

Bad Online Reviews and How to Respond to Them



It is important to address **every** online review – good or bad – publicly so that others reading the review will know you are responsive to patient communication and concerns.

Here's How to Respond

Here are some simple steps to addressing a bad review, potentially resolving the patient's complaint and showing possible future patients how you deal with patient concerns.

Don't get bent out of shape.

As much as we want to think that we do the best we can for every patient, we do make mistakes. I spoke with a patient recently and told her the practice had failed to send her prescription in and she was dumbfounded. "You mean you are actually admitting you made a mistake?" she said "That's so refreshing." We will all make mistakes, and we all must own them.

Read it. Go away. Come back and read it again.

First blush reads can be deceiving because we are instantly on the defensive. All healthcare is under the microscope and we are all peddling so hard to keep up that it's easy to feel that we are doing everything we can and resent anyone who thinks we could do better. If you let it go for 24 hours, when you come back and read it a again, it could read differently and may be not as harsh as we originally perceived it to be.

Address the online review and include:

- An **apology** acknowledging that the patient was

dissatisfied – regardless of the specifics or what you cautioned them about, you want patients to know you do not want them to be dissatisfied. This is not necessarily to admit that you did something “wrong”, but that if the patient feels something went wrong, you want to acknowledge their feelings and address them. This is not the forum to say “we told you this might happen...”

- **Reassurance** that patient care is the top priority in your practice.
- An **invitation** to contact the practice administrator to discuss the issue in more detail and review if anything could have been done differently. Include a phone number and email.
- **Edit, edit, edit.** Write it, let it sit for awhile, and come back and see if it reads the way you want it to. Have others read it and give their opinions. Less is often more when responding to a bad review.

Keep a copy of the online review and your response

Share with employees at a staff meeting. Make it a customer service teaching moment.

Contact the Patient

If you know who wrote the online review, contact the patient with an offer to discuss over the phone or face-to-face.

Keep in mind that the most important thing is to take the public sting out of the review by responding in an open, calm and compassionate way.

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13 Ways to Energize New Staff or Re-energize the Long Timers



Sometimes a job just gets a little old, and even the best employees need a little something to get them re-engaged and excited again. Try one of the ideas below at your practice and let me know in the comments the ways you keep your staff energized and engaged!

1. Provide a career track and offer multiple levels of learning jobs. For instance, break the receptionist job into steps (see below) and set time lines for attaining those goals. You may want several steps to be accomplished at 90-days, more at 6-months, and more at 12-months. There may be monetary awards, honor awards, or qualifications for other acknowledgements.

- *Pre-registering patients by phone – demographics*
- *Making appointments & mini-register for new patients*
- *Registering patients face-to-face – demographics*
- *Understanding insurance plans and registering their insurance*
- *Taking photo ID or taking photos*
- *Collecting co-pays*
- *Answering basic patient questions*
- *Answering advanced patient questions*
- *Reviewing the financial policy with patients*
- *Reviewing the Privacy Policy with patients.*

2. Offer certifications and credentials – support staff emotionally, time-wise and financially so they can attend face-to-face or online courses.

3. **Offer specific responsibilities** and the title of lead person for that responsibility – don't assume you know what staff are or are not capable of – they might surprise you!

4. **Meet every 6 months or every quarter to set goals.** A job can be a drag if there's nothing new to learn or to accomplish.

5. **Set up process improvement teams** to work on problems that everyone complains about – give them the responsibility to come up with solutions and try them out.

6. **Involve them in social media marketing of the practice.** Make sure they understand your social media plan (you do have a plan, don't you?), give them guidelines to work within and let them work on your website, your blog, and your Facebook page.

7. **Install a wiki** (many are free) and have them work on loading all the practice knowledge into the wiki. Have different staff responsible for different parts of the wiki and set goals for adding all the information that runs your practice every day.

8. **“Walk a Mile in My Shoes”** – this is also great for getting the clinical and administrative staff to understand each other better. Have the staff shadow each other and take turns seeing parts of the practice they don't know much about. I participated in this at a hospital several years ago and shadowed a nurse (and asked a million questions) for about an hour. It was wonderful! I felt better equipped to work with my hospitalist service after having been on a patient floor for just a short time.

9. If you are a practice that receives referrals from others, have staff responsible for regularly **touching base with staff from referring practices** and asking how service can be improved. Teach staff about relationship building and remember that it's the referring office staff (not the provider) that

often choose where the patient is referred.

10. Have staff take turns **going with you to meetings, seminars and local events** where you represent the practice and introduce them to everyone.

11. **Forward listserv discussions to employees** and have them monitor the discussions and bring things to you that they want to know more about.

12. Encourage employees to **become the practice expert** in a payer, an employer, a referrer, a process or a protocol and help them learn about their topic by sending them information from the web or your professional organizations.

13. Have the staff **put together an internal or external newsletter** and help them with concepts of internal and external marketing.

Why and How to Use QR Codes in Healthcare



As healthcare embraces technology to improve patient outcomes, streamline operations, and lower costs, the technologies with the most impact are the ones that Make Things Simpler.

One of the most basic ways to simplify a complex process to is remove friction

The electronic medical record removes the *friction* of paper records – finding, handling, storing, and securing them – all the things that can get between the critical information on the page and the physician who needs it. A smartphone removes the friction of needing to be near a desktop to read and send email, get contact information, and securely access practice and hospital documents and patient data. This technology provides value by simplifying a process to its core so that time, effort and resources are not wasted on mishaps, transportation, and basic human inertia.

Now, think about your practice's web content: the basic information and elevator pitch about your services that you want to communicate to existing and future patients. **Your content** is the reason you have a website in the first place and you should always be looking for ways to get eyeballs in front of it. Email lists, Facebook and Twitter, direct mail and practice brochures are all designed to connect people with your content to drive business to your practice. If someone sees a link to your content while they're at their computer, then the only friction you'll encounter is getting them to click to go to your page.

But what about all the mobile time your potential customers spend?

If they see an advertisement – TV, billboard, print – that has the URL (web address) you want to send them to, they will have to bypass a lot of potential friction before they see your content. They have to:

- Commit to going to the website later
- Remember the URL, and why they wanted to go to in the first place

- Follow through with this commitment and remember how and why they wanted to go to the page
- Type the URL into a browser

With social media and email campaigns that are usually accessed through internet enabled PCs or mobile devices, a simple link enables you to bypass all of this potential friction because there's a fairly good chance that your customer will either click the link immediately, or possibly bookmark it to check it out later (enabling a much easier recall). But with print, public, and televised advertising campaigns the odds are the customer doesn't have either:

1. An internet enabled device on them at the moment, or
2. The time or inclination to check out the website immediately- and if they did, they would encounter more friction typing the address into their mobile.

So how can you overcome this friction, and get the benefits of the simplicity of a link in a "real world" marketing situation? One way is with Quick Response (QR) codes.

A QR code is a two-dimensional barcode that can be quickly and easily read by a fairly simple piece of software to communicate a piece of information: text, or a phone number or other contact information, or a web address to direct a phone's web browser. Most of the QR Codes themselves are a small jumble of black and white pixelated dots that sort of resemble a "digital bacteria" or some sort of computer life form. But in many ways, Quick Response (or QR) codes are like hyperlinks that exist in our physical lives. By installing a small program on your phone, and then taking a picture of the code with your phone, you can immediately access the information embedded within.

- See a newspaper ad about a sale at one of your favorite stores, and scan the QR code to get a link to a coupon for an additional discount, or to register to be told

about other upcoming sales.

- See a TV commercial about a new restaurant, where scanning the code on TV leads your phone to a website to make reservations for dinner, or receive a special two-for-one deal.
- See a poster at a health fair booth and scan the QR code to get an instant calculator app that gives you easy exercise options for someone your age with your level of physical fitness.

