

Yelp *for* Help

HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

How to Use the Popularity and Power of Yelp to
IMPROVE YOUR IMAGE AND ATTRACT NEW PATIENTS



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Future Updates of this Ebook

Yelp is constantly changing itself to try and be more useful, relevant and valuable. For example, in 2014 it changed the term “Filtered” reviews to “Recommended” reviews, it expanded its advertising options, it set up a reservation system for restaurants, added new features to the Yelp mobile phone app and more.

The advice in this ebook is based on the information available in September 2014. By October, one or more of the details in this ebook will probably be changed. So to help you stay current, we will update this ebook on a regular basis and provide you with each new version at no additional charge. Just register on our website by [clicking here](#).

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1. Introduction

Yelp is currently the biggest, most popular and most powerful review site on the internet. Its stated purpose is “To connect people with great local businesses.” Users and businesses can use Yelp free of charge.

Over 1.4 million visitors go to Yelp per day. It has over 61 million reviews which is many times more reviews than any other review website. Yelp is a public company with a stock price that steadily rises, and it made a profit in 2014 for the first time. Yelp is not going away.

Churches, dog sitters, lakes, cannabis dispensaries, county fairs and even consultants get Yelp reviews. Next to restaurants, healthcare is the second biggest category for reviews with dentists topping that category. No one is ignored: hospitals, surgeons and even insurance plans are all reviewed.

Because it displays negative reviews, Yelp and Yelp reviewers have been sued many times, yet Yelp always wins because you cannot stop free speech. For example, a Northern California dentist filed a lawsuit against Yelp and a patient saying the bad review cost her hundreds of thousands in lost income and severe emotional distress. After 10 days, the lawsuit was dismissed against Yelp, but not the patient. After a 2.5-year legal battle, the dentist was ordered to pay \$81,000 to the patient for legal costs.

In another example, a Manhattan dentist had 10 great reviews and one negative review that said his office was “small, old and smelly.” He became obsessed with the one negative review and filed a \$400,000 lawsuit against Yelp and the patient. The lawsuit was dismissed within days.

[Yelp even has an A+ rating from the Better Business Bureau](#), despite 1439 filed complaints. The BBB is impressed with Yelp’s level of responsibility for dealing with these complaints.

If Yelp is not yet a powerful force in your city, it will be. You have an opportunity to become an “early adopter” and take one of the number one spots. For example, if you use Yelp to search for a dentist in Los Angeles, you will see the practice owners who show up at the top of the list have dozens and dozens of positive reviews. You will also see they were getting positive reviews years before Yelp was a popular way to find healthcare providers.

You can treat Yelp as an enemy or as your friend. By following the steps in “Yelp Help for Healthcare Providers,” you will have the knowledge you need to increase your popularity and generate new patients with Yelp. When Yelp is your friend, it is a VERY GOOD friend.

Once you master Yelp, by following the steps in this ebook, you will also know how to master all of the smaller review websites, such as [Google+](#), [HealthGrades](#), [Facebook](#), [AngiesList](#), [Vitals](#) and [RateMDs](#).

2. Why Yelp Has So Much Power

Yelp reviews have a direct effect on your new patient flow. Even if referred by one of your patients, your potential new patients will check your reviews before scheduling an appointment. Your Yelp page may be the biggest single factor for blocking or getting the new patient in the door.

For example, a dentist in Southern California has an anger problem. Each day, he yells at his staff, his spouse and even his patients. He is also a smart businessman. His website is gorgeous and compelling. His reviews on other dental review websites are all five-star because he can block or remove bad reviews from these sites. Yet his Yelp page contains 40% negative patient reviews, usually because of his temper problem. The negative reviews are quite believable.

The dentist pays Yelp a lot of money for advertising, but they will not remove his bad reviews. Potential new patients who do their research see a huge difference between Yelp and the other review websites. If they have found the reviews on Yelp are more reliable than other review websites, they will trust Yelp and not trust this dentist.

[According to a Nielsen survey](#), 70% of us believe online reviews are a trustworthy source of information. This is 15% higher than four years ago and growing.

