers that you wrote that were published in medical journals.
- Showcase anything unique about you or your practice such as special interests or a niche that can be applied to your medical practice.
- Provide links to rating sites like Yelp and Healthgrades as well as your social media platforms.
- If you have positive testimonials from happy patients – be sure to include those on the home page.
- Invest in having professional photos taken of you, your staff, and your office. Try to avoid stock photos – patients want to see what is real, so they know what to expect when they come for an appointment.
- Provide a financial section that discusses insurances accepted and the many ways patients can pay. Also include the financial policy of your practice including cancellation fees charged for no shows.
- Make it easy for your patients and show that you are current with technology by offering online scheduling, online patient intake forms and online payments. This is expected by patients today so don't make a bad first impression by not having these conveniences available for new and current patients.

- Hire someone to write a blog on relevant topics that speak to the conditions you treat or write the posts yourself if you can carve out some time and writing is something you like to do. If writing a blog is too big of a writing commitment, write a few white papers and make them available for download. A good resource for background information and topics is the Kareo Resource Library and Kareo's Go Practice blog.
- Create some short videos blogs of you talking about your practice.

## Website Best Practices

1. Keep it fresh. You'll need a content management system (CMS) so you can make updates and add new content once the site is done. A dynamic website improves search engine optimization (SEO) and is more engaging for patients.
2. Make it actionable. Employ tools that enable patients to take action, such as patient acceptance of appointment reminders via text and email. [A patient portal](#) can provide many actionable features and help you stay more connected to patients while also improving their compliance and wellness.
3. Market your site. There is no point in having a website if no one can find it. Market your site via emails to patients, referral sources, and vendors and by adding your URL to all advertising and forms. Make sure all of your social media landing pages link to your website.

Nearly **80 percent** of Americans own smartphones. In 2018, more than half of all website traffic worldwide was generated through mobile phones.

(Source: Statista)

### Source

<https://www.create180design.com/15-web-design-best-practices-for-medical-practice-websites>

## Step 2: Engage Patients on Social Media

For the past 15 years, social media has continued to build in popularity and shows no signs of dying down among Americans. According to the 2019 Social Habit study, Americans differ in their social media usage particularly among gender and age groups. This is what the study found:

- Younger population, ages 12-34 have declined in Facebook usage from nearly 80% in 2017 to 62% in 2019. All other social media platforms are down such as Twitter, Pinterest and LinkedIn. The only social network that is growing among young Americans is Instagram – up to 66% from 64% two years ago.
- The age and gender that is dominating social media usage in 2019 is middle-aged women, 34-54 years old, which is probably one of your target demographic groups. For Facebook and Instagram, nearly six out of 10 users are women.
- Facebook is less popular in 2019 than in 2015 and hasn't moved much since its peak popularity in 2013. There is an estimated 15 million fewer Facebook users in the U.S. in 2019 as compared to two years prior.
- Seniors 55+ is the only age group that has increased its usage in Facebook since prior years.
- Twitter is the sixth largest social network in the U.S. and is also losing steam in recent years.

### Source

<https://www.edisonresearch.com/the-social-habit-2019/>

## Social Media Platforms - Deciding Which Ones to Use

To help you decide what social media platforms would be best, we have compiled a list on the next page of the top social media sites that are used by businesses today and their current statistics.

### Source

<https://intrepy.com/choosing-social-media-for-practice/>



Social Media	Active Users	Largest Demographic	Advantages for Physician Groups	Disadvantages	Key Takeaway
<b>Facebook</b>	1.3 billion	60% are female, 25-54.	Great for increasing website traffic, building brand loyalty, finding new patients receiving patient reviews and boosting engagement. Good for all medical and healthcare specialties.	Followers won't see your posts unless you buy FB ads or have a large following.	Facebook is good to purchase ads that target your local audience for new patients and engage with current patients.
<b>Instagram</b>	800+ million	59% in US are under 30 years old, 89% of users follow a business on Instagram.	Good platform to engage with patients and show images of procedures, results, and practices. Use for finding new patients, new local patient prospects, practice events.	Time and resource-intensive to be successful – posting, photos, interactions, ads, building an engaged audience.	Instagram is visual and a better fit for surgeons, cosmetic surgery, dentistry, dermatology, weight loss, ob/gyn, PTs.
<b>Twitter</b>	600 million	18-29	Good to share medical information with other healthcare providers and patients. Hashtags help users and doctors to find related content by topic. If you invest time and share a lot of content and engage with followers, Twitter can be successful for your practice.	You are limited in words per tweet – must get straight to the point.	Twitter is going down in popularity but can be good for your practice if you invest the time for regular participation.
<b>LinkedIn</b>	600 million	30-49. 57% of all LinkedIn traffic is mobile. 44% of users make more than 75k a year.	Helps you to share related medical business news, articles, and build professional relationships. You can use platform to search for new hires and review backgrounds and resumes. Build networking communities within your specialty and industry.	Personal profile needs to be of the healthcare professional and if others are managing platform, they need to be the personal voice which can be tricky.	Physician-owned practices benefit the most, but all specialties can benefit from having a LinkedIn business page.
<b>YouTube</b>	1 billion, 2nd largest search engine behind Google	All ages	Good for providers who want to share and create videos that showcase specific medical services, testimonials and more. Great way to market services with short videos, education pieces and create a video-blog, which is quicker to produce than writing a long blog.	Can be time consuming and expensive to film quality videos.	Good for all specialties to share information about your practice, specialty, staff, etc.
<b>Pinterest</b>	291 million	More than 80% are female Medium Pinterest user age is 40 but those younger are also using platform. 72% of pinners use Pinterest to decide what to buy offline.	Good for finding new patients and sharing local events and health and wellness information.	Need to create pins that pinners want to share with others.	Good for primarily a female audience so medical practices and healthcare businesses looking to appeal to women would benefit the most. This includes Ob/Gyn, Senior Care, Pediatricians Aesthetics Physicians, Cosmetic surgeons, Weight loss clinics, dermatologist.



