

Healthcare Whitepaper

# Reputation Management for Healthcare Organizations

## Build a Better Online to Offline Patient Experience

Whether a patient seeks a new healthcare plan, doctor, specialist, pharmacy, facility, or service, a majority of consumers today begin their search online. Many start with Google or ask for referrals in a local Facebook group. Then they'll hop over to Yelp to look up reviews and ratings to guide their final decision.

Regardless, prospective patients will almost certainly land on a search listing or profile before they ever make it to your website — and what they see often determines whether they choose your practice or go somewhere else.

The question is, has your healthcare organization put time and energy into optimizing your local listings to make sure you're making an excellent first impression on potential patients? If the answer is no, you're risking more than you realize.

**There are many compelling reasons to optimize your healthcare brand's online presence. For example, Nielsen data reveals that among patients searching Yelp for medical businesses:**



**91%** of 18-34-year-olds trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations.

**81%** look for service providers they can visit multiple times.

**73%** are between the ages of 18 and 49.



## Optimizing Your Online Presence Is Vital

Any healthcare organization that hasn't prioritized optimizing its digital presence is doing patients a disservice. But what does "optimize your digital presence" really mean? And why is it so important?

- **The search for healthcare services begins online.**

According to a healthcare reputation report, in 2018 a mere 9% of patients searched online for information about a provider. By 2020, that number increased to 68%.

- **Ratings and reviews play a major role in patient decisions.**

Patients want to read positive reviews about their doctors. But, 65% of physicians have zero reviews.

## 4 Approaches to Improving Your Healthcare Organization's Online Reputation

Patients want to find accurate medical care information, fast. In response to this, major pharmacy chains, CVS and Walgreens, are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into digital health solutions, including voice integration tools that help consumers find services faster. Amazon is dipping into the prescription market, and major insurance companies are overhauling their apps and digital presence to catch up to meet patient needs and expectations.

**To stay competitive, consider these four strategies:**

### 1: Local listings

"Near me" searches, conducted in real-time to locate services close by, increased by 136% in 2021. As more people turn to local search in a moment of need, healthcare systems must be able to provide people with the information they want the second they want it. Being able to access accurate local listings—including any business profile that contains your business name and contact info—like a Google Maps record—is the key to connecting with more consumers.

However, 85% of patients have found inaccurate information on a business listing in the last year, showing that there's lots of work to be done. Incorporate the best practices discussed in this guide and prioritize optimizing your brand to set your practice up for long-term success.

### 2: Patient reviews

Given that 84% of patients consult online reviews before selecting a healthcare provider, and 70% of Americans say online ratings and review sites have influenced their decision when choosing a physician, it's critical to manage your practice's reputation effectively.



Increase in online search for provider information from 2018 to 2020





Start by identifying who in your office is responsible for monitoring and responding to reviews and work together to develop best practices. Be sure to incorporate the tips we discuss in this guide for optimal results.

### 3: Voice search query visibility

With the popularity of mobile assistants like Siri and smart home hubs like Alexa on the rise, voice engine optimization is steadily becoming more important for healthcare facilities looking to maintain a competitive edge.

Reviews, listings, rank, and pages are the four key SEO factors that impact local and voice search visibility. Take the time to optimize your business in these areas to increase engagement, reach, rank, and your ability to be found by potential patients.

### 4: Location-specific landing pages

It's becoming increasingly important for healthcare organizations to create website landing pages with location-based information including hours, local phone numbers, provider and practice descriptions, etc. as well as links to book appointments.

## 3 Steps Healthcare Organizations Can Take to Boost SEO and Attract New Patients

### Step 1: Maintain accurate local listings

For years, local listing optimization revolved around having an accurate business name, address, and phone number. Now, listings have evolved, and it's essential to make sure that each of your listings has an accurate and consistent name, address, phone number, website, category, hours of operation, and description. 25% of the weight in Google's ranking criteria applies to "Google Business Profile" optimization, which includes each element listed above.

Analysis of the top 10 healthcare systems revealed that their listing accuracy averaged 83% in 2019 and increased to 91% in 2020. We encourage businesses in the healthcare sector to aim for 95% listing accuracy for optimal visibility. Any deviation from that 95%, even if it's small, can make a significant difference in your facility's ability to be found. Why?

Listing accuracy and consistency make up 36% of the weight Google uses to determine where your business appears in search results and how easily it can be found in a 'near me' map search. Even minor inaccuracies affect your rank—and your trustworthiness among consumers.

95%

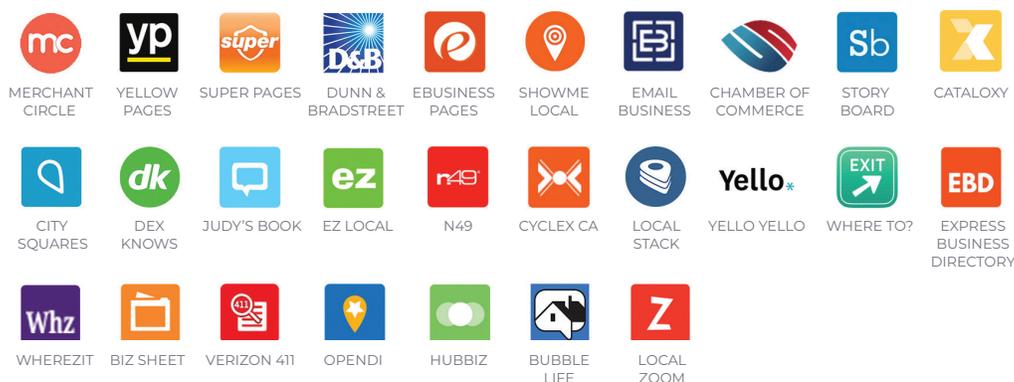
Healthcare businesses need 95% Listing Accuracy for optimal visibility

Where should you prioritize optimizing listings first? We recommend focusing on tier 1 sites, including Google, Apple, Facebook, Yelp, Foursquare, and Bing. After those sites are fully optimized, move on to tier 2 sites.

TIER 1



TIER 2



Sound time-consuming? It is. That's why many healthcare organizations invest in a proven listing management solution. With listing management software, you can view, compare, and edit all your listings from one user-friendly dashboard that streamlines the manual process of optimizing multiple business profiles. It saves you time while making it easier to improve your brand's SEO.

**Step 2: Create local pages for all providers at your location**

Once you've optimized your primary local office listings with current names, addresses, phone numbers, etc., it's time to diversify, by implementing optimized local landing pages.

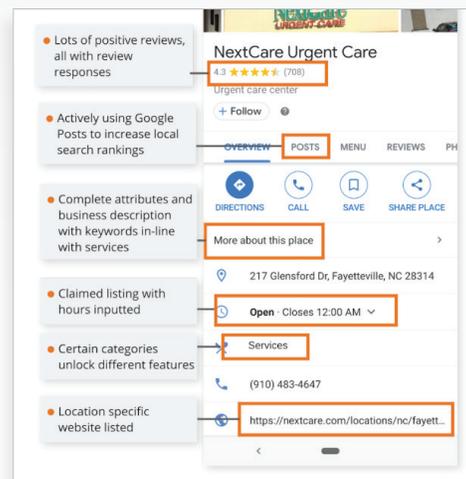
We like to think of every local page that appears in search results as a door. The more doors you build, the more opportunities patients have to walk through one. If your organization relies on one local listing to drive traffic to your facility, you're missing a massive opportunity.

In contrast, if you have a hierarchy of individual local pages for every specialist, department, clinic, and doctor in your facility that links back to your primary business listing, you open up many more opportunities to capture local search traffic.

Be sure to include plenty of detail on each local page to effectively capture more traffic. Chances are, each one of your providers offers a wide array of services. Adding in-depth details to local pages on the types of conditions treated, the procedures offered, and so on can help you connect with patients looking for a specific type of care.

Each additional local page you create should be connected to your facility's primary website, but the URL can link to the individual doctor or clinic's profile or specialty page. As discussed above, each local page should have accurate and consistent information.

You can also add additional components to optimize your Google listings. Incorporating relevant pictures, categories, attributes, call to action buttons that allow patients to request an appointment, Q&A with responses, and Google Business Profile posts will help you drive more qualified potential patient traffic to your front door. On Yelp you can optimize your listing with basic information about your business as well as adding descriptions, images, and even a COVID-19 message banner.



Listings accuracy, presence, and optimization account for 36% of how Google ranks healthcare organizations.

Source: AdviceLocal

### Step 3: Implement an unbranded keyword strategy for all providers

The last step in setting up your healthcare brand for optimal visibility is to learn what keywords patients use to find facilities like yours and implement those keywords into your local listing descriptions. Unbranded keywords are words that patients use in their search queries that don't mention a specific practice, healthcare facility, practitioner, etc. by name.

Many brands focus on optimizing listings and websites for branded keywords because they have a higher click-through rate and return on investment, but that approach can cost you big time when it comes to local search visibility.

Why? Because the three most common words consumers use to find healthcare providers are "hospital near me," "hospital," and "doctors near me." When businesses neglect to focus on unbranded keywords the result is a major missed opportunity.



Incorporating unique descriptions that contain relevant unbranded keywords into your local listings increases your facility's likelihood of ranking in unbranded search results. The most common keywords mentioned by consumers are staff, hospital, experience, nurse, doctor, and care, in that order.