[In another study](#), 79% of us trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations from our friends and family members.

Because Yelp filters suspicious (fake) reviews more efficiently than any other review website, its “Recommended” reviews are more reliable than any other website. In a 2014 Nielsen survey, Yelp was named as the most trustworthy review website. [And another 2014 survey by Software Advice](#) found Yelp the most trusted website for helping select an attorney.

If you are new to Yelp, look at some of the reviews for businesses you visit. Are your favorite restaurants reviews fairly accurate? How about a bad restaurant?

For example, you notice cockroaches running around on the floor in a restaurant. You go home and check the review websites. You see several Yelp reviews complain about the restaurant’s cockroach problem. You decide that from now on, like millions of other people, you will check Yelp before going to any restaurant that is new to you.

3. How Negative Yelp Reviews Can Hurt Your Practice

A bad review will ruin your day. You feel rage at the reviewer and even at your staff and yourself. You can feel paranoid that the next patient is going to turn around and stab you in the back. And you are correct to worry about the consequences of a negative review being out there for the world to see . . . forever.

Negative reviews can block your advertising efforts, turn off referral sources and make patients switch to different practices. For example, if you only have five Yelp reviews and three are negative reviews, your ranking may be as low as 2 out of 5 stars. If one of the reviewers accuses you of charging her too much, another accuses you of bad breath and another says you were angry and rude, you look pretty bad. Anyone who looks at your Yelp profile page, and believes the bad reviews, will look elsewhere.

If you “Google yourself” (search the internet web with your name) your Yelp page will probably be on the first or second page. So if a potential new patient Googles you, he or she will most likely see your Yelp page. In fact, 70% or more of your potential new patients, below the age of 50, will use the internet to learn more about you before they schedule an appointment.

People believe reviews from patients more than they believe your promotional statements. For example, your happy patient Jill has a friend name Jack who needs a dentist. She says, “Jack, you should see my dentist. He’s great!” Prior to review websites, Jack might say, “Okay, if you like him I’ll give him a try. Where’s he located?”

But in this new age of technology, Jack grabs his cell phone, types in your name and within seconds is reading your Yelp reviews. If they are mostly bad he says, “Jill, look at this!” Jill reads the reviews and says, “Well, he is late a lot and he can be a little grumpy. Hmmmmm. What about this one here with all those 5-star reviews? Wow, she sounds terrific!” Not only does Jack go to a different practice, so does Jill.

As another example, you spend \$10,000 to mail thousands of fantastic postcards, but only one person calls. You check your Yelp stats, as covered later in this ebook, and you see your postcards got 50 people to check you out. They read your bad reviews and did not call you.

People who are not patients are also influenced by your reviews. For example, if a patient asks an attorney to sue you, the attorney will Google you and use the information he or she finds to decide what to do. If a building landlord, business partner or associate doctor is considering an agreement with you, your reviews will probably be considered, as well. Even potential new staff will check out your online reputation before applying for a job at your practice.

Statistically, you can lose 50% or more of your income solely because of bad reviews.

Strangely enough, bad reviews have an upside. You can use them to demonstrate to the world that you can take a hit from a patient and still be an awesome health-care provider. You show your willingness to apologize, improve your practice and you can show the world that you have an abundance of grace, kindness and care. More on this later.

4. How Positive Yelp Reviews Can Help Your Practice

When patients who are searching for a new provider, referrals from colleagues, referrals from patients and your inactive patients read how much Yelp reviewers like your service and treatment, your practice gets a boost. It's as if your favorite patients are talking to dozens of people about you, month after month!

For example, one of our clients went from no reviews to twelve 5-star reviews over a 14-month period. With no other changes, the flow of new patients increased by 5-10 new patients per month!

Another ExecTech client had two bad reviews, two good reviews and no details about his practice. He had not claimed his free Yelp account as he felt it was better to just ignore Yelp. Yet because his flow of new patients was steadily dropping, he had to make some changes. He now has 12 great reviews and, thanks to Yelp advertising, he gets 5 calls per week from people who look at his Yelp page.