By removing the friction of telling someone about web content without giving them the ability to access it automatically, QR Codes lubricate the entire person education process. A QR Code on a brochure can facilitate initial contact with the patient by sending them to a website to get more information, or book an appointment, whereas a phone number to call with more info, or even just the practice's web address means a patient is left to go the rest of the way on their own. On top of that, a QR code is a simple and effective way to improve your image as an organization on both a technical and user friendly front, and QR codes are flexible enough to handle a lot of different applications in your practice:

- Flyers about annual checkup services: (blood pressure, weight management, mammograms) that your patients see as they leave (often when most motivated to seek additional services) can include links to more information (general info sites, government warnings, approved resource sites, treatment communities) or redirect to content on your site or blog.
- Advertisements for surgical procedures and contain codes to access before and after pictures and patient testimonials, or to a landing page to submit requests for more information.

By streamlining the process of fulfilling a patient's request to "*tell me more*", QR Codes give practices an easy (and did I mention **free**) way to build relationships, influence patient

health choices and outcomes, direct patients to the content you choose for them, and even send the message that your practice is on the leading edge of technology.

Five steps to start using QR codes in your practice right away

1. **Decide** how QR Codes fit into your overall marketing and education effort. Which real-world situations do you want to link to web content?
2. Setting up a QR plan doesn't have to involve a big up-front expense. **Use free programs** like Kaywa (<http://qrcode.kaywa.com/>) to generate codes for your campaigns, and free readers like i-nigma for iPhone (<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/i-nigma-4-qr-datamatrix--barcode/id388923203?mt=8>) and QRDroid for Android (<https://market.android.com/details?id=la.droid.qr>) to get started right away
3. **Think carefully about where you place the codes themselves.** You want people to have access to the info, without making the code itself the center of the message. The code is the link to more, not the point of the marketing effort. And make sure people can see and frame the code easily enough that they don't struggle to scan it. Don't add friction now!
4. **Don't assume** everyone knows what the code is, or what to do with it. Give them a clear call to action, complete with instructions. "Scan this code with a QR reader to receive (learn more, find out, book now...)"
5. Make sure the payoff at the other end of the code is worth the effort. **Give them some real value** for their scan. It could be a discount, it could be exclusive, valuable, it could be a frictionless way to make an appointment with you (win-win!), but don't have people scan if the effort won't be rewarded with real value.

12 Ways to Supercharge Your Practice in 2012: #3 Create a Customer Service Culture

Is Your Practice Struggling?
Click Here for 12 ways to
SUPERCHARGE IT!



When do you think about customer service in your practice?

When things start heading downhill? You overhear something that surprises you, complaints seem to be on the rise and you think, “time for another customer service seminar.”

The problem with this, of course, is that customer service is a day-to-day relationship. If you wait until you recognize the signs of things heading in the wrong direction, it could be too late. Just like other relationships, customer service in your practice needs consistent attention and creativity to keep things fresh and in the forefront of everyone’s mind. Just like other relationships, customer service is a living thing that needs care and feeding.

Here is what Customer Service isn’t:

- A script.
- Regional casual endearments like honey, darlin’ or sugar.

- Talking to another employee about something unrelated to the patient in front of the patient.
- Telling the patient the physician is delayed due to an emergency when he's late because_____. (fill in your own answer)
- Having patients sign in, then shouting out to the waiting area for the patient to come back up to check in.
- Leaving patients in the examining room for longer than 15 minutes without checking in on them and giving them an update.
- Bad customer service means patients may not come back, they may tell 10 or more people about their experience and they'll probably give your practice a very bad review on Twitter, Facebook, Yelp, Angie's List, HealthGrades and 10 other rating sites.

