

Internet ratings gone awry

I was doing an Internet search for my clinic when I came across a not-so-nice review. There was only one review, too, so our overall rating was horrible. I'd hate for a prospective client to be turned off by one person's bad experience. Is there any way to counteract this?

"In the old days, an unhappy customer was said to tell about 30 people. Today, with the Internet, that one customer has the power to tell millions," says Linda Wasche, founder and president of LW Marketworks Inc. in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. "There are a few things you can do, however, to prevent this from happening and balance the negative comments of an unhappy client."

First, she says, make it easy for clients to locate positive information about your clinic. "Consider adding client testimonials to your Web site as well as listing awards or accolades," she says. "Issuing press releases about special programs, presentations, and other activities at your clinic may add to your credibility if they're picked up and posted by the local media."

Second, make it easy for clients to complain. "Make it part of your hospital's culture to embrace client complaints as a means of continuous improvement," says Wasche. "Put procedures in place for staff members to get to the bottom of complaints quickly." Wasche also recommends regularly soliciting feedback from all clients through client surveys, post-appointment comment cards, and phone interviews. "This feedback lets you spot weaknesses as well as opportunities to enhance your clients' experiences."

Finally, Wasche says, recheck your quality-control procedures. What happened in this particular situation and could it have been prevented? How did you leave things with the client? How did you follow up? Is there anything that could've been done differently?

"Keep in mind," she says, "it's difficult for clients to evaluate your team's technical skills. Instead, clients will often evaluate your practice based on bedside manner and how they were treated."



Linda Wasche