



EXECUTIVE WHITE PAPER

Patient Acquisition in the Age of Consumerism

How to Improve Online Search Visibility and
Consumer Experience

Contents

Introduction	3
Google Dominates Consumer Experience in Healthcare	4
New Patient Journey	5
Online Visibility: Are You Optimized for Search?	6
Customer Engagement: Driving Conversions from Local Search	8
PX Improvement: Listen and Take Action	11
3 Steps to Get Found, Get Chosen, and Improve Patient Experience	15
Step 1: Get Found	16
Step 2: Get Chosen	17
Step 3: Get Better	18
MultiCare: A Case Study	20
A Wake Up Call for Healthcare Organizations	21

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed unprecedented strain on health systems and providers around the U.S., pushing them to innovate and adapt quickly to treat patients and serve the community in the new normal. Faced with this health crisis, healthcare organizations must accelerate adoption of digital tools and strategies, and communicate more effectively about their services and the safety of their facilities. Collecting and analyzing feedback about experiences at your facilities in real-time and across channels will be essential to learning how to best serve patients now and in the coming months.

Today, patient feedback is omnipresent and immediate, and patients are more informed and self-directed about their healthcare choices than ever. Healthcare consumers are in control, and health systems and providers must meet them on their terms and provide the right information at the right time to win their business.

To accelerate digital transformation, healthcare organizations must implement the right technology and resources, and they must change the way they go about attracting, acquiring and retaining patients. In this whitepaper, we explore how your organization can adapt to the current environment, meet the evolving needs of healthcare consumers and capitalize on the new patient consumer journey.

You'll learn:

- **How healthcare consumers are searching for care**, and what factors influence their decision to choose a provider or location.
- **How to be found and chosen** along the new patient journey.
- **How to harness unstructured feedback data** to improve patient experience and reputation.
- **Why patient experience is critical for healthcare brands** to improve care and acquire new patients.
- **Plus, we'll outline a proven 3-step process** for building a solid online reputation and digital presence that showcases the exceptional care and experience you deliver.

Google Dominates Consumer Experience in Healthcare

The new patient journey has led to increased competition among healthcare providers. Providing patients with an exceptional experience — from search to selection, to care delivery and follow-up — is critical to driving patient acquisition.

But patient experience (PX) isn't limited to the delivery of care at the clinic; it begins with the first online search. And, today, search is by far the preferred way for patients to find healthcare providers online:

- More than 88% of healthcare consumers search for providers online and [over half \(52%\) use Google](#) to conduct their research.
- [Search drives 3X more visitors to hospital sites](#) compared to direct visits.
- In most major healthcare verticals, [over 60% of consumers](#) conduct an online search before scheduling an appointment.

More than ever before, consumers are taking an active role in choosing a care provider. Healthcare provider organizations must optimize visibility on search engines to get found, and they must improve their reputation to get chosen.

Software Advice reports that [90% of consumers](#) use online reviews to evaluate physicians, and 71% use online reviews as their first step to finding a new doctor. What's more, many people don't click through to providers' websites from search results — in fact, [50% of Google searches are "zero-click"](#), meaning consumers often rely on the information displayed on the search results page to make a decision. If you don't provide consumers with the information they need to find and choose you, you've failed to deliver a great experience at the very first touchpoint.

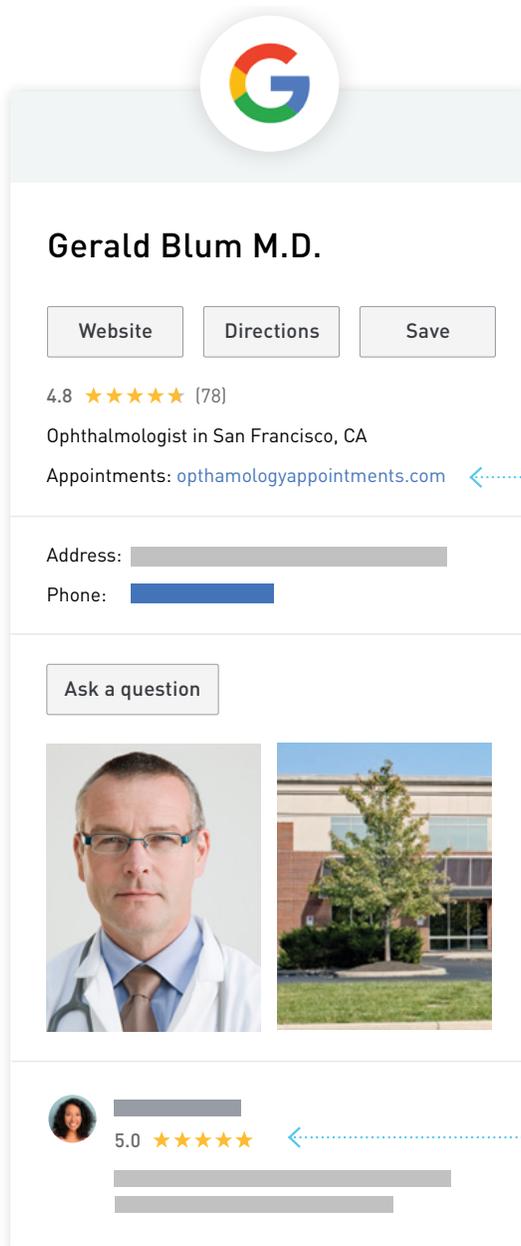




New Patient Journey

Online Visibility: Are You Optimized for Search?

