


From the Inside Out

From review responses to first-call scripts, learn the internal systems that shape patient trust and drive long-term brand success





Imagine a prospective patient sitting at home, beginning the search for a new office. Maybe he's noticed his tooth was extra sensitive to hot coffee on his morning commute and needs care quickly. Or maybe she's a tired mom who just left her kindergartner's room after a lengthy bedtime routine and realizes she hasn't had a cleaning in a while, and it's time for her pre-teen to start thinking about braces. You might also picture a recent college graduate, new to the area, trying to find providers on their own for the first time.

All these potential patients start in the same place: opening social media or a search engine. Their first action isn't to pick up the phone; it's to open Google, scroll through Instagram, and text friends or coworkers for recommendations. Their decision will be shaped by how your practice shows up online through reviews, your community standing, and the consistency of your online presence. Your practice's reputation has influenced their decision well before they've stepped foot in your office or met your team.

Your character extends beyond the treatment room. Each interaction, online review, social post, and shared experience contributes to shaping your practice's position in the community. A satisfied first-time patient posting about a recent visit becomes your most powerful marketing tool. An emergency case handled with exceptional care spreads through local networks. Practices that excel in clinical care can easily overlook how their reputation is shaped through these countless small moments.

Taking a reactive approach—only addressing reputation when problems arise—leaves your practice vulnerable. By then, public perception has already solidified. A dedicated team member managing your reputation ensures nothing falls through the cracks. When she owns the responsibility of documenting patient success stories, responding to reviews promptly, and maintaining your social presence, your practice's reputation blooms with each interaction. Avoid

the mindset that these tasks are only critical in a crisis. Managing your brand isn't just about reacting to issues but proactively cultivating trust and loyalty.

Patient scheduling and appointment experience

The wonderful things a patient discovers about you online and through your website won't amount to much if they have a disappointing first call with your front desk. A new patient's opinion is shaped during that first conversation and reinforced through every subsequent interaction. Your team members should be trained to listen for signs of uncertainty or anxiety, take their time, and gather information while building rapport.

Consider implementing a system where your scheduling team documents not only appointment details but also patient preferences, concerns, and personal notes. Your practice should have protocols in place to ensure that important notes, such as a patient's high dental anxiety, are communicated to assistants and hygienists before seating the patient. These details, when remembered and referenced later, show patients they're valued as people, not just appointments.

Regular team meetings focused on values, communication style, and procedures help ensure your team is aligned and ready to create positive patient experiences. Clear communication prevents most misunderstandings before they happen. While templates for common scenarios, such as patient anxiety or financial discussions, can be useful, avoid rigid scripting. Leave room for genuine and authentic connections.

Digital and social management

Public opinion of your practice is shaped as much online as it is in your operator or lobby. Managing how you show up across digital platforms should be treated with the same importance as protocols for answering phones. Social

media is an excellent and inexpensive way to share your practice's culture, your team's expertise, and your commitment to patient care. Share the moments that matter from your team's continuing education achievements and community involvement to a simple staff birthday announcement.

Assign a team member to oversee your digital platforms with the same attention you give to clinical care. By designating one person to manage your brand's voice, you ensure consistency across all platforms, whether it's your website, Google Business profile or social profiles. This ensures patients experience the same excellent care they would in your office when they interact with you online.

Social media and digital management should be viewed not as separate tasks, but as valuable, integrated aspects of your daily operations. When prospective patients search for your practice, they should be able to get to know you and your team before making that initial call. Make sure your website has a dedicated space for patient testimonials and keep them fresh and up-to-date. Adding recent team photos and current office information not only shows attention to detail but also builds trust and confidence in the care you provide.

Review generation and responses

Reviews serve as performance indicators for your practice, and your entire team should contribute to gathering them. From hygienists and assistants to front desk staff, everyone can contribute by spotting patients who might leave a good review. When they notice a positive interaction, the marketing manager can easily send a

review request via email or text. Many practice management systems already have this capability, making it easy to integrate into daily operations.

