



Reputation Matters

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How to Read this Book

This book gives you a proven, three-part process to use reputation marketing to consistently attract new patients to your dental practice. I've taught this process to over 20,000 dentists one-on-one, in small groups, and in large settings at conferences around the United States. I've also consulted with hundreds of dental practices to help them grow their practice through dental marketing.

The dentists who get the best results from reputation marketing understand that the reason this process works is just as important as the specific steps to implement the process. When they understand why each step is important and how that relates to their goals, their success skyrockets. Because of that, my teaching is very hands-on. Unlike many speakers and trainers who ask people to silence their phones and put them away, I ask people to take out their phones, and I walk them through exercises to show them exactly why this is important and how to experience things as if they're potential patients looking for a dentist.

I'm going to do the same for you in this book, not only walking you through the proven, three-step reputation-marketing process, but also showing you why it works so well, and walking you through some exercises to help you experience how powerful this plan can be for your practice if you implement it.

As you're reading, stop and perform the exercises I give you at the end of each chapter before moving onto the next. This will put the information

you just read into a proper context and set you up to better receive the information from the next chapter.

If you prefer to read the book straight through, I highly suggest you go back through a second time to reread each chapter and complete the exercises.

Any way you read it, the only way it will benefit you is if you implement the plan in your practice. **Unless you implement your education, you've only been entertained.**

While this book will certainly entertain you, my purpose in writing this book isn't to just entertain you.

The reason I wrote this book is to help you achieve the freedom and peace that comes when you no longer have to worry about where your next patient will come from, if you'll be able to pay your bills, or whether you can afford to take time off for a much-needed vacation. That freedom only comes from implementation, not entertainment. Do the exercises and then implement the plan.

And if you need help or have any questions along the way, just call me.

I'm here to help.

Introduction

How would it feel to almost effortlessly attract dozens of new, ideal patients to your dental practice each and every month?

What would it do for your practice if those new patients came in already trusting you, so you didn't have to constantly convince people to accept your treatment plans?

How would you like to have your practice naturally rise to the top of Google's search results without having to spend thousands of dollars on expensive search-engine-optimization campaigns?

Finally, how would it feel to not have to worry that one unhappy and unreasonable patient could bring you down by posting a one-star review about you online?

In 2007, when I bought my dental practice, none of that was possible. Dental-practice marketing was expensive and ineffective. Practice building took years of slow growth using traditional advertising such as YellowPages or newspaper ads, word-of-mouth patient recommendations, direct mail campaigns, and building relationships with insurance plans.

The website Yelp! had been around for a few years, and other review sites were gaining popularity. Patients could reach thousands of people by posting a review about your practice online, good or bad. That was an exciting but scary proposition for many dentists.

That's the environment I faced after purchasing my dental practice in 2007, from the estate of a dentist who had just committed suicide. Marketing as it had traditionally been done in the dental world back then was expensive or ineffective, and patients were more active online than ever. With a new \$18,000-per-month practice loan payment on top of the operating expenses, student loans, and personal financial obligations, I was pretty overextended financially and didn't have thousands of dollars to pour into traditional advertising or the time to wait for word-of-mouth to spread. I had a practice to run. On top of that, the practice was in rough shape, as you might imagine with a practice that had been run by a dentist who tragically took his own life.

I tried to build the practice as best I could for the first couple of years, but it was a struggle, and I needed a better and more cost-effective way to attract new patients to my practice. I needed to market my practice without adding thousands of dollars in costs to the already-high operating expenses and debt service.

After searching everywhere for an answer, I recognized a gap between how people shopped for dentists and how dentists were marketing. Specifically, by that time, online reviews had become mainstream in many industries, with consumers routinely searching Google for a company and reading online reviews before doing business with them, even if they were recommended by a friend. This was true across industries, from buying products, eating at a restaurant, and even choosing a doctor or dentist. I had seen this in action with my patients

and had done the same as well. The problem I had, though, was I had virtually no online presence. My practice was barely visible online. I spent the next several weeks searching for a marketing solution that would help me build a strong online presence, so when patients searched for a dentist in my area, they'd both find me and decide that I was the right dentist for them. I also wanted patients who went online to search for me after being referred to me by a relative or friend to want to make an appointment with me based on what they found online.

The three-part reputation marketing plan that would revolutionize dental-office marketing.

I knew I needed to accomplish three things if I wanted to market my practice this way. First, I needed to get found online. That meant my practice needed to rank high on Google search results, the largest search engine in the world. Second, I needed to get found in a compelling way. That meant that what prospective patients saw when they found me online needed to encourage them to make an appointment with me. Third, I needed a simple process to monitor and protect my online reputation. That meant I needed a way to make sure I knew what was being posted about me online and had a plan to protect myself from being vulnerable to negative reviews.

After searching everywhere for a simple solution that would accomplish those three things, I came up blank. Even worse, not only was there no real solution available, there wasn't even any good place to teach me how to accomplish those three things. The only things I found were

partial, *reputation-management* options. None of them accomplished all three aspects of my plan. I wasn't looking to *manage* my reputation. I needed to *market* my reputation. That's different.

Reputation *management* is unfocused, reactive, and ineffective. It's an old term that makes me cringe. Reputation management is essentially trying to get bad reviews off the first page of Google search results. It doesn't work and won't attract new patients to your practice. Even worse, it's a distraction from the best way to attract new patients to your practice, which is through reputation marketing.

Reputation marketing is the focused, proactive, and effective practice of building your online presence and reputation to increase your search rankings, encourage patients to visit your practice, and protect against potential negative reviews or stories. Reputation marketing is essentially a combination of the controllable and most useful elements of reputation management with the most effective brand-marketing techniques. I wanted a reputation *marketing* solution.

The search for automatic and predictable practice growth

Having found no existing reputation marketing software solutions, I decided to build my own, so in 2009, I hired a developer to create one, which I called iSocialReviews. The first version of iSocialReviews wasn't a perfect solution, but it filled all the gaps in the market and helped me automate collecting and promoting patient reviews online while protecting against potential negative reviews.

After a significant testing and further development, I built iSocialReviews into the only comprehensive reputation-marketing software in the market.

In 2009, I had 279 new patients come to my practice. It was my third year at my practice. Most of my marketing in 2009 was pay-per-click advertising, although I started testing reputation marketing that year as well. Given that, about twenty-five new patients a month was pretty good for a fee-for-service practice almost entirely reliant upon pay-per-click to attract new patients.

By 2010, my reputation-marketing initiatives had started taking shape. In 2010, I had 768 new patients, or sixty-four new patients a month. I was so busy that I didn't take a single day off in 2010 other than major holidays. I did nothing different in 2010 other than adding the three-part reputation marketing plan with help from iSocialReviews. I've continued to do the same to this day, only continuing the pay-per-click campaign that has generated a decent return on top of software-assisted reputation marketing.

In 2011, the numbers were similar, with 763 new patients and no days off. Then 2012 was much of the same, with 780 new patients and no vacation. By this point, my reputation-marketing plan was working almost too well. I had more business than I could handle and was burning out. I couldn't do it anymore. I had other things I wanted to do with my life. I had discovered a dental-marketing plan that was better than any other on

the market and developed software to implement it. It made marketing my dental practice almost too easy, and I wanted to help other dentists take the stress and worry of marketing off their minds. I also wanted to spend more time with my family. To do both of those things, I needed to cut back on office hours, so at the beginning of 2013, I decided I would accept fewer patients, so I could consult more and spend time with my family. Despite that, my schedule remained full and patients regularly poured in, with between 480 and 525 new patients each year since then, depending on how many days I work. I now attend about thirty trade shows per year and spend much-needed time with my wife and son.

As I cut down my schedule in 2013, I decided to begin offering reputation-marketing consulting services and access to iSocialReviews to other dentists. My first attempt to attract consulting customers was at the 2013 Yankee Dental Congress, where I set up a booth for the first time. To my excitement, ten people subscribed to use iSocialReviews with my help. I was pleasantly surprised. Shortly thereafter, ten became twenty, thirty, fifty, and one hundred, until eighteen months after first offering iSocialReviews to others, 180 dental practices were using it to attract great new patients to their practice on a regular basis.

After building iSocialReviews beyond just serving my practice, the software caught the attention of a much larger company called BirdEye, who wanted to buy the software from me. It was a great opportunity to expand the software beyond dentistry and get help from a larger company to serve my iSocialReview consulting clients.

In 2014, we negotiated a deal where BirdEye bought iSocialReviews and brought me on board to lead their Dental Vertical. This freed me up to focus on what I loved most, reputation-marketing consulting and continuing to practice dentistry. BirdEye and I now help over 1,700 dentists with their reputation marketing, and BirdEye uses the software to help another 20,000 businesses in other industries.

I continue to run my practice, consult with dentists and dental practices, and run BirdEye's dental vertical, traveling to between twenty and thirty-five dental trade shows a year, doing what I love most: educating dentists on how to implement a reputation-marketing plan for their practice that is not only more effective than traditional marketing, but also much more affordable. I've taught over 20,000 dentists how to use reputation marketing to build their practices through seminars, consulting, and online learning platforms.

