



# **The New Word of Mouth: How Online Reviews Are Changing The Doctor–Patient Relationship**

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## The New Word of Mouth: How Online Reviews Are Changing The Doctor-Patient Relationship

Chances are that if you use the internet, you've read or even written online reviews. From vacation homes on [Airbnb](#) to products on [Amazon](#), online reviews help validate decisions and drive consumers to take action. Healthcare is no exception. In this report, we'll look at data that illuminates exactly how patients and providers alike are using online reviews to improve the healthcare experience and build stronger relationships.



**Have you ever Google searched your practice?**



**Do you know what your patients are saying about you online?**



**Is your online reputation protected?**

**Visit [www.zocdoc.com/join](https://www.zocdoc.com/join) to learn more.**

This report is brought to you by Zocdoc, the digital health platform that helps providers attract new patients, manage their web presence, and build patient loyalty.

# The Search Begins:

## More patients are going online to find providers

Sixty percent of patients lack a consistent relationship with a healthcare provider. A growing segment of the patient population is turning to online platforms to find a healthcare provider they trust and who fits into their busy lives.



<http://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/>

**77%**  
of patients start their  
healthcare search online.

Online review platforms rank prominently on Google searches, often the first step in the patient journey. <sup>1</sup>

**94%**

of internet users who  
use reviews **consider**  
**reviews helpful** <sup>2</sup>

**88%**

of consumers **trust online**  
**reviews** as much as personal  
recommendations <sup>3</sup>

**68%**

**increase in patients**  
using online reviews  
from 2013 - 2014 <sup>4</sup>

**84%**

of patients **read online**  
**reviews** to evaluate  
providers <sup>5</sup>

**47%**

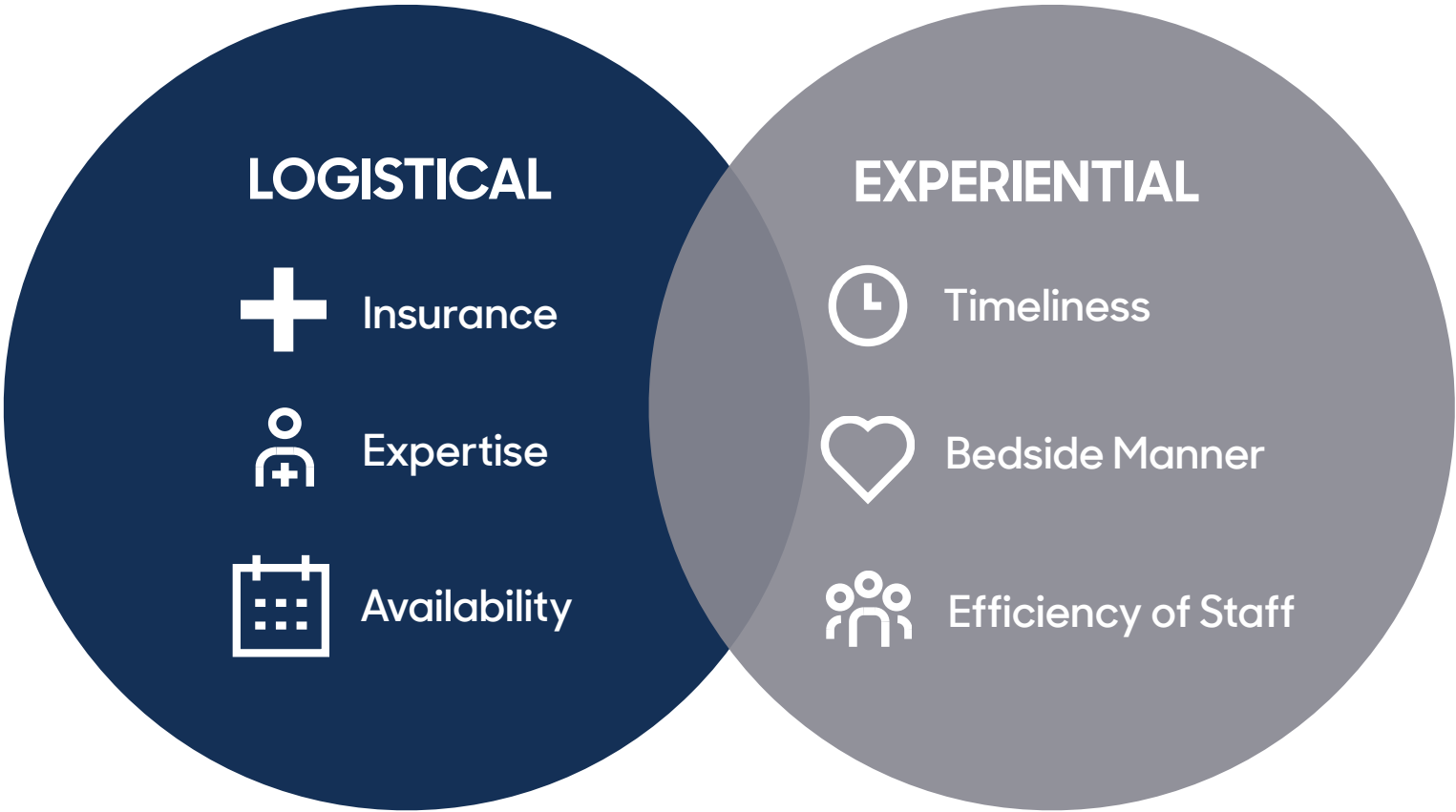
of patients **feel different**  
**after reading** a provider's  
profile and reviews <sup>6</sup>



