

Best Practices for Curating Your Own Provider Profile

It goes without saying that the internet is crowded with infinite choices and resources for consumers who like to shop around. Doctor directories are no exception.

As a provider, managing your online brand means navigating through a jungle of commercial directories, online yellow pages, and health network websites, each with its own database of physician profiles, ratings, and reviews. While it may be tempting to just post your name, specialty, and phone number in each one, converting site visits into booked appointments requires that you carefully curate all aspects of your personal brand.

Our 2018 survey of 1,334 healthgrades.com users revealed that one-third of consumers actively search for information about new doctors and specialists. That's in addition to the 8% who evaluate recommended doctors and specialists to make sure they're a good fit. Your online profile can thus be a powerful sales funnel when you take the time to provide the information consumers are searching for.

But what exactly is it that healthcare consumers are searching for?



$\frac{1}{3}$

OF CONSUMERS
ACTIVELY SEARCH
FOR INFORMATION
ABOUT NEW DOCTORS
AND SPECIALISTS

1

BE SOCIAL: ATTRACT AND MONITOR PATIENT REVIEWS

55% of healthcare consumers say they look specifically for patient reviews when researching a doctor online, according to a Comscore survey commissioned by Healthgrades. In fact, patient reviews are the most important factor in their decision when choosing a doctor.

While an Ivy League diploma hanging in your office may look impressive, a string of 5-star ratings decorating your online listing is more likely to inspire healthcare consumers to pay a visit. Another [study by the Health Management Academy](#), in conjunction with Healthgrades, revealed that 62% would choose a physician who graduated from a generic university but has a 5-star rating over one with an elite university diploