



PRACTICE POTENTIAL

Learn How to Leverage Patient Reviews to Help Grow Your Practice

Matt Prados | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

A [recent survey](#) confirmed 88 percent of people trust online reviews as much as they trust a personal recommendation.¹ That's a powerful statistic – especially for acupuncturists who want to gain a deeper understanding of patient behavior. Because understanding why patients read reviews, how they read them, and where they read them presents new opportunities on how to leverage reviews to grow your practice.

Who Reads Reviews: Rise of the Online Shopper

To understand why reviews are so important when making buying decisions, we must first understand the psychology of the online shopper. While online shopping started with the rise of e-commerce technology in the 1960s, it wasn't until the '90s that we saw the first secure online purchases.

By 2003, more than 20 percent of Americans had broadband in their homes, and online sales increased by 26 percent.² This cemented consumer trust in the Internet. By 2010, online stores began to optimize the online shopping experience.

Stores went online. And consumers used their cellphones to buy. They also used their phones to research the products and services they intended to buy.



But it wasn't always sunshine and rainbows when buying online. In the late '90s, eBay and the Better Business Bureau were the only two places to see reviews. In 2002, Google acquired Deja and Google Reviews was born. In 2004, Yelp came onto the scene. In 2012, businesses started to actively acquire reviews. And today, reviews are integrated with Google Maps, Apple Maps, Amazon, Facebook and more. This shift in culture has made shopping more safe.

Why Read Reviews: The Easiest Path to Making a Buying Decision

Product or service research became a new habit in the consumer journey. This habit continues today, with a recent study that found 97 percent of consumers read local business reviews.

Your patients are shoppers; they share the same shopping behaviors as everyone else. So, before they select an acupuncturist, they read reviews to justify their selection.

Our minds have an incredible ability to adapt and take the shortest route possible when making decisions. Rather than read all the reviews, your patients are likely reading a handful of reviews and deciding "good enough" when they make their final decision. Studies show "good enough" is about 7-8 reviews.

So, with a better understanding of why patients read reviews, and how exactly they read them, you might be wondering: *Where do patients read reviews?*

Beyond Google Reviews: Where Patients Read Reviews Today

Here are a few places to leverage reviews for your practice:

Online review sites: BrightLocal found that Yelp and Facebook were consumers' most trusted source of customer reviews in the U.S., so make sure your practice is registered and up-to-date.

You can check out the [top online review sites](#), sorted by average monthly U.S. traffic:³

Your personal website: Reviews on your personal website capture cold leads that find you through organic traffic. Reviews turn cold prospects into warm leads by building credibility right on your site. Combine this with an "online scheduling" tool, and you can start to capture leads 24/7 without much effort.

Your emails to new patients and existing patients: Reviews on your emails build credibility and increase repeat patients. You can show reviews in the email body or send marketing campaigns to show off new reviews.

Social profiles like Facebook and Instagram: Make sure to claim your business Facebook page so potential customers can find you (and learn more about you) without having to leave their social network. Social sites like Facebook and Instagram reward high levels of responsiveness, so make sure you assign someone to monitor incoming messages across the channels you're trying to optimize for new-customer acquisition.

Television: Have a TV in your waiting room? Having education is great, but add some flashing social proof in the form of reviews and watch your new-patient sign-up rate and PVA start to climb.

Posters: You can get creative with brand-awareness posters and place them directly in your office. Think about it: Patients often visit your office with family members or friends who may need that extra social proof to become patients themselves.

Stickers: These can also provide acupuncturists with an effective strategy to spread social proof around the neighborhood. Stickers come in all shapes and sizes depending on the print house you choose. Once printed, you can place stickers on glass entrance ways, on your vehicle and/or in public places.

Landing pages: A landing page catches traffic from front-end online advertisements. Sometimes it's called a "squeeze page." Because traffic is usually cold, reviews should be broken up to show quantity and quality of individual reviews. That way, you'll amplify the social proof and back up your claims.

Billboards: There were approximately 450,000 billboards on U.S. highways in 1991. Somewhere between 5,000 and 15,000 are erected each year. Clearly, they work. And they work even better with reviews broadcasting your amazing services.

Print advertising: This can be direct-mail campaigns in the form of letters, postcards and magazines. You can also print flyers to hand out. This form of advertising allows you to pack in tons of rich, quality content to help your patients learn about your services.

Business cards: Finally, don't forget about business cards. You can show your average customer reviews right on the back to provide social proof.

Practice Pearls

There you have it. That's everything you need to know about leveraging the amazing power of reviews. Don't be overwhelmed by all the information; start in one place and grow campaigns from there. That way, you can start using reviews today to bring in new patients, increase retention and scale your practice.

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