Here is what Customer Service is:

- Seeing people as individuals and remembering something about each one of them (yes, you probably will have to write it down to remember it, but I'm sure your computer system has some place to write a note.)
- Setting the practice thermostats to a comfortable level for the patients, not the staff. If you can't get the thermostat to behave, tell every patient that the office is chilly and to bring a sweater or jacket. Buy a refurbished blanket warmer. Everyone loves a warm blanket!
- Inviting patients to roundtables to tell you what they like and don't like about a practice. Don't forget to invite the patients who are really, really mad at the practice – they give you the best information and can become your greatest advocates.
- Telling patients when they call for their first appointment that the doctor always runs late and that no matter what appointment time they get, they should

always come 30 minutes later. (Yes, you could try to retrain the physician, but I've never been able to, have you?)

- Excellent customer service means patients will feel good about coming back, they may tell 3 or more people about their experience and they might even give your practice a very good review on Twitter, Facebook, Yelp, Angie's List, HealthGrades and 10 other rating sites.

Customer Service is WHATEVER MAKES PEOPLE FEEL BETTER.

It is anything from saying "I'm sorry we didn't do the best that we could have for you," to providing a drink or a place to have a private conversation. We don't have to be perfect, we just have to have the desire to provide the perfect experience for each patient. Compassion is having no preconceptions about the other person and being willing to serve the other person's needs regardless of your own feelings about the person. It is taking "you" out of the equation.

Try this exercise with your staff. Tell them that none of the patients coming through the door today will be paying, except for one person. That one person will be paying for all the patients in your practice today, and that one person will make it possible for the practice to stay open and for the staff to receive their paychecks. However, no one will know which person is the one that is paying for everyone. How will the staff treat the patients today?

How do you create a culture of service in your practice?

1. **Your physicians model it.** The manager can be the most service-oriented person in the universe, but if the physicians don't model it, it's all over. The physicians

must be respectful. (Dear physicians, please don't stand outside exam rooms and tell jokes, or talk to drug reps or talk about other patients because I have never met the exam room wall that you can't hear right through. You upset the patients and make the staff uncomfortable.)

2. **You model it.** You prioritize patient complaints by meeting with patients and speaking with patients when they call. [You apologize.](#) You investigate their concerns.
3. **You recruit for it.** You tell applicants that this practice exists to be of service to others, and if that is not a concept they are comfortable with, this is not the job for them. If they want to be of service to others, ask them for some examples of how they have been of service in previous jobs and what they would intend to do here.
4. **You acknowledge good customer service** when you see it or hear about it from others. You may have a reward program in your practice for excellent customer service. You publish compliments about customer service in your newsletter or on a staff bulletin board.
5. **You establish clear expectations.** Speak respectfully to all people in the practice. Keep voices down. Smile. Patients often remember the "hello" and the "good-bye" the most – make them count. Be confidential. LISTEN and do not think you already know what every patient is going to say. [Read this.](#)
6. **You talk about it** in staff meetings. Someone told me once that there are only two reasons why people get angry – they're either hurt or they're scared. That has stayed with me for a long time. Teach employees to diffuse situations, to apologize sincerely, and help them by role playing the right answers to patients who are angry or disappointed or sick. Make sure everyone knows that patients have lots of choices for healthcare.
7. **You measure patient satisfaction.** You can measure it in

a BIG WAY or in a small way, but start to measure it. There are a number of very fine organizations who will develop custom patient satisfaction forms for you, distribute them, collate them and interpret them for you and get you started on the road to improvement. You can also brainstorm with your team about a customer service focus each month of the year, and see what improvement gets the most comments from patients. Try a greeter in the reception area, calling every patient who had a sick visit the previous day to check on their progress, a nurse visiting your patients in the hospital (not cared for by you), a limited house call schedule – they can be little things or big things – recipes for patients to take home, patient voting on a big ballot for the magazines they'd like to see in your waiting area and exam rooms...the ideas are endless.

What will you do this year to change customer service at your practice?

