

How To Handle Online Haters

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“Practices need to get involved if they want to thrive in the future.” - *Eric D. Garcia*

Whether your practice has been around for a few days or a few decades, I can promise you that one thing is consistent between both:

Your online reputation is either driving people toward, or away from, your veterinary practice.

Unfortunately, if you haven't started to secure positive reviews online to both maintain and enhance your reputation, you run the risk of the many pitfalls that may follow. Something as simple as a Google Review can actually have profound implications on your business and whether or not you're securing the volume of pet owners that your practice is capable of.

While I once wrote specifically addressing the impact of Google on your online reputation as a whole (at simplydonetechsolutions.com/safeguarding-reputation), I will focus more on the power of Google Reviews and how to leverage this resource to enhance your business, maintain a stellar reputation, and increase engagement from pet owners in the process.

When pet owners have a positive experience with your veterinary practice but don't leave a review, this encounter doesn't have the long-term impact it's capable of having.

Yes, the client was satisfied by their experience. But there's nothing over the long haul to prove it, enhance your reputation, or otherwise garner a testimonial for future marketing. This can harm your overall visibility and consequently decrease the number of referrals you're receiving from Google. This is far from marginal, because Internet referrals from sites such as Google (or competitors like Bing and Yahoo!) **now account for one of the top three sources veterinary practices receive clients from.**

That's right, these online resources account for one-third of new business, which of course equates to vast amounts of annual revenue. While traditional word of mouth is still a powerful tool necessary for securing new clients, your online reputation is something like a **digital word of mouth**, which reverberates far and wide to pet owners who are searching for reliable care. There's no ignoring this reality, which leaves a more permanent footprint than traditional word of mouth and can't be underemphasized in the modern digital age. It's more important now than ever to begin securing new reviews as soon as possible.

This is partially because practices that have no reviews online are the most vulnerable. If this practice, who has not previously established their online reputation, receives a single negative review, **this is the only thing that prospective clients will see online.**

This can be detrimental for both new and existing business, as a negative review can cause doubt for new prospective client owners and even serve as a red flag to current clients of your veterinary practice.

That's why when veterinary practices approach me to ask where to start when it comes to their marketing efforts, I always tell them the same thing:

Start by looking at your online reviews!

Your online reputation is the cornerstone of your success and will likely dictate future success as well. Even clients who ask me for a marketing strategy but haven't worked extensively on their online reputation receive the same reply. We may be able to create a fantastic brand with clear, beautiful messaging and a sleek, modern website, but it won't do anything if your practice doesn't have a great reputation online.

Practices must get involved with online reputation management, paying very close attention to Google Reviews, if they want to thrive both now and into the future.

The difference between a practice with a 3-star ranking and a 4-star ranking can make a major impact in your ability to market yourself and secure new business.

This is especially true when a single-star can impact your ability to appear in the map section of the first page of a Google search. A huge amount of traffic and attention goes toward the results that appear first, and practices with lower scores will get buried in online search results. This is because Google selectively filters the results of veterinary practices based on the reviews they secure online.

It's actually in Google's best interest to do this, because providing results of higher-rated veterinary practices tends to enhance the search experience for pet owners, who are typically looking for the best resource available in their local area. If a pet owner searches (let's say, in the Tampa, Florida region for example) and only finds veterinary practices with 2- and 3-star reviews, they'll likely keep searching. Instead, Google wants to streamline search results and deliver the best results possible to the user on the very first try.

That's why practices with 4- and 5-star ratings often overwhelmingly appear first in search results!

This may not occur if a rural area doesn't have a wide-selection of veterinary practices to choose from, but it will always be the case if there is competition in the marketplace.

Ok, let's try a little pop-quiz to see how it works. Let's say I find three veterinary practices during a Google search, and they have the following reviews:

Practice A.) 3-star rating with 10 reviews.

Practice B.) 4-star rating with 12 reviews.

Practice C.) No reviews.

In this common scenario, where would you go?

Statistically speaking, almost all those surveyed will choose **Practice B**. Practice B may not have the best veterinarians, the best service or even the best equipment. Still, their online reputation will land them countless new clients, as it's simply our nature to

gravitate toward the most secure solution. Practice B has the highest rating overall, and this lets us feel secure in our decision when taking our pet there.

By taking ownership over your online reputation, you can leverage Google Reviews to garner new business and make sure your visibility is maximized online.

Get involved by following these simple steps:

- (1) **Claim your business with Google and list your hours, phone number, location, and photos. This is your chance to ensure your listing is accurate and displays vivid imagery to attract new pet owners.**
- (2) **Reply to positive reviews as they come in! Engage with pet owners who have taken the time to submit a review and show appreciation for those brand advocates for supporting you.**
- (3) **Make sure to solicit new reviews, especially from pet owners who are delighted after their appointment. You can simply ask clients to leave a review, and send a follow-up email clearly explaining how to leave a review for your practice.**

It's important to make leaving a review as easy as possible for your client, so feel free to print a step-by-step guide that ensures all types of pet owners know how to leave a review. There are also services available, such as [AllyDVM](#), [Vetstreet](#), [ePetHealth](#), [Rapport](#), [Banyan](#), or [Testimonial Tree](#), which can help you to secure reviews by integrating directly within your practice management software and sending surveys.

By enlisting the help of one of these recommended services, you'll gain the peace of mind that comes from knowing that only clients who leave great survey results, will be asked to go a step further by leaving you a review online. Those who had a less glowing experience will be asked if they're open to discussing their experience, allowing you an opportunity to address their concerns and enhance your veterinary practice accordingly.

No matter the route you choose, understanding and leveraging the impact of Google Reviews will allow you to increase customer satisfaction, enhance your practice, and engage with new clients – contributing to a level of future success you may have once never imagined possible.



About the Author: Eric Garcia is an IT expert. Digital marketer. Industry thought leader. When it comes to helping veterinary practices streamline their technology and attract and retain clients, Eric Garcia has a proven track record of educating the industry and producing results. Eric is an IT and Digital Marketing consultant working exclusively with veterinary practices. In addition to a long list of satisfied clients, Garcia's work has been recognized throughout the industry. He speaks regularly at conferences all throughout the world. **Facebook:** [facebook.com/EricGarciaFL](https://www.facebook.com/EricGarciaFL) **Instagram:** [@EricGarciaFL](https://www.instagram.com/EricGarciaFL)