As long as you provide five-star care, and follow the advice in this ebook, you will win the Yelp game.

5. Five Myths and Truths About Yelp

A. “Yelp posts more negative reviews than positive reviews.”

Yelp just shows reviews. It does not write reviews. Around 85% of the reviews posted by users are three stars or higher.

B. “If you pay Yelp enough money, they will remove bad reviews.”

See for yourself. [Click to see a list of Yelp advertisers who have negative reviews.](#)

C. “If you do not advertise, Yelp will hide your positive reviews. If you advertise, Yelp will show your positive reviews.”

The advertising people have no control of your Yelp profile page. If you advertise, you can work with an Account Manager to improve your page and respond to reviews, but your Account Manager has no control of your patients’ reviews.

You can read this [independent study](#) that shows Yelp does not show reviews to help its advertisers.

In most cases, Yelp hides reviews from new reviewers until they become more engaged with Yelp.

D. “Yelp is like the mafia where they will ruin your practice if you don’t pay them. It’s extortion!”

Practice owners, who have caused or allowed negative reviews to be posted about their practice by patients, are disappointed when they pay Yelp for advertising and the reviews do not disappear. They assumed the bad reviews would go away and get quite angry when this strategy fails. You cannot pay Yelp to do anything to your patients’ reviews.

A dentist, vet and a car shop recently sued Yelp for extortion. They claimed Yelp had written their negative reviews and would only remove these reviews if they bought advertising. Even if they had had proof to back up their claims, which they did not, the [9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled](#) it would still not be extortion. The court stated Yelp can do anything it wants with Yelp reviews.

Yelp gives you a listing and allows you to respond to reviewers, post Public Comments, display pictures and a description about your practice and more, all at no charge. If you follow the advice in this ebook, and you provide excellent service, your awesome Yelp page will be filled with positive reviews and will attract new patients to your practice without you paying a dime.

E. “You can hire a reputation manager to take care of your negative reviews on Yelp.”

Unlike other review websites, there is no secret way to remove negative reviews from Yelp. Several companies imply they can get negative reviews removed from Yelp, but they cannot. Instead, they will try to drown the negative reviews with fake reviews.

The only way to remove or neutralize negative reviews is to follow Yelp’s procedures, as covered in this ebook.

There are also services that try to act as a go-between between your patients and Yelp. These go-between companies give you a link to give to your patients that make the patients think they are posting reviews on Yelp, but the go-between company intercepts the review. They can then let you block any reviews you do not like. Of course, experienced Yelp users will see what you are doing and will just go directly to Yelp to post their reviews.

6. How to Win with Yelp

You or anyone who represents you (your spouse, a family member, a staff member, a marketing person or consultant) can make your practice's Yelp page into a priceless asset.

You cannot demand anything from Yelp. You cannot force it to do anything. You cannot pay it enough to change anything about your reviews.

To win, you need to cooperate with Yelp. You need to play by its rules. You need to constantly work on your Yelp image.

More importantly, you and your staff need to provide excellent care and service to your patients. You need to be honest, kind and patient. You need to welcome your potential new patients from Yelp.

To win the Yelp game, you need to be patient and persistent. It's a marathon, not a sprint. You need to understand how Yelp operates.

7. Learn How Yelp Operates

A. Look at your practice's Yelp page.

Yelp decides how to operate based on what is good for its users. So the best place to start the game is to see how your Yelp page looks to Yelp users.

Go to www.yelp.com, type your name in the Find box and your city in the Near box.

Pretend you are a person looking for a practice like yours. Is your Yelp page appealing? Would you be compelled to call and schedule an appointment based on this page?

If your practice is not listed, or if your practice is listed more than once, you will fix it later in this ebook.

B. Look at others' Yelp pages.

Do another search for your colleagues in the area. For example, type "Dentist" in the Find box and your city in the Near box.

Read several profiles and dozens of reviews. Notice which practices seem to be thriving on Yelp and which are not.