From the first Google search — whether typed in or voice-activated — a consumer is forming an opinion about your organization. Consider these questions:



Search and Discover

- **What is the consumer's intent for the search?** Consumers seek different information at different stages of their care. In an early stage, a consumer may research symptoms to determine the type of care they need — urgent or primary care, or a specialty referral. Then, they look for who can provide that care.
- **Do your locations and physicians show up in search results for queries you expect?** Are you appearing on the first page of results? Most consumers will not click through to the second page of results.
- **What do searchers see in the results?** Are your listings complete and accurate with the right phone number, clinic location, provider specialty, etc.? Are there reviews?

Select and Schedule

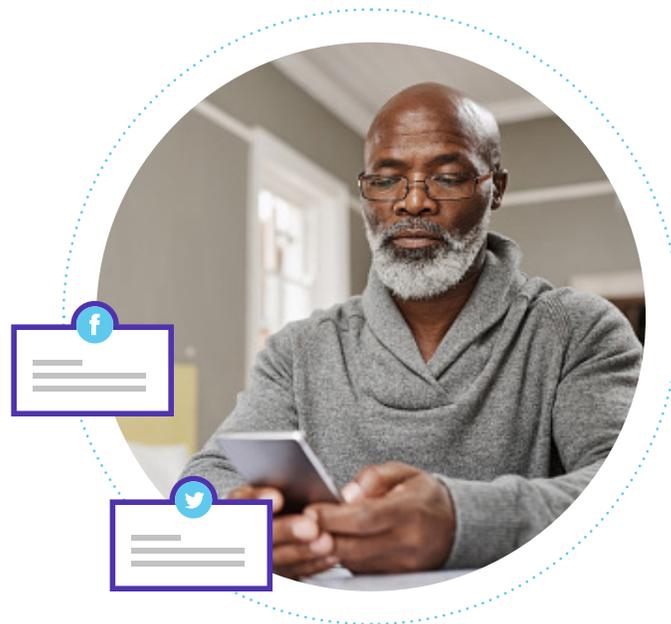
- **Do you showcase recent, positive reviews and ratings?** 94% of healthcare consumers read ratings and reviews. Reviews also ensure you show up at the top of search results.
- **Is it easy to schedule an appointment from the Google listing,** without having to click through to your website? Aim to eliminate as many steps as possible.

Factors that matter most

Ease of access, reputation, and answers to questions, factor into a consumer's decision about where to go for care. That's why a strong online presence is absolutely essential for driving new conversions and retaining existing patients.

User-posted reviews, surveys and social comments are powerful — not only to Google's algorithm, but to help attract new patients. Patients share their experiences online for everyone to see, and their stories influence other consumers' decisions to book an appointment at your facility or call a competitor.

Although Google's ranking algorithms are complex and ever-changing, good ratings and lots of recent, positive reviews are necessary to rank high in results.



User-posted reviews, surveys and social comments are powerful

Where do patients search for you?

89%

89% of healthcare related searches are these five sites

- Google: 52%
- Your Site: 15%
- Apple: 12%
- Facebook: 6%
- Bing: 4%
- Healthgrades: 3%
- Web MD: 2%
- Yahoo, Vitals, Yelp: 1% each

Source: Reputation.com research

Customer Engagement: Driving Conversions from Local Search

Google's Consumer Insights reported a [900%+](#) increase in "near me" searches in the past two years — and that's across all industries, including healthcare. This is particularly true among Millennials, who typically [have no provider loyalty](#).

This younger demographic is comfortable with finding healthcare information through digital channels, and more skeptical and discerning than ever. When they need care, they don't bother with browsing a health system's website. Instead, they rely on Google to provide a shortlist of nearby clinics or doctors.

In fact, the vast majority of healthcare searches today are non-branded and local. People don't search for a specific health system or provider — instead, they perform local searches, such as "pediatrician near me blue cross blue shield," or "urgent care nearby." Only 15% of healthcare consumers go directly to a provider's website when looking for care.

