



Best Practices for Engaging Patients on Social Channels

Introduction

Healthcare can learn a lot from other industries — such as retail, hospitality and even automotive — about how to use social media and online reviews to attract business.

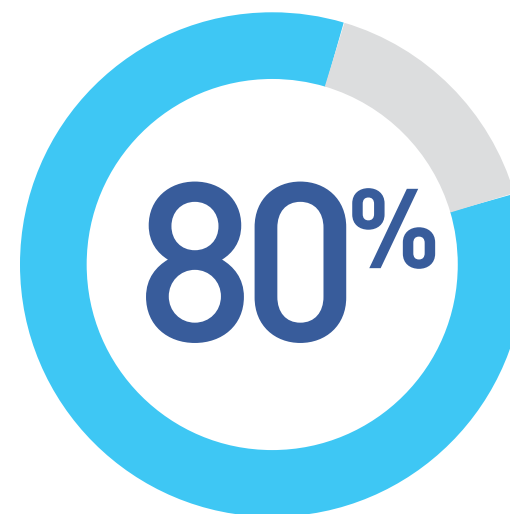
In fact, social channels are now one of the primary ways patients find providers. Consider these findings from a 2016 survey of more than 1,400 patients.¹

- Nearly 80 percent of consumers report using online reviews as a first step to seeking a provider, while 16 percent use them to validate the choice of a doctor they're considering.
- Almost half (47 percent) would go out-of-network for a doctor who has more favorable reviews, versus a similarly qualified in-network doctor.
- More than eight out of 10 consult a reviews website with some frequency to view or post comments and ratings of healthcare staff.

This data suggests a strong online reputation on review sites and social channels is essential for continued success as a healthcare system, hospital or medical practice.

“80 percent of consumers report using online reviews as a first step to seeking a provider.”

~SoftwareAdvice



The Growing Role of Social Media

Until recently, specialized healthcare reviews sites such as WebMD and Healthgrades were the focus, but now, social networks such as Facebook and Google are becoming more important based on the volume of reviews they generate. Most people leave reviews for doctors and hospitals on these sites, like they do for hotels, restaurants and other businesses.

Facebook Reviews allows patients to provide online feedback and ratings about hospitals and clinics. Those ratings are easy to spot on a Facebook profile page — they're at the top, below the banner photo and usually next to the box showing the number of "likes" they've received.

Facebook uses star ratings and reviews in its algorithm to determine where a post ends up in the news feed, if at all. So your organization's visibility in this channel depends on the reviews it receives.

Google looks at an organization's entire social presence including recent reviews and interactions from social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter) to determine rankings in SERPs. A hospital or clinic's presence on a SERP is critical in helping patients find your locations and doctors.³

**“ More than
2 million active
small businesses
pay for advertising
on Facebook. ”**

~ Facebook Business

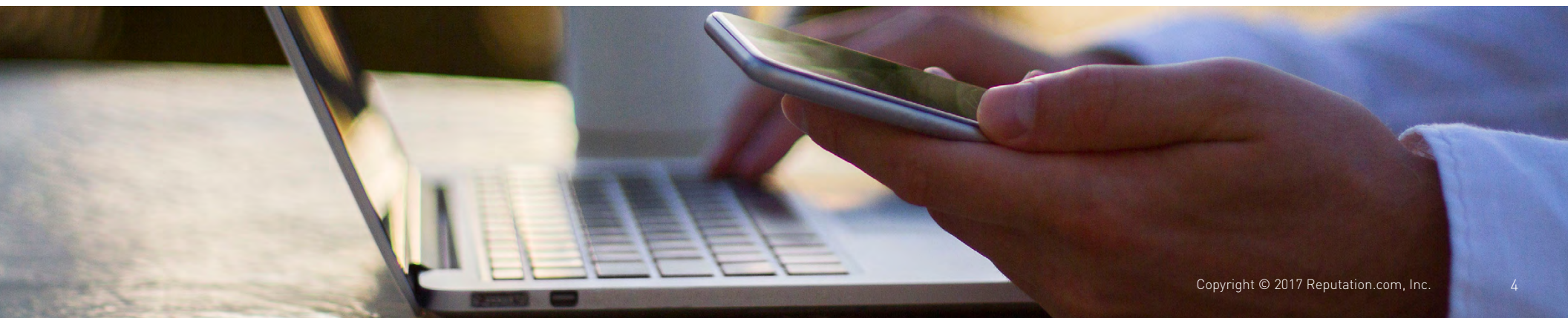
Engaging in the Social Conversation the Right Way

Whether you like it or not, patients will talk about your providers about your providers online. And the conversations they're having will shape your reputation. Engaging in these social conversations is essential for influencing how people perceive your organization and the quality of care it provides.