C. Check out a restaurant, hotel or other type of business you use.

Are their reviews accurate? Does Yelp show you places you might want to try?

8. Learn How Reviewers Operate

Being a part of Yelp is more than posting reviews. “Elite” Yelp users become friends, communicate with each other on a daily basis and attend Yelp events. They follow each other’s reviews and share tips for meals, travel and more. If you get good reviews from these Yelpers, your practice will benefit.

To understand Yelp reviewers, you can participate as a reviewer in a very limited, private way with these steps.

A. Become a member.

If you do not have a Yelp Member account, go to www.yelp.com and click “Sign Up” (top right corner). Type in your name and email address. If you have two email addresses, one for personal and one for business, use the personal email address. Create a password and enter as much information as you wish.

Yelp will send you an email to confirm that it’s your email account. Click the link in the email message from Yelp and sign in. You are now a Yelp Member!

B. Allow or block email from Yelp, Yelp users and business owners.

Unless you change your settings, Yelp will send you emails from time to time. You can allow or block anything you do not like with these steps.

1. Click the drop-down arrow next to the head in the top right corner.
2. Click “Account Settings.”
3. Click “Email Accounts and Notification Settings.”
4. Make your changes and click “Save Notification Settings.”

C. Post a review for a restaurant that you like.

1. Click the box next to “Find” and type in the restaurant name and city.
2. Write a review and click “Post.”
3. Check how your review looks on the restaurant’s page. For example, your profile only shows the initial of your last name.

If you do nothing else with Yelp, your review will probably be hidden or filtered out by Yelp within a few weeks. To read the filtered “Currently Not Recommended” reviews, scroll to the bottom of the restaurant’s reviews and click the grey-letters link that says “___ other reviews that are not currently recommended.”

Yelp gets so many fake reviews, it rarely trusts a new user who only leaves one review. Yelp will “Recommend” your review if you become more engaged with Yelp.

D. Download and try the Yelp app on your phone.

You can use the app to find businesses nearby. The app will show you a description about the business, display its reviews, tell you if the business is open, give you a button to call the business, tell you how far away you are from the business, and give you directions to that business.

If you use your Yelp app when driving, you will know what is available wherever you go, such as gas stations, restaurants, auto repair shops and so on.

When on a vacation, you will stay in better hotels, eat at better restaurants and enjoy your activities a bit more because of your Yelp app.

E. Become a trusted Yelp user.

Yelp uses a point system to determine if you are a real person who gives honest reviews. You can become a recognized Yelp user simply by using Yelp. Examples:

1. Use the phone app to find a business and then click "Check In." The Yelp app sees you are telling the truth about visiting a location.
2. Write more reviews from time to time. Be factual and descriptive.
3. Add more details to your Yelp account profile. Just go to www.yelp.com, click "Edit your profile" and answer any of the questions about yourself that you wish to share.
4. Add a picture to your profile. If you don't want to use your own picture, use your pet's!
5. Participate with other reviewers. For example, when you read a review that you think is helpful or funny, click the "Useful" or "Funny" buttons under the review. You can even send a compliment to the reviewer.

Once you are recognized by Yelp, your reviews will no longer be hidden.

9. How to Claim Your Yelp Business Account

Next, become a Yelp Business user. You must claim or “unlock” your listing to have control over what is displayed on your practice’s Yelp page. You can get alerts by email when anyone posts a review. You can see how many people visited your page and what actions they took. Yelp gives you all of these business tools, and more, for free.

You can use the same email address as you did to become a Yelp Member, but if you have a business email address, use it for your business account.

A. If you have never claimed your business account.

1. Go to www.yelp.com
2. Type your name or your practice name in the “Find” box and your city in the “Near” box.
3. If listed twice or not at all, see the steps near the end of this chapter.
4. From your Yelp page, click “Work Here? Claim This Business.” If you do not see this link on your page, someone else has already claimed the Yelp Business Account. See the end of this chapter for instruction.