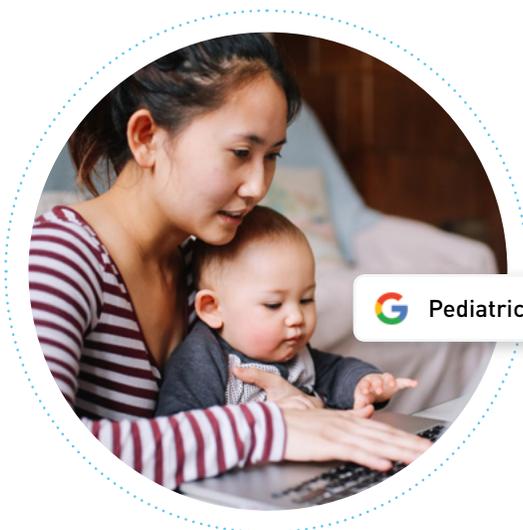
And, about [50% of all searches](#) are done using voice commands, either on a smartphone or digital assistant. Optimizing your content and websites to rank high in response to natural language inquiries will drive more conversions, especially as voice-assisted search continues to gain momentum.

900%+

Increase in "near me" searches in the past 2 years.

15%

Only 15% of healthcare consumers go directly to a provider's website when looking for care.



Millennials are less likely to be loyal to a single provider or brand

When Millennials need care, they rely on Google to provide a shortlist of nearby clinics or doctors.

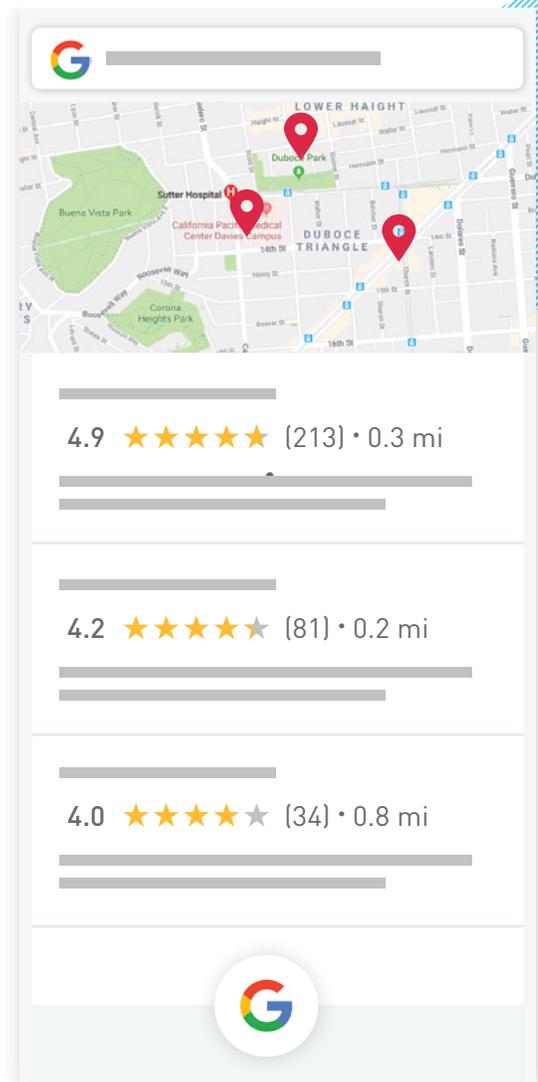
The Truth about Reviews

Reviews are the fastest growing factor in Google's search algorithm, meaning they have a significant impact on how your locations and providers rank in organic search. They are also the key to persuading healthcare consumers to choose you over competing providers.

According to Oliver Wyman, [83% of consumers](#) surveyed said patient-generated reviews influenced their decision about where to go for care. And research conducted by Reputation.com's data science team shows that [two-thirds of healthcare consumers](#) will wait longer for an appointment with a doctor who has good reviews. The vast majority (79%) want to read at least six reviews before making a choice.

Unfortunately, most health systems and practitioners are sorely lacking in a high volume of recent, positive reviews — and that's impacting their ability to attract business and drive conversions.

Your current and future patients are online, reading reviews and social comments, and using that information to make decisions about their healthcare and validate their choices. A steady stream of recent reviews on your Google My Business pages not only satisfies consumers' need for information about your organization, it helps you rank higher in local search so they can find you in the first place. In fact, reviews are the fastest growing factor in Google's local ranking and have been for the past three years, according to the annual [Moz Local Search Ranking Factors](#) study. Having lots of recent, positive patient reviews strengthens your ability to convert new healthcare consumers.



A steady stream of recent reviews helps you rank higher in local search so consumers can find you in the first place.

77%

77% of doctors have no reviews on Google.

Source: [Reputation.com research](#)

Harnessing Unstructured Data to Understand the Voice of the Patient

An important benefit of monitoring and managing reviews and social commentary is the ability to harness consumer feedback and put it to use to improve patient care. “Data in the wild” — the vast quantity of written unstructured feedback from reviews and social — holds a wealth of insight about patient experience and how to improve it.

Reviews and social posts are immediate and unfiltered, and they contain real-time insight into what patients think and feel about your organization and its providers.



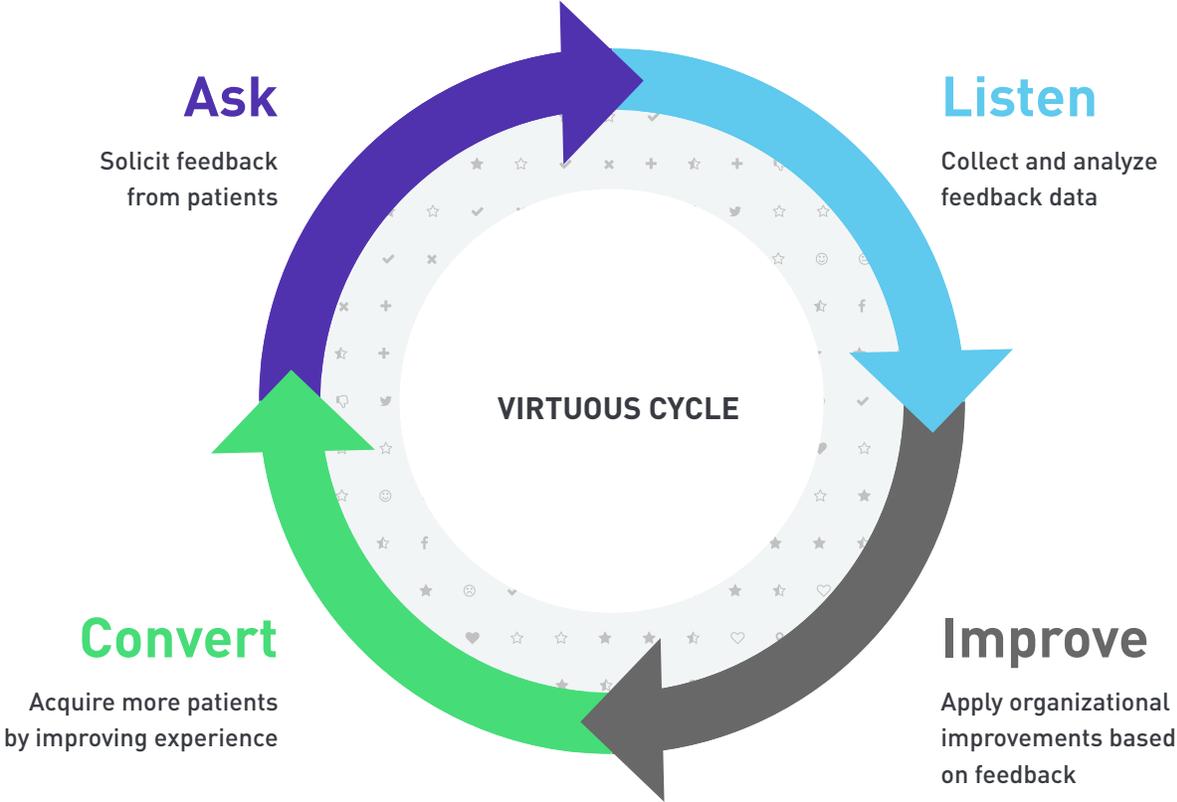
Taking action on real-time insights

Taking action on feedback is key: Customers don't provide feedback just for fun — they expect change.

Your reputation will suffer if you don't use feedback to deliver an improved experience. Additionally, monitoring and responding to reviews provides a way to better understand patient sentiment and engage with the community, which builds brand awareness and consumer trust.

PX Improvement: Listen and Take Action

To truly understand what makes an exceptional patient experience requires listening to customer feedback — whether it's in surveys, online reviews or social — and taking action to address any problems or issues patients have. Listening to and acting on patient feedback in reviews, social commentary and surveys will initiate a virtuous cycle of improvement and align your brand promise with the patient experience you deliver.



As you improve the patient experience, you will receive more positive ratings and reviews. Google’s algorithm weighs this customer feedback data heavily, and your physician and location listings will rise in local search results. As new patients look for providers, they see your reviews and can make an informed decision about where they go for care.

Healthcare organizations don't always do a good job of understanding consumer needs and behaviors, and they're slower than businesses in other industries to leverage customer feedback. To make matters worse, feedback comes from myriad sources, which makes it difficult to harness and analyze together to glean actionable insights.

Being vigilant and having processes in place to collect and act on patient feedback in real-time and at scale requires sophisticated technology. Many healthcare organizations are using an integrated platform to collect and analyze data from all feedback sources. Using this data for actionable insights helps organizations raise the bar on operational efficiency and patient experience. This puts the virtuous cycle of experience improvement in motion, leading to more positive reviews, higher search engine visibility and engagement, and more conversions.

Voice of the Consumer

Providing a holistic view of patient feedback and brand reputation



Listen

- CAHPS Surveys
- 3rd party/partner surveys and feedback (i.e. pulse surveys, partner product surveys, employees, etc.)
- Ratings and reviews data (Google, HealthGrades, WebMD, ZocDoc, Vitals, etc.)



Understand

- Natural Language Processing
- Sentiment analysis run through Artificial Intelligence
- Healthcare-specific categories (i.e. bedside manner, wait times, nursing, etc.)



Act

- Identify locations and providers in need of operational improvement
- Route feedback to functional owners for action
- Identify service recovery opportunities and future enhancements

The Voice of the Consumer: Going Beyond CAHPS

For years, healthcare systems relied mostly on traditional forms of feedback that Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) surveys provide to measure patient satisfaction. Many healthcare systems in the U.S. started using results from CG-CAHPS surveys to publish star ratings and testimonials to their own web pages, delivering a significant advantage in search engine page rankings. Using Schema Markup, they could let Google know how many stars their locations or providers received from reviews, improving their organic rankings in Google's search results.

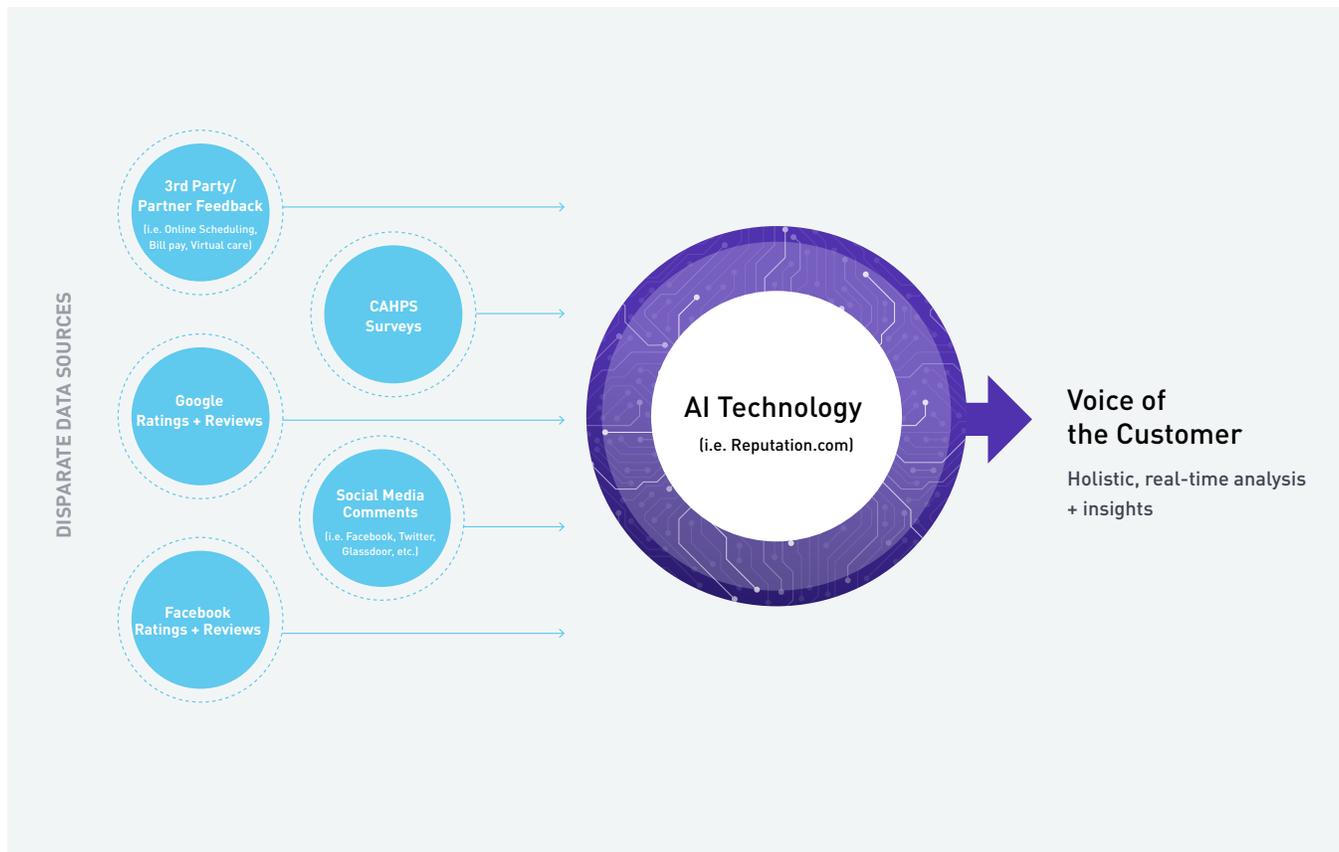
But Google changed the rules — and providers' self-reported star ratings are no longer displayed under their brands organic search results on Google the way they once were. Star ratings based on CG-CAHPS scores can be available on provider pages on healthcare organizations' websites, but today, most Google searches are zero-click searches.

Since consumers aren't clicking through to providers' websites, they'll rely on the ratings and reviews data prominently displayed on the search engine results page from Google, and possibly other third-party sites such as Healthgrades and Vitals.

What's more, traditional methods of collecting patient feedback are not designed to capture "data in the wild." Today's consumers share and seek out ratings and reviews on sites like Google and Facebook. Healthcare executives cannot fully grasp the voice of the customer until they look at CAHPS surveys, pulse surveys and all of the unstructured feedback across dozens of review sites collectively. This is a daunting task — how can any organization possibly listen to everything customers are saying about their experience across all data sources?

The good news is, healthcare brands can now leverage artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze data from numerous sources to glean insights. Solutions such as Reputation.com have years of experience in healthcare consumer feedback analysis and feedback modeling. The days of waiting for CAHPS scores are over: By reviewing feedback holistically, healthcare executives can access and analyze data in real time to make proactive, strategic improvements that increase patient acquisition and boost retention.

Use AI Technology to Capture and Analyze Data from Disparate Sources



3 Steps to Get Found, Get Chosen, and Improve Patient Experience

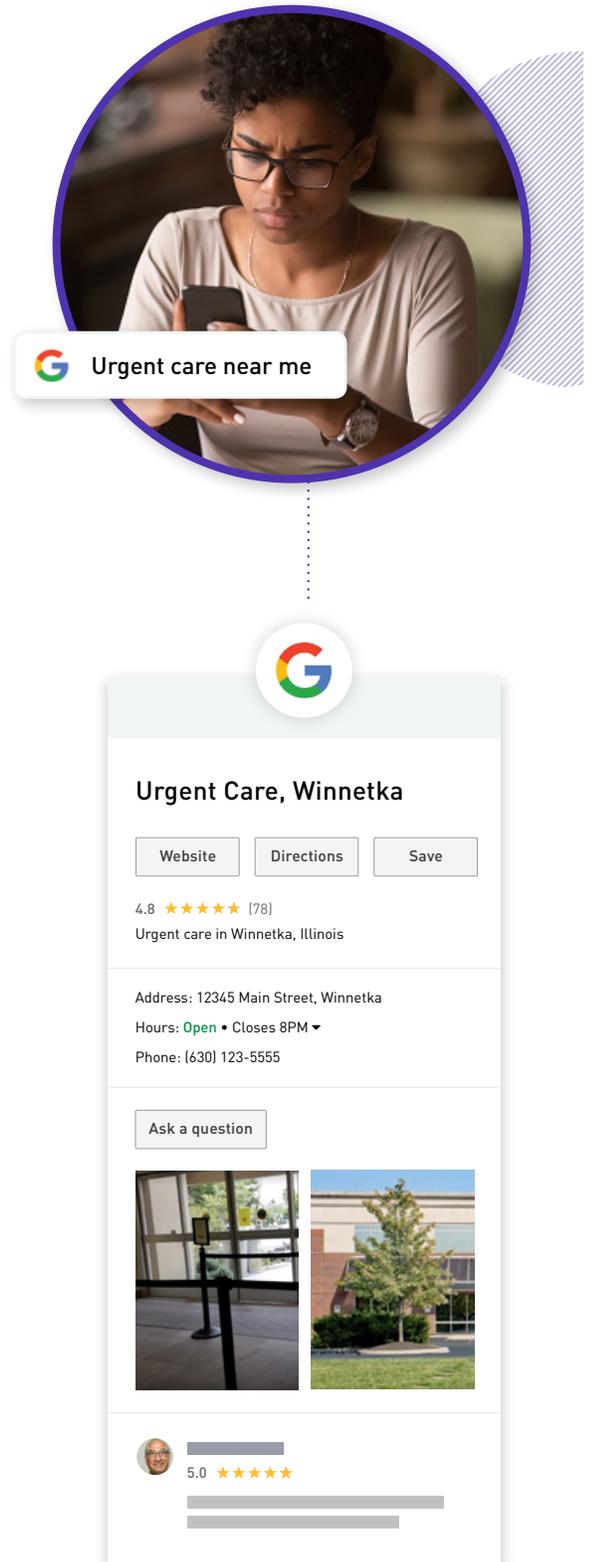
Building a strong online reputation doesn't happen overnight — it requires ongoing attention and oversight. Following is a 3-step process to help health systems and providers capitalize on the new patient journey.

Step 1: Get Found

Optimize your online visibility so patients can find you for the care they seek.