# The patient mindset:

## What patients are looking for in online reviews

Patients turn to online reviews to quickly find in-network doctors who fit into their schedules — and who have certain “softer” qualities desirable in a provider.



More reviews, more stars, more patients

9x

Doctors with the most reviews on Zocdoc typically receive **nine times as many appointments** than those with the fewest <sup>7</sup>

47%

of patients would go **out of network** for a doctor with more favorable reviews <sup>8</sup>

85%

of patients are **not comfortable choosing a provider with 1 star** for more than 10% of reviews <sup>9</sup>

# Owning your online reputation:

## Balancing positive and negative reviews

Even the most popular providers receive an occasional negative review.  
It's a fact of life online.



**A few negative reviews will not  
hurt your reputation**



Of the most popular 10% of  
doctors on Zocdoc

**89%**

have at least one  
negative review<sup>10</sup>

# Building your patient database:

## How to make the most of negative reviews

Web-savvy providers actively manage their reputations by soliciting reviews from all of their patients. This creates a fair, representative picture of their practice by balancing out negative reviews with comments from the average, satisfied patient.

**Acknowledge** the review in a respectful, sympathetic, and sincere way

**Reach out** privately if the review is warranted and addresses a fixable issue

**Encourage** more patients to review you

### Patient-Doctor Review Cycle

**Learn** from the feedback



# Closed-Loop Reviews:

## How Zocdoc Reviews are different

There is a significant difference between open-loop and closed-loop review systems. In an open-loop system, anyone can leave a review, whereas Zocdoc’s closed-loop reviews are written by verified patients who have seen the doctor and are actively asked for their feedback.

	Open-Loop Platform Reviews	Zocdoc Closed-Loop Reviews
Who can review?	Anyone can leave a review, including the provider or staff, competitors, or patients who have never seen the provider.	Only patients who have seen the healthcare provider can leave a review.
Do providers need to opt in?	Providers do not need to opt in for users to post reviews and feedback.	Providers must opt in to the platform to receive reviews and feedback.
Is feedback solicited?	In open-loop review systems feedback is not solicited by providers.	Zocdoc actively seeks feedback from patients after they see their doctor.
How accurate are reviews?	With little or no vetting of the review, there are weaker safeguards against unwarranted bad reviews.	Safeguards protect against unwarranted reviews.
Are reviews fair?	Open-loop reviews attract outliers who are looking for a place to vent	The patient sample is representative. 84% of reviews on Zocdoc are the highest possible score.



# Cheat Sheet:

## What you need to know about online reviews

By managing their online reviews, providers can attract new patients, strengthen their practice, and control their web presence.

### Why providers should care about online reviews:



Online reviews are the new, more powerful form of word of mouth.



The more reviews, the better: providers should encourage patients to post online reviews.