## Social Media Checklist:



- Use social media sites to help establish and promote your brand. Be consistent across your website and social channels with your look and feel.

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- Once you create your pages, send out an email to your patients encouraging them to “like” and “follow” you on Facebook and Twitter. You can also put links to your Facebook and Twitter pages on your website, business cards, and in your email signature. Encourage your staff to “like” and “follow” your practice and share content.

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- Build your presence by liking and following influencers in your community and groups that relate to your specialty (e.g., local cancer support groups if you are an oncologist).

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- Post regularly and provide useful, informative, and actionable content for patients. Having a blog (or other dynamic content) on your website can make this easier. Including tools on your social media sites that allow people to do things like request an appointment and write or view reviews is also a great way to engage people.

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- Interact with your social media followers. Reply to their comments and like their posts. If someone brings up personal health information, take it offline as quickly as possible.

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- Make your posts both professional and social—patients want to be able to connect on a personal level with your practice, so don’t be afraid to share accomplishments of staff members or pictures from around the office. But also don’t forget that as a doctor, you are a trusted source of information for your patients. Keep it professional!

## Step 3: Own Your Online Listings

Keeping track of your practice's online reputation gives you the knowledge and the power to celebrate the good, clear up any misunderstandings, and fix the bad.

Many practices aren't aware that they have online listings on physician search and rating sites. These sites use the physician blue book and other sources to populate their pages. Most will allow you to own your information and make updates. Some offer more advanced features, such as online ads, for a fee.

### Manage your online listings

Find and own every listing that you can. You want all the information about your practice and providers to be as accurate and up-to-date as possible. And, you want to be able to add your website and social pages if you can. Some sites require the physician to approve changes and may even ask for an NPI to verify the physician is really signing off on the changes.

**HOW:** The best way to find all the sites where you are listed is to conduct Google searches several times over the course of two to four weeks. Create a spreadsheet to track the sites, links, available information, and current reviews or rankings. Repeat the process to find them all. Once you've collected them, go to each one and follow the instructions to confirm the listing information or make any changes. Don't forget about payer directories, medical societies, and patient communities. You might already have listings that should be updated or you may want to add one. If you are a rheumatologist, for example, consider listing your practice with local, regional, and national resources for patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

**WHY:** Accurate listings, particularly prominent ones like those in Google Places, help improve your ranking on search engines, which, in turn, raises your placement in online searches. In this way, taking ownership of your listings is about more than accuracy; it's about visibility and credibility.

### Provider-to-provider social networking

Networking is an important part of medicine, and online platforms provide new ways for healthcare providers to connect. Web and mobile applications help bring professional networking in healthcare into the 21st century—physicians and other clinicians can now reach out to each other and communicate with the click of a mouse. Some companies, like [Doximity](#), make these tools HIPAA compliant, which is essential for the transmission of patient information. As healthcare strives to increase efficiency and reduce costs, online applications make provider-to-provider outreach easy and affordable.

## Step 4: Be Responsive and Current

Nearly 82% of smartphone users do an internet search on their phones before making an online purchase, according to a 2018 survey conducted by BazaarVoice, a tech-based company that connects shoppers to online brand content. Their report, Research Online-Buy Offline, stated that 45% of American consumers read an online review before making a purchase.

In other consumer research, the annual PwC's Global Consumer Insights Survey reported that in 2017, nearly 40% of consumers globally rely on social media to make a purchasing decision. The opinions of friends and strangers on social

media was the top purchasing influence, followed by the business' website and price comparison.