If you don't show up among the top few results on Google, you won't be found or chosen by the consumer. That's why it's absolutely critical for you to maximize your visibility on search engines, starting with Google:

- **Optimize your Google listings.** Your GMB listing is the most important local search signal according to the [Moz annual Local Search Rankings report](#). At minimum, your listings should contain your business name, address, phone number and hours of operation. Other important elements of a complete business listing include the business description, categories, photos, and the title and meta description.
- **Establish and maintain a source of truth that's accurate and reliable.** All of the information you have on your GMB listings must match the information on every review site and directory where your locations appear, as well as on your main website. Google's algorithms are good at finding discrepancies, and will penalize you for inconsistent or inaccurate information, causing your locations to rank lower on search results pages. Creating and maintaining a single source of truth that you use to populate your listings is the best approach.
- **Develop a sound local search strategy** to capture traffic from "near me" search. Build review volume and make sure your website is designed for easy mobile viewing, as more than 50% of search queries now come from mobile devices.

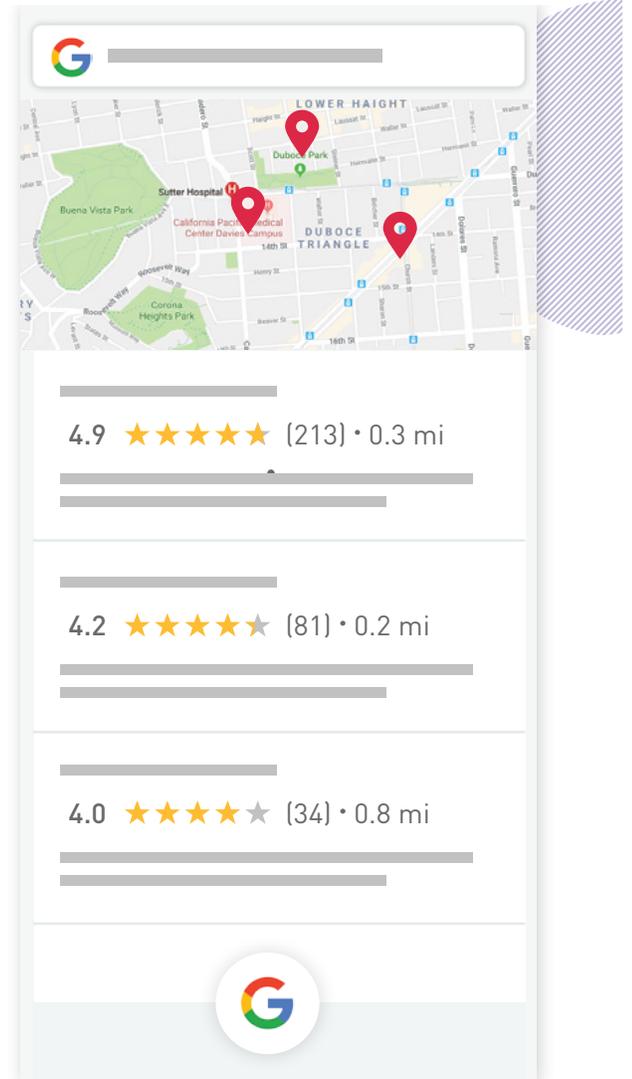


Step 2: Get Chosen

Stand out online with great ratings and reviews, so customers choose you.

Search Engine Land reports that [69% of consumers](#) think reviews older than three months are no longer relevant. And, as the third-highest ranking factor, [reviews account for 15.44%](#) of Google's search algorithm. That's why it's essential to develop a consistent, sustainable practice for requesting reviews from all patients:

- **Ask for a review immediately following a visit or other important interaction.** This will yield higher response rates and more detailed, actionable information.
- **Provide multiple ways for patients to provide feedback.** Meet patients where they are — on text, email or in-office tablets.
- **Start with Google.** With more than half of healthcare consumers searching for information online use Google, focusing on building Google review volume is a smart first strategy.
- **Respond to reviews to build trust.** Responding to online reviews is an effective way of engaging with patients. A prompt and thoughtful response — particularly to a negative review — demonstrates you're listening to patient feedback and care about delivering an exceptional experience. Develop an online review protocol that empowers your team to know how to respond to reviews, taking into account the tone and content of the review, and ensuring [compliance with HIPAA](#).



Hi! Thanks for visiting.
How was your experience?



Step 3: Get Better

Improve customer experience to increase patient retention.

Real-time monitoring of patient feedback across all sources enables you to identify and pinpoint issues that are actively impacting your patients and address them before they harm your reputation.

