



MARKETING TOOLS

## Reviews Are the New Referrals

Matt Prados | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

Every successful acupuncturist knows it: Without a consistent flow of new patients, it's nearly impossible to grow or sustain your business. Every practitioner wants more referrals to generate that consistent flow, but getting patients to proactively make those introductions is an uphill battle.

People talk less to each other in person and instead have their attention consumed by electronic devices. Just walk around and look at people and how they communicate. Even when they are at dinner with friends and family, they are on their phones.

Word-of-mouth referrals used to be the only way people would hear about a business. But today, person-to-person, live talking has been replaced to a large degree with person-to-other-persons posts online instead.

It's safe to say that many acupuncturists still think online reviews don't matter as much as where your friend goes to get adjusted, right? But it's just not true: The number of acupuncturists who can attract new patients by word of mouth alone is super small and shrinking every day.

In an Amazon World, Your Online Reviews Matter

As the internet continues to grow (with no signs of stopping any time soon), online reviews are dominating the way patients make decisions. Think about the last thing you bought from Amazon, for example. There were multiple options / products to choose from; reviews helped guide your decision. You probably looked at the reviews, noted how many the product had, and the star rating; that was the tipping point in making your decision. Patients will do the same thing when choosing between your online listing vs. the chiropractor down the street.

Even when a patient hears about your practice from a friend or family member, one of the first things they're going to do is research your practice online to see what other people are saying.

They want to see your reviews; better yet, they trust these reviews even though they're from total strangers. Research shows that [84 percent of people](#) trust online reviews as much as recommendations from friends and family.<sup>1</sup>

So, you can cross your fingers and hope your patients actually send referrals your way ... or you can put systems in place to guarantee you grow your reviews, which will have a powerful buying influence on new patients for years to come.

### Online Reviews Boost Your Rankings

When people talk about you in the real world, it doesn't help boost your rankings online. But when they leave relevant reviews online, at a constant, steady pace, you get a consistent boost on Google.

An estimated [61 percent of patients](#) search for a health care practitioner online *before* scheduling an appointment with them.<sup>2</sup> If you can't easily be found online, it's costing your practice hundreds of thousands of dollars every year.

There are thousands of patients searching online in your town every year. Imagine new patients finding you online solely based on your massive number of reviews. Each review is an asset that will help you for years and years.

Stay away from "gimmicks" that have you spending time, energy and money on incentives. Not only does this not work, but it's also illegal. It's not worth it just to get a handful of reviews in a short period of time that end up disappearing.

### Online Reviews Lead to Action

The average person reads through approximately 10 reviews before making a decision.<sup>3</sup> Patients want the best care; that means they will choose the acupuncturist with more reviews and a better star rating.

There's no doubt about it: Online reviews make people take action. While word of mouth can be a great way to make potential new patients aware of your practice, you still need a good online reputation to hook those word-of-mouth referrals and turn them into patients.

### References

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