Timing is key when requesting reviews. Ask within 24 hours of the visit, and refrain from pestering patients if they don't respond. Pay attention to key moments, such as after a pain-free visit or when a nervous patient has a breakthrough. Team members should recognize these opportunities and approach them naturally. Automated review requests are useful but should always feel personal and connected to the patient's experience. When possible, ask patients for reviews directly, as it's often more effective when it comes from a team member they've built rapport with.

Every review deserves a response, whether it's a glowing 5-star or a less-than-ideal comment. Your marketing manager should have a process in place to respond promptly and thoughtfully to inquiries. Keep responses meaningful, and always maintain HIPAA compliance. Never confirm details about patients or their visits. Negative reviews should be addressed with care, and it's best to handle sensitive feedback offline. Acknowledge complaints within 24 hours and offer to resolve them in a private manner.

Crisis management

Even the most well-run practices encounter challenges. The difference lies in how prepared you are to address them. Develop clear protocols for common scenarios, such as a negative social media post, an upset patient in the office, or a service

failure. Your team should know exactly who handles these situations and how to escalate concerns appropriately.

The key to effective crisis management is speed and sincerity. Train your designated team member to respond quickly while maintaining HIPAA compliance and professional standards. Often, a prompt, empathetic response can transform a potentially damaging situation into a demonstration of your practice's commitment to patient satisfaction. Trust that new and existing patients are not only reading your reviews but also paying close attention to your responses.

Most importantly, use these situations to strengthen your systems. A surge of complaints about waiting times reveals scheduling issues. A viral post about billing confusion could highlight the need for better financial communications. Turn these moments into opportunities for genuine improvement.

Office culture

Your office culture shapes your reputation from the inside out. Every team member should understand how daily interactions impact patient perception and practice growth. Quality assurance in reputation management involves consistent communication among clinical, administrative, and marketing teams. Morning huddles should include time for sharing recent patient feedback and discussing opportunities for improvement. When every team member understands their role in building your practice's reputation, they become built-in ambassadors for your brand and assume personal responsibility for its success.

Document and celebrate team achievements, both professional and personal. When your hygienist completes advanced training or your assistant reaches a service milestone, make it known. These moments of recognition not only boost team morale but also demonstrate to patients they're in capable, committed hands.

Brand amplification

Your brand grows stronger when your entire team understands and embodies your practice values. Regular team meetings should include discussions about recent patient feedback, successful interactions, and opportunities for improvement. Share positive reviews with the whole team, especially when they mention specific staff members.

Encourage your team members to naturally participate in brand building. Social sharing works when it's authentic. When employees share practice updates on their profiles or engage with practice content online, it creates a ripple effect that extends your reach beyond paid advertising.

In-office documentation

Your practice is one of a kind, and its story should be organic and original. Take opportunities to document the natural moments that showcase your values and vision through achievements, relationships and skills. Great content will transpire naturally by promoting what makes your practice special.

Keep a running document of shareable moments. When your team completes advanced courses, celebrates work anniversaries, or goes the extra mile for patients, note it.

Content is easily pulled from consistent and thoughtful documentation of your practice. Moments that endear patients to your staff and culture are brought directly into their living rooms through social media. Suddenly, you're not someone they see twice a year, but a constant and reassuring presence on their feed.

The impact of intentional reputation management

Your practice's reputation isn't something that happens by chance. It's the result of consistent effort, proactive strategies, and a commitment to patient experience. Every phone call, appointment and online interaction shapes public perception. Just as you have systems in place for clinical excellence, you should have a structured approach to managing your brand both in person and online.

When reputation management becomes second nature, your team works together to build trust, reinforce positive patient experiences, and enhance your community presence. Your front desk creates first impressions, your clinical team delivers care worth talking about, and your marketing lead ensures those moments are shared with the right audience.

The key is to be intentional. Assign ownership, implement best practices, and integrate brand-building into daily operations. With a dedicated team member guiding your reputation strategy, your practice stays ahead, proactively shaping how patients see you rather than reacting to what they say. A strong reputation isn't built overnight, but with consistency and care, it becomes one of your greatest assets. **OT**



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