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SUPERCHARGE IT!**

How to Ask Your Patients to Leave Positive Feedback for You Online

Asking for feedback can be tough.

Asking for feedback as a physician or care provider is

unexplored territory for most practices.

My primary care provider has a simple and effective way to ask patients to leave feedback online.

At the checkout desk is a small pile of papers that look like this:



Note that the paper is simple, not slick, and the wording is humble. No one at the practice has ever called my attention to the little pile of papers.

Here is the text of the form:

PRACTICE NAME

Dear Sir/Madam:

Hope you received satisfying care at PRACTICE NAME.

We are trying to raise online visibility of PRACTICE NAME and would like to request you to write a short review of your experience.

You can write a review at Google.

1. Please go to <http://maps.google.com>
2. Search for "PRACTICE NAME CITY STATE"
3. Click on "more info"
4. Click on "Write a review" link

We sincerely appreciate your assistance.

DR. SMITH

DR. JONES

DR. BLACK

You could also direct patients to:

- Yelp
- Angie's List
- Your Facebook page
- Any physician evaluation website

Just don't ask patients to place comments on ALL these places. Choose one location at a time.

Don't fear negative comments. They will happen because no one is perfect. What will set you apart from others is your ability to answer concerns and resolve issues in a real way.

The Social Media Conversation

As social media matures and more healthcare groups gain experience using it, we understand more about it and the role it will play in the future of healthcare.

Last week, Abraham and I gave a program called "Starting the Conversation: An Introduction to Using Social Media In Healthcare" to a group of healthcare managers. We discussed social media's potential to influence patient satisfaction, which is expected to influence reimbursement.



You can download our program [here](#).

Resources from the presentation:

[AMA Social Media Guidelines](#)

[Ohio State Medical Association Social Media Policy](#)

[CDC Social Media Toolkit](#)

[Dose of Digital Wiki of Healthcare Communities and Websites](#)

[Pew Internet and American Life Project](#)
[Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media](#)
[Manage My Practice Social Media Posts](#)
[“Found in Cache” Social Media resources for health care professionals by Ed Bennett](#)
[Five Simple Rules for Social Business](#)
[Brian Solis Definition of Social Media](#)

My Talk: Introducing Social Media in Healthcare

Yesterday I had the pleasure of speaking to the Fayetteville (NC) Area Medical Group Managers Association (FAMMA) and we had a lively discussion about social media and healthcare. Here's the [link](#) that you can use to download my powerpoint presentation.

9 Ways Managers Can Change Healthcare in 2011



Healthcare is changing. It is changing to eliminate waste of money, time and resources. It is changing to make more care available with less providers. It is changing to empower patients to participate in their own care. How are you changing with the times in 2011? Here are 9 ideas.

1. Make your website **interactive**, clean-looking, **interactive**, friendly and **interactive**. Think of your website as your digital receptionist to your practice. If all your patients can do on your website is look up your phone number, you're wasting everyone's time. Patients want to register, make appointments, pay their bill, get their test results, chat online with a staff member, access their personal health record (PHR), watch videos and listen to podcasts you make or recommend. They do not want to wander around your phone tree or wait on hold.
2. Give your patients **information**, information, information. According to a MedTera study conducted in September 2010, 95% surveyed indicated that they are looking for more comprehensive information about disease management, and 77% said they hadn't received any written information about their illness or medications directly from the physician. See more details about what patients want [here](#).
3. Understand that people have different types of learning styles and **offer your practice and medical information in different ways**. Offer information via written and digital documents, videos, and podcasts. Offer support groups and group education for the newly diagnosed. Help patients build communities around your practice.
4. **Take down all those signs** asking people to turn off their cell phones. Cell phones are going to revolutionize healthcare so go ahead and bite the bullet and embrace them. For all you know the person on the cellphone when you walk in the exam room is texting "gr8 visit til now, wil i <3 doc?" (Great visit until now, will I love the doctor?)
5. **Eliminate the Wait**. Patients have much better things to do than wait in your practice. It doesn't matter why the provider's late – you're cutting into the patient's ability to make money and get things done. Text them to let them know the provider is running late. Text them

to let them know an earlier appointment is available. Give patients an appointment range (between 10am and 12N), then text them when their appointment is 20 minutes away.