5. Follow the instructions for claiming your Yelp Business page.
6. To prove you own or work at the practice, you will come to a page that requires verification by email or phone.

If by email, Yelp will send you an email within seconds. Open the email message and click the link.

If by phone, Yelp will display a code number to enter when Yelp calls your office number. As soon as you click the button to “proceed with the call,” a computer system will call your office within seconds. Someone in your office will need to answer and enter the code number with the telephone.

Once this is done, you can now use your Yelp Business Account to manage your page, upload pictures, watch your Yelp statistics, deal with your reviews and more.

B. If you have multiple locations.

Claim each location individually. If you advertise with Yelp, ask your Account Manager about a bulk management service to more easily manage and monitor all of your Yelp pages.

C. If your practice is listed twice.

1. Report the issue to Yelp [by clicking here](#).
2. You can also go to the Yelp Support Center by clicking “Support” at the bottom of the screen.
3. Click “Updating Business Information” on the left side of the screen.
4. Click “Reporting Incorrect Business Information”
5. Click “How do I report duplicate business pages?” and submit a report.

D. If your practice is not listed

1. Go to www.biz.yelp.com
2. Click “Create your free account now.”
3. Enter your practice name and city. Click “Find my Business.”
4. If it is not on the list, go to the bottom and click “Add your business to Yelp.”
5. Fill out the details about your practice and the email address you wish to use for your Yelp business emails. You can change anything you enter at anytime in the future.
6. Click “Add Business” and Yelp will send you an email.
7. Click the link in that email to confirm your email address.

E. If you have taken over a practice with negative reviews.

1. Assume your practice is not listed and try to start a new Yelp page using the above steps. If your name, email address and website are different than what is listed with the previous practice’s Yelp page, Yelp may not do anything to stop you.
2. If that does not work, or if Yelp ties the old Yelp page with your new Yelp page, prepare a note to Yelp.
3. Include all the details, list all the changes and emphasize how you were not part of the old practice. Offer to provide documentation or do anything else Yelp needs to determine the facts and make a decision. Let Yelp know if you want delete the old practice’s entire Yelp page or just the reviews.

Keep in mind that many businesses have tried to remove their negative reviews by faking a business sale. Sooner or later, a Yelp member will figure this out and report the deception to Yelp or worse, write a new negative review to expose your ploy.

4. Click “Contact Yelp” at the bottom of your [Yelp business owner page](#) or use [this link to go directly to the support page](#).
5. Select “Business Owner/Representative” in the first box.
6. Find the Yelp page you want to replace in the next box.
7. Enter your note to Yelp in the “Describe your concerns” box, along with your email address, and click “Send.”
8. If Yelp will not remove the old negative reviews or give you a fresh Yelp business account page, use the Yelp page you are stuck with to make it very clear that you are the new practice owner. Explain that all the reviews before the sale date are not related to you.

Follow the steps in “How to Remove or Neutralize Negative Reviews” in this ebook with each negative review. Always start with an apology and invite the unhappy patients to come see you and your new practice.

F. How to claim a Yelp business account that has already been claimed.

1. Go to Yelp for Business owners at www.biz.yelp.com
2. See if it was claimed with your email address by clicking “Forgot your password?”
3. Enter your email address and click “Reset my password.”
4. If you get a message “The email address you provided is not signed up,” try any other password that you or someone who worked for you might have used.
5. If no luck, go to your practice’s Yelp page and click “Message the business.”
6. Send a note asking to know who has claimed your business account. Include your contact information.
7. If the mystery does not solve, [ask Yelp for help](#). At the bottom of the Yelp for business page, click “Contact Yelp” and complete the form.
8. Find your practice Yelp page and then explain the problem. Include your email address so Yelp can get back to you. You can ask for the email address associated with the account or to reset the account with your email address.
9. Let them know they can contact you at your office number which will help prove you own the practice. You can also include a link to other websites that list you as the practice owner as well as a link to your website page.

Did you like this sample?

Get more details or buy “Yelp Help for Healthcare Providers” at www.exectechweb.com/yelp