Respond Promptly — and Appropriately — to Comments and Reviews

One of the most important things a healthcare organization can do is respond to social posts and reviews — whether positive or negative. Using social media to address customer queries and complaints goes a long way toward building brand loyalty and trust. Sixty percent of patients feel it's "very" or "moderately important" for doctors to respond to online reviews.⁴

When a patient complains about a provider on a social page, don't ignore it. A well-crafted response addressing the reviewer's concerns, while ensuring you maintain patient privacy, can turn it around in your favor — 95 percent of unhappy people will return to a business if an issue is resolved quickly and efficiently.⁵



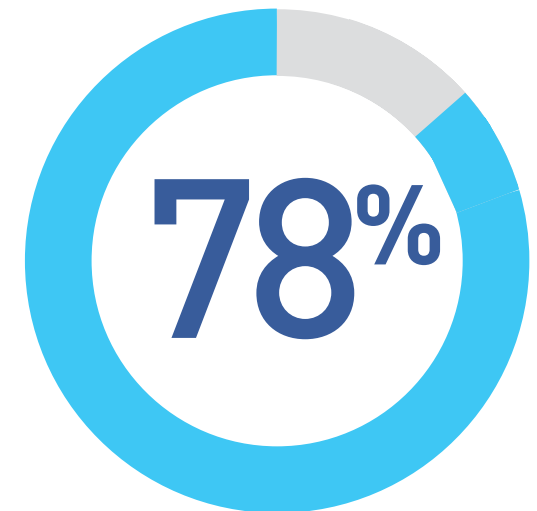
How Your Organization Responds is Key

Here are some basic guidelines:

- **Follow HIPAA Guidelines for Patient Privacy.** Your organization cannot discuss details about the patient's past, present or future mental health or condition, the type of care the patient is receiving, or payment details for care received. Work with your organization's legal and compliance team to develop accepted responses to positive and negative patient reviews. make sure your responses don't include any information that may make it possible for others to identify the patient. The provider can contact the patient directly and privately, if appropriate, to discuss resolving the issue in greater detail
- **Take it Offline.** Marketing should partner with the hospital operations and patient experience team to ensure concerns are addressed in a HIPAA-compliant way, offline.
- **Respond Promptly.** Monitor posts for patient feedback and take steps to alleviate concerns and complaints. About 78 percent of people who complain to a brand via Twitter expect a response within an hour.⁶ If the concern isn't addressed promptly, a patient's negative feelings may fester; they may complain to friends and family members or write additional negative reviews on other social channels or review sites.

“ 78 percent of people who complain to a brand via Twitter expect a response within an hour. ”

~ Lithium



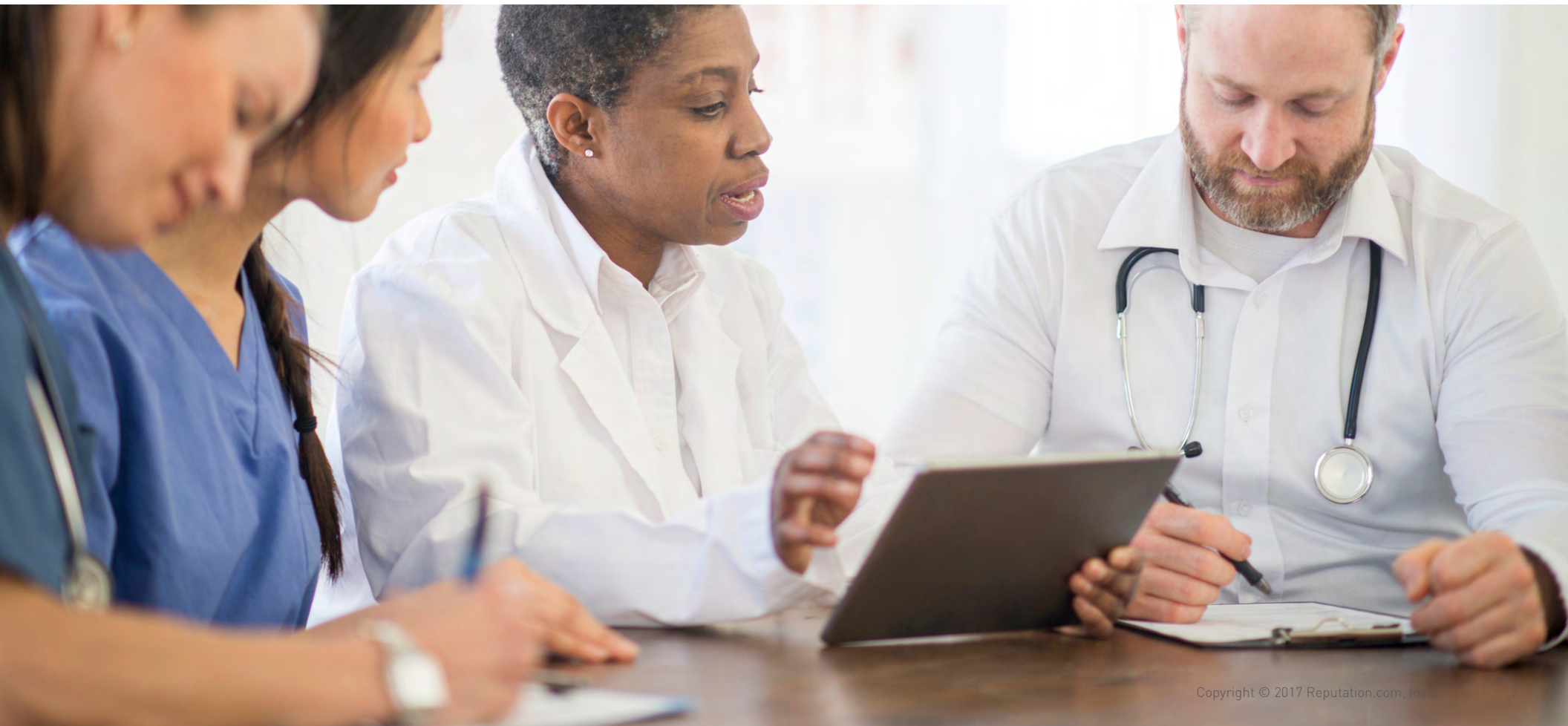
Promote and Enhance Your Organization's Reputation