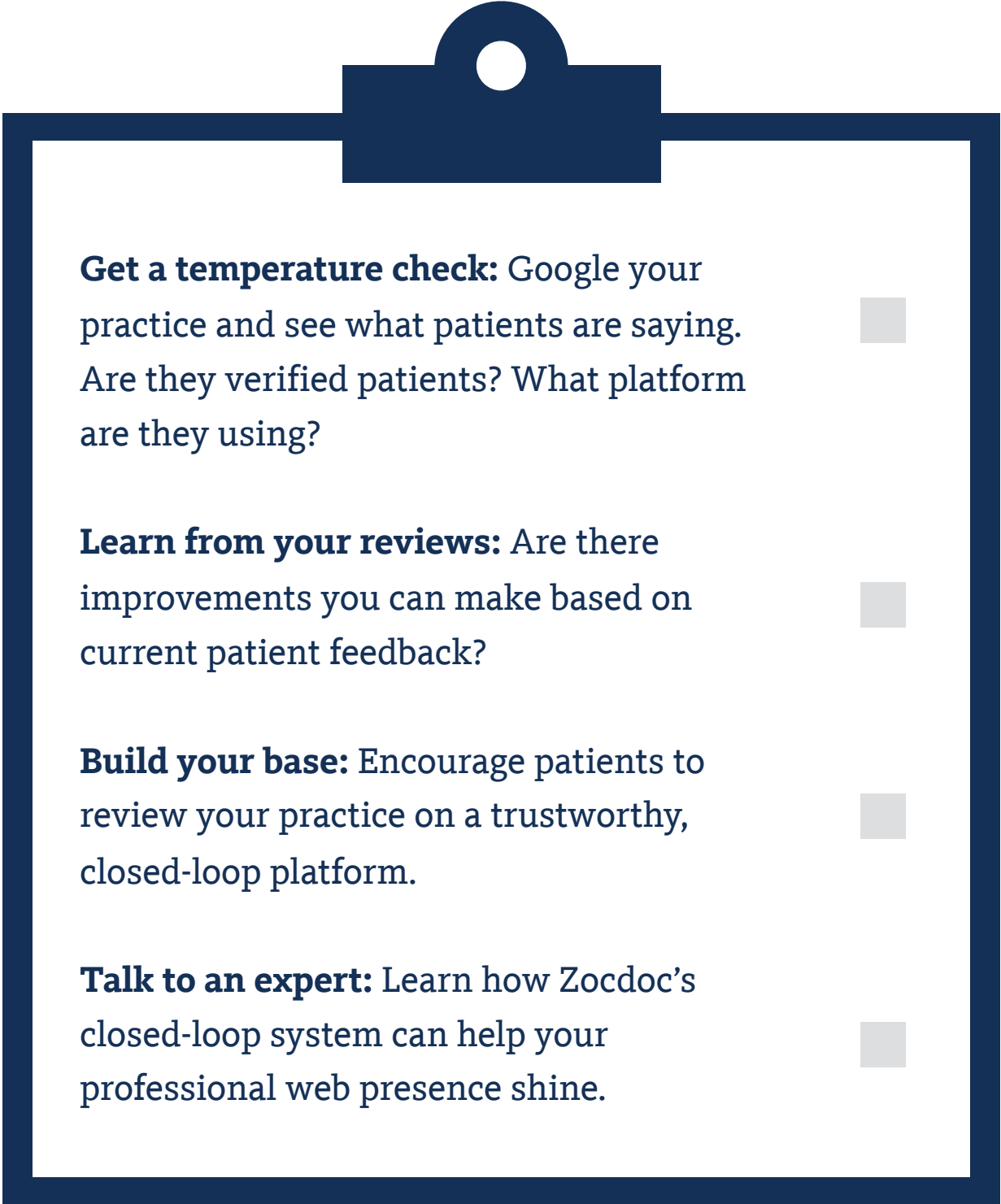
Closed-loop reviews help providers seek verified feedback and offer safeguards against unwarranted negative reviews.



Online reviews are the future of patient-first healthcare, improving the quality of the patient experience and the health of the provider's practice.



# Your online reputation checklist



**Get a temperature check:** Google your practice and see what patients are saying. Are they verified patients? What platform are they using?

**Learn from your reviews:** Are there improvements you can make based on current patient feedback?

**Build your base:** Encourage patients to review your practice on a trustworthy, closed-loop platform.

**Talk to an expert:** Learn how Zocdoc's closed-loop system can help your professional web presence shine.

Call (866) 962-3622  
[www.zocdoc.com/join](http://www.zocdoc.com/join) today!

We love hearing from practices across the country, and want to show you how Zocdoc can be tailored to your needs. Give us a call to learn how we can help you attract new patients, protect your online reputation, manage your web presence, build patient loyalty, and more.

# Appendix:

- 1 77% of patients start their healthcare search online  
<http://www.softwareadvice.com/resources/how-patients-use-online-reviews/>  
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- 6 47% of patients feel different after reading a provider's profile and reviews  
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- 7 The doctors with the top 25% of reviews receive 9x more appointments than those with the fewest.  
Zocdoc Internal Data, Apr 2014 - Apr 2015
- 8 47% of patients would go out of network for a doctor with more favorable reviews  
Loria, Gaby. "How Patients Use Online Reviews." Software Advice. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.
- 9 85% of patients are not comfortable choosing a provider with 1 star for more than 10% of reviews  
Bassig, Migs. "Doctors, Hospitals, and Healthcare Marketers and Organizations: A List of Online Review Sites You Track and Manage." Review Trackers. 24 Feb. 2015. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.
- 10 Of the most popular 10% of doctors on Zocdoc 89% have at least one negative review  
Zocdoc Internal Data, Apr 2014 - Apr 2015

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