When it comes to making a healthcare decision, the survey also found non-traditional health care providers, such as those located within retail locations, offered a more convenient and customer-centric approach to consumers than traditional healthcare clinics or physicians' offices. This should be a concern for healthcare providers of independent practices. The survey reported that more and more consumers are trusting non-traditional providers to receive healthcare



services such as a diagnosis for minor ailments, eye exams, and over-the-counter medicine. For traditional healthcare providers to continue to be successful with changing consumer behaviors, it's important that their practices are viewed as trustworthy and able to provide quality products when and where consumers need them. This is a key reason why it is important that your practice "brand" be part of the online conversation by having positive reviews, active social media platform(s) and a website that is updated and shows your practice in the best light.

Since 53% of those surveyed would trust a non-traditional provider to offer over-the-counter medicine, up from 42% in last year's survey – there is no time but the present to be part of the online conversation.

Whether it is a comment on your own social media page or on a third-party site, there are three things you need to do to effectively manage your online reputation:

1. Stay aware of online reviews
2. Respond to reviews and ratings whenever you can—good and bad
3. Encourage your patients to post reviews

Once you own all those listings, regularly check back for new reviews or ratings. It's important to know what people think of you. Keep track of what they say in

a spreadsheet and share the reviews at regular staff meetings so everyone else is aware, too. Use meetings to discuss any pending issues or challenges as well as celebrate your successes and good work.



## How to get and keep a new patient

- ✓ Patient journey starts online
- ✓ Establish a strong online presence
- ✓ Secure patient trust
- ✓ Successful acquisition relies on good customer experience
- ✓ Use digital to secure loyalty

## How to Respond—for Better or for Worse

It's important to respond to what people have to say. A simple thank you for a positive review is enough. But if the review is negative, consider these options:

1. **It's a general complaint or constructive criticism about a process or procedure in the practice:**
  - a. If it is a simple fix, do it and respond to the review by saying something like, "Thanks for letting us know about this problem. We value our patients' feedback and have addressed the issue in the following ways: [be specific]. We hope you'll give us another chance to deliver great care."
  - b. If it is more complex, simply say, "Thank you for letting us know. We are looking at how we can address this issue." If you are able to make changes, let them know.

### Negative Reviews Aren't All Bad

A ZocDoc study found that patients are willing to book appointments with doctors who have received some negative reviews—as long as their reviews aren't overwhelmingly negative.

It is not until a physician's overall rating falls to 2.5 stars out of five that patient preference for that provider significantly declines. In fact, of the 10 percent of doctors who receive the most appointments through ZocDoc, about 75 percent have at least one negative review.

Encouraging your patients to write reviews protects your practice's overall review score.



2. Someone is angry because of a legitimately bad experience. Respond quickly, apologize, keep the lines of communication open and offer to talk more about how to fix it and avoid having it happen again.
3. If it is inaccurate or inflammatory, many sites will allow you to appeal the review. If it is found to be inappropriate or unsubstantiated, you may be able to get it removed.

Encourage your patients to post reviews on sites, which list only verified patient reviews—making them more representative and trustworthy than other review sites. More often than not, your patients have great things to say about you and just need a reminder to do so. And their feedback can improve your overall ratings. For example, a practice with one negative review and three positives listed on a medical review site will receive a 66% recommendation score, while a practice with one negative and nine positives gets a 90% recommendation score. That's a big difference, and it's just because there are six more patient reviews posted for the second practice.

## Final Thoughts

In summary, using social media for your marketing efforts offers many benefits to your practice. Social media participation can help increase patient engagement, drive new patients to your practice, and give you an opportunity to share updates, give you exposure as a healthcare expert and build positive relationships with your patients. Here are some final tips to help you with your online social media marketing efforts:

- Understand the different social media channels and which are the best fit for your practice (see chart on page 8).
- Make sure your social media sites are properly optimized, consistent and organized.
- Hire or appoint someone from your office to help with regular interaction with followers and posting valuable content on social media to help grow your audience. Regularly posting of unique images and content for your practice will create consistent brand continuity.
- Provide links on your social media platforms that encourages patient engagement and helps in patients giving referrals to their friends and family.

In 2019, nearly 80 percent of the population in US had a social networking profile – a two percent increase from the year before.

(Source: Statista)

## About Kareo

Kareo is the leading cloud-based complete medical technology platform purpose-built to meet the unique needs of independent practices in more than 45 specialties. Today Kareo helps over 50,000 providers in all 50 states run more efficient and profitable practices, while delivering outstanding patient care. The Kareo technology platform is the first to help independent practices find more patients, manage their care with a fully certified and easy-to-use EHR, and get paid quickly all in one complete and integrated package. Kareo has received extensive industry recognition, including the Deloitte Technology Fast 500, Inc. 5000, and Black Book's #1 Integrated EHR, Practice Management and Medical Billing vendor, as well as ranking at the top of the Leader Quadrant in the FrontRunners Software Analysis of EHR. Kareo's growth further demonstrates the expansion and vitality of the independent practice market in the U.S. With offices across the country, Kareo's mission is to help independent practices succeed in an ever-changing healthcare market. More information can be found at [www.kareo.com](http://www.kareo.com).



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