- **Analyze data contained in patient reviews, social commentary and survey responses.** Integrated reputation management technologies can apply deep machine learning to analyze data from all feedback sources and deliver actionable insights. You can dig deeper into service categories to see what’s impacting your [Reputation Score](#), and make the changes necessary to improve it.
- **Deliver seamless PX across all channels.** It’s important to establish a positive, consistent experience across every customer touchpoint — from the initial online Google search to care delivery and follow up, and even to the final bill. This starts by creating a robust website that showcases your organization’s services, intuitive [find-a-doctor tool](#) and brand messaging. But if you don’t deliver on your PX promises offline, none of that will matter.
- **Look for ways to close the gap between how patients experience your brand online and at your locations.** Insights gained from analyzing feedback can help you implement staff training and create a physical environment that delivers on the promises you make through digital channels.



Medical Clinic
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I do not recommend this office. I like Dr. Adams, but I received an incorrect bill!

Create Ticket
Ticket 2171

Category

Billing

SEND

Ticket 2171:
Route to billing department customer service for follow up.



Healthcare Center
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Thank you for fixing my billing issue! I will be back to see Dr. Adams for my next physical.

Patient Experience Management: It's More Than Marketing

Although marketing teams often act as the front door for online patient feedback, partnering with other internal teams that can take action on that feedback is critical for success.



Call Center Integration

The most progressive healthcare organizations have incorporated feedback into the call center operation. Many large organizations rely on the call center staff to monitor online chat, social media and reviews. When a patient complaint comes in from social commentary or online reviews, the call center can be the “front line” for service recovery. For optimal customer service, your ORM and CX management platform should integrate directly with your customer relationship management (CRM) platform and call center software.



Clinical Operations

The medical group and clinical operations leaders maintain close working relationships with front-line caregivers and are responsible for ensuring clinical care excellence and efficiency. This team may also employ patient service representatives who act as liaisons between patients and medical staff, and engage directly with patients to understand and mitigate their concerns.



Revenue Cycle Management

A physician or clinic may get glowing remarks for patient care, but the reputation of the brand can be undone by the interaction a patient has when it comes to billing. Billing issues are one of the most common complaints posted in online healthcare reviews. [A 2015 report by TransUnion](#) found patient satisfaction to be correlated with billing and payment. In fact, 83% of patients who gave the highest ratings to their quality of care also gave high ratings to their billing experiences. Often, this data never makes it back to revenue cycle leaders, and in the meantime, your reputation can suffer. It's important to align the corporate culture toward improving reputation and patient experience. Success is possible when employees across various business functions understand your patient experience goals and receive immediate, actionable insights related to patient experience.



MultiCare: A Case Study

MultiCare, a not-for-profit regional health system in the Pacific Northwest, was facing fierce local competition and needed to increase visibility in non-branded search on Google, engage effectively with healthcare consumers and showcase positive sentiment about its physicians and locations online to drive more business and protect its competitive position.

Working with Reputation.com, they optimized their third-party listings with accurate information and began systematically monitoring and responding to reviews. In an effort to improve star ratings and search engine optimization, MultiCare implemented a process of **requesting reviews** from all of its patients. Additionally, they leveraged the unstructured text in patient reviews to identify trends and patterns in patient experience and address potential issues as soon as they occurred.

In just four months, MultiCare:

4+



Increased all of its providers' star ratings to 4 stars or higher on Google

↑10X

Review Volume

Generated more than 1,000 a month — a 10X increase

↑4.6



Increased the average star rating for all locations from 3.5 to 4.6

↑200%

Phone Calls

Increased actions such as phone calls and direction requests from Google by more than 200%

What happens if a review discloses PHI?

When a review from a patient includes protected health information (PHI), you don't need to delete it, but don't repeat or disclose PHI in your response.

Never acknowledge the reviewer is a past or present patient. The best course of action might be to simply thank the patient and publicly state that you're taking the conversation offline. Work with your organization's patient experience, social media and legal teams to develop agreed-upon language for handling positive and negative reviews.

A Wake Up Call for Healthcare Organizations

Today's healthcare customer's journey begins online — but it doesn't end there. To remain competitive and drive new business, health systems and providers must deliver exceptional experiences, from the initial online search to care delivery and post-care follow up.

Large healthcare organizations can't do this on their own — they need the right technology to monitor and analyze patient feedback and the right processes to take meaningful action.

Reputation.com is helping hundreds of leading health systems — including three of the top five in the U.S. — get found and chosen online, and ensure exceptional PX across all locations. [Contact us today to learn more.](#)

About Reputation.com

Reputation.com pioneered the online reputation management (ORM) category. We continue to lead the charge with the only proven, unified CX and online reputation management platform, and innovative, customer-driven solutions. Our SaaS-based platform manages tens of millions of consumer reviews and consumer interactions across hundreds of thousands of touchpoints. The patented algorithms behind Reputation Score are based on more than a decade of deep machine-learning and data science expertise, providing businesses with a reliable index of brand performance that they can use to make targeted CX improvements — and increase their ability to get found, get chosen and get better.



Get Found. Get Chosen. Get Better.™