6. Use a **patient portal** to take credit cards, keeping them securely on file and stop sending patients statements. Use the portal to deliver results and chat and email patients.
7. Stop fighting the tide and **let your staff use social media at work** – for work. Involve everyone in Facebook, Twitter and your website and blog. Using social media for communication and marketing is not a one-person job.
8. Form a **patient advisory board** and listen to what specifics your patients want from you. If people don't have time to attend a face-to-face meeting, **Skype** them in.
9. Think about **alternate service delivery models**, both in-person (group visits, home visits) and digitally (email, texting, Skyping, avatar coaches, home monitoring systems.) [Emotional technology](#) studies show that people can improve their health by accepting and utilizing technology in healthcare.

What do patients want in 2011? They want **information, communication and a real connection with you**. Use social media and technology innovations to make it happen.

Photo credit Image by [gumption](#) via Flickr

The Digital Story of the

Nativity as Told Through Social Media

This is My Application for a Spot on the Advisory Board for the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media



Image via Wikipedia

Recently the Mayo Clinic launched its Center for Social Media and announced the names of 13 well-suited social media stars to sit on its volunteer external advisory board. An additional 12 people will be chosen from nominations and applications. This post is my application.

I've been writing about social media in healthcare since I read [Phil Bauman's groundbreaking "140 Healthcare Uses for Twitter"](#) almost two years ago. The exciting potential for social media in healthcare settings is also cause for apprehension among administrators and clinical staff. What once was so hidden, so cloistered, so proprietary, so inscrutable is now emerging into the sunlight and is becoming collaborative, transparent, open, consumerist and available.

It's refreshing and scary.

I started my career in healthcare as a temp receptionist in an orthopedic office over 25 years ago. I have been a consultant, a private practice manager of small practices, a Chief Operating Officer of a very large practice. I've worked with physicians and care providers of all kinds in settings both rural and urban, for-profit and not-for-profit, and I have done most everything in healthcare except serve on the Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media Advisory Board. (hint)

For the talent portion of my program, I will be interviewing myself live.

Q: Tell us something interesting about yourself.

A: I was Butler County (PA) Junior Miss of 1976 (a brains pageant with some physical fitness thrown in for good measure.)

Q: What is your greatest regret?

A: I wish I had taken touch typing in high school.

Q: Are you a cat person or dog person?

A: A cat person but I get along well with dogs.

Q: Favorite charity?

A: My brother is a missionary in Ukraine and his organization (www.muchhope.org) helps disadvantaged children with food, clothing, healthcare and education.

Q: How do feel about shameless plugs?

A: I find them tacky, but ultimately necessary.

Q: What social media apps do you use?

A: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, GoAnimate, Wellsphere, WordPress Blog

Q: What is your favorite social media app for healthcare?

A: Ummm. Pass.

Q: Why you?

A: Why not me? I'm a patient, a mom, a wife, a healthcare manager, a social media groupie, a blogger, a reader, a thinker, a cartoonist, a learner, a writer, an observer of life. Every board needs me.

Q: What is the future of social media in healthcare?

A: Mobile, for sure, and I think QR codes have tremendous promise.

Q: What is your favorite social media app for healthcare?

A: Facebook. The potential is unlimited.

Q: Last question: "healthcare." One word or two?

A: One.

NOTE: If my beloved readers wish to support my appointment to the MCCSM Advisory Board, please Tweet about me with the hashtag #mccsc, leave a comment on the MCCSM blog [here](#), or send an email of support to socialmediacenter@mayo.edu. Thank you!