Reputation Marketing is More Important Than Ever

Gone are the days where there's only one dentist per town, and everyone visits that practice. Every year, new batches of dentists flood the market, competing for the same batch of customers as you. At the same time, patients are more mobile and savvy than ever, and don't just choose the closest dentist to their home or office.

Because of that, dentists can't be just dentists these days. They also need to be marketers. The key is to market in a way that is predictable

and relates to how people actually choose dentists. A comprehensive reputation-marketing campaign is the best way to do that, much better than direct mail, traditional advertising, a blog, or search-engine-optimization campaigns.

It helps you use what people are already doing—talking online—to direct new patients to your practice. It also helps you get noticed where people already are, on Google and Facebook. Finally, it helps you stand out from other dentists by having your patients sing your praises in far greater numbers and on a continuous basis, so you can have the greatest volume of relevant and recent positive experiences posted about you.

Since 2009, when I first started using reputation marketing to grow my practice, the impact of reputation marketing has exploded in growth for these reasons and more. The internet is more developed than ever, and more dentists have websites, social media accounts, and pay-per-click campaigns than ever before. That means there's more competition for search engine results than ever before. Because of that, it's more necessary than ever to implement a proven formula for getting found online.

Additionally, study after study confirms that building online reviews in a systematized way is critical to attracting new patients to a dental practice (and most other business, too). For example, people who search for you online will now read and see your customer reviews before they consider looking at your website, yet people spend thousands of dollars

developing websites that people will never visit because they have no online presence outside of their sites. In fact, one study reported that 84% of consumers said they trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. Moreover, consumers even trust reviews from unknown users more than expert opinions and advertising, with 70% trusting unknown users compared to 27% who trust experts and 14% who trust advertising. Over two-thirds of patients say online reviews make them trust businesses more, a necessary precursor to buying from someone.

Building a Simple Reputation-Marketing Plan

This book teaches you the exact reputation-marketing process I used to attract hundreds of new patients to my practice each and every year, and the same process I've used to help thousands of other dentists do the same.

First, I'll walk you through a proven method for getting found online. This includes more than just generating reviews, although reviews are an important part of it. You need to also make sure your practice is listed property everywhere Google looks to determine importance and relevance. I'll show you how to do that. You also need to make sure to effectively use social media to grow your practice. I'll show you a simple way to utilize social media as part of your reputation-marketing plan.

Finally, I'll introduce the importance of reviews to getting found online. Second, I'll walk you through making sure you're found in a compelling way. The main way dentists do this is with a simple online-review

campaign. I'll teach you every step to do this in your practice, with or without software assistance from a company like BirdEye. This is important because even though BirdEye software is automatic, simple, and effective, you need to know the steps it takes for you and why they're important in order to maximize the value for your practice. Thus, I'll show you the exact steps to building many great online reviews for your practice, so when people find you, they will want you to be their dentist.

I'll show you how to handle negative reviews and why negative reviews can actually be a good thing for your reputation-marketing plan. People are already talking about you online. When people have bad experiences, they talk about you online. That can turn potential patients away. Those negative reviews, if left alone, can be toxic to your practice, but a carefully nurtured and managed online reputation can attract new patients and even turn negative reviews to a positive. Ignoring your online reputation is like throwing money away, because bad experiences that go unresolved will end up on the internet. That will turn into a bad reputation and cost you money, because the next people who find you online will move on to the next dentist.

This is one of my favorite topics to teach about, because many dentists fear negative reviews. Although they're still not something I actively solicit, I'll show you how to make sure you're protected from negative reviews and what to do if someone posts one about you.

I'll also show you how to seamlessly incorporate the collection of online reviews into your practice. Again, this is an area where software can simplify the process of soliciting and collecting reviews, speeding up the process of your practice showing up in a compelling way on search results, but it's important to understand the process as well. I'll show you the process so you can get started right away, with or without software simplification.

Finally, I'll help you monitor and protect your online reputation with a proactive marketing focus. The primary way this is accomplished is by creating a reputation culture in your office. A reputation culture is the best way to benefit everyone involved in your practice, from your patients, to team members, and you. I'll show you exactly how to do this in your practice, so your patients are happier and your employees are satisfied with their work. You'll learn exactly how to monitor and build reviews as a natural part of your operations.

Preparing to implement your Reputation Marketing plan

Before you move on, remember, education without implementation is just entertainment. I don't want to just entertain you here. I want to help you succeed. That can only happen if you implement the plan I'll share with you here. The first step to do that is to start getting found more online.