In addition to responding to comments and complaints on social media and review sites, active engagement is needed to influence and optimize your organization's online reputation. An active social presence will help build trust and awareness, drive traffic to providers' websites and, ultimately, result in more walk-ins, appointments and admissions.

Online Reputation Management (ORM) platforms can help providers engage the right way, by enabling the following proven strategies:

- **Optimize Social Profiles.** Social media sites are high-authority platforms for search engines. So, it's smart to create social media profiles on all major social platforms. Optimize them with relevant keywords. Include buttons that link to popular reviews sites to make it easy for patients to post a review, and make sure the "Review" feature is turned on Facebook profile pages.
- **Share Compelling Content.** Be sure you're creating and posting content worth sharing, such as infographics, CAHPS survey results or relevant articles and blog posts. This helps gain attention and traction on social media outlets, driving additional website traffic. ORM platforms can help integrate CAHPS survey scores and reviews with your website, promoting transparency and increasing visibility for high scores. They can also enable you to publish content and deploy local and social ad campaigns quickly and efficiently.

- **Make Improvements Based on Feedback.** Customer suggestions garnered from social posts and reviews enable operational improvements that can enhance the patient experience, leading to even more positive posts and reviews. These can be as simple as having coffee available in the waiting room, or ensuring a receptionist greets every patient as they enter a physician's office. Make sure your social media team has a good partnership with your organization's operations and patient experience team, because they are responsible for addressing concerns and implementing improvements.



Request Feedback to Build Positive Review Volume

Getting a negative review or comment on Facebook or another social media site isn't the end of the world — and, as it turns out, it's pretty rare. Only 6 percent of patients leave “very negative” or “somewhat negative” feedback — which means the other 94 percent leave positive feedback.⁷ The implication? It behooves you to ask for feedback of any kind.

Best practice is to empower patients by making it easy for them to voice opinions about your services. Find an ORM tool that enables your organization and providers to send emails with links or buttons to popular review sites. Tablets at the front desk of an office or clinic enable patients to post reviews immediately following a visit.

Finally, leverage Online Reputation Management software to reach out to patients through social media, email and text. The more reviews, the better — a single negative comment is going to have much less of an impact alongside 10 positive ones.

¹ [SoftwareAdvice](#).

² [Facebook Business](#).

³ [SearchEngine Journal](#).

⁴ [SoftwareAdvice](#).

⁵ [PeopleClaim](#).

⁶ [Lithium](#).

⁷ [SoftwareAdvice](#).

About Reputation.com

Reputation.com delivers the category-leading Online Reputation Management (ORM) platform for healthcare organizations with hundreds or thousands of providers.

Our intelligent platform helps them monitor review sites, generate more representative star ratings and reviews, maintain accurate business listings, and drive recurring visits, admissions and revenue.

For more information, visit us at reputation.com or contact us at sales@reputation.com.