Here are some examples of healthcare industry unbranded search terms from a leading health-care marketing firm:

Healthcare keyword	Monthly searches in the U.S.
Urgent care near me	1,890,000
Hospital near me	574,000
Walk-in clinic near me	194,000
Doctors near me	187,000
Pediatrician near me	169,000
Gynecologist near me	145,000
Emergency room near me	78,600
Primary care physician near me	61,200
Cardiologist near me	52,000
Doctor's office near me	50,092
Medical clinic near me	31,900
Orthopedic doctor near me	31,700
Women's health clinic	23,600
Mammogram near me	22,700
Oncologist near me	15,600
Pediatric clinic	13,600
Orthopedic clinic	9,500
Cancer center	8,800

**Now, be sure those favorite keywords for prospective patients searching for new healthcare providers get incorporated into the following areas:**

- Google listing category, description, and attributes
- Local pages
- Website
- Review responses

By strategically adding unbranded keywords into pages that Google and other top-tier search engines index, your medical team can take another step towards improving your overall SEO, search visibility, and ranking while offering more opportunities to connect with future patients.

In addition to optimizing local presence, it's critical for healthcare facilities to use local SEO to improve patient satisfaction, loyalty, retention—and ultimately, your online reputation.

However, it takes more than keywords and local SEO alone to build a stellar, trustworthy, and revenue-building online presence.





## Managing Your Healthcare Organization's Online Reputation

Consumer healthcare reviews are essential factors in influencing a patient's decision when choosing a new doctor or medical provider. In a high-risk industry with literal lives involved, patients take the extra time to read through online reviews before making a decision.

Patients look for 1) overall ratings and review sentiment, and 2) whether or not a doctor or facility is responsive to negative reviews. 46% of patients expect a response from a healthcare provider within 6 hours.

**There are four key places to find provider and facility reviews:**

1. Search engine (Google, Apple, Bing).
2. Consumer review sites (Yelp, NextDoor).
3. Local pages that live on social media sites (Facebook, LinkedIn).
4. Healthcare review sites (Healthgrades, ZocDoc).

### The delta between practitioner and facility reviews

Data shows that healthcare institutions receive significantly lower ratings than their providers. A study by Vanguard Communications reports that 62.7% of patients rate hospitals 3 stars or less, while 66% of patients rate doctors 4 stars or more. That means, when it comes to managing reviews, healthcare systems have a lot more work than doctors. This insight can help guide your organization's reputation management strategy as you develop a review management workflow.

### Responding to reviews

First, it's smart to have an on-site system in place that allows patients to provide feedback before they even leave the building, like a rating card given to patients as they check in or out. You can also send a follow-up survey via email or incorporate ways to submit feedback via your patient portal.

Second, if a patient posts an online review, always respond regardless of whether their comments are positive or negative. This is all about building trust. Taking the time and initiative to reply shows that you care what others say about your organization. Keep in mind that any topic can be the subject of a negative review, including long wait times and billing issues.

Third, it's imperative to be mindful of HIPPA privacy laws when responding to reviews. You never want to share details about a person's private health information, even if the review is accusatory or negative. Instead, it's better to reply and give the reviewer a way to connect offline with someone in your office to discuss their concerns. When relevant, include some of the popular unbranded keywords listed above in your replies to add some oomph to your SEO.

## Elevating Your Healthcare Organization's Online Presence: Best Practices

From Apple Maps to ZocDoc to Google Q&A, you now have an arsenal of strategies local SEO tools perfect for optimizing your healthcare team's presence across channels—and your entire organization by enhancing your organization's SEO, improving search visibility, attracting new patients to your business, and effectively managing your organization's online reputation.

Now that you know what to do, it's time to add some tasks to your list and get started.

### Local SEO best practices and recommendations for healthcare organizations:

- **Establish a baseline**

Identify your most significant areas of opportunity. Start by using this free tool to analyze your brand reputation.

- **Pick the low-hanging fruit first**

Prioritize SEO steps in order, starting with local page optimization for your primary facility on tier 1 platforms. Doing so will give you a solid foundation to build on.

- **Make consistency a habit**

When it comes to optimization and reputation management, consistency is the best predictor of success. If you perform regular audits on your brand and stay on top of reviews, you'll almost certainly see a dramatic positive impact on your business.

The healthcare industry is facing a dramatic shift, as 84% of patients consult online reviews before selecting a provider. In their moment of need, consumers decide on a provider in mere minutes and if your information is inaccurate or worse—doesn't show up at all—you'll miss out. Put in the effort to meet patients where they are to attract more new patients, earn more referrals, and generate more predictable growth.

**Learn more** at [Chatmeter.com](https://www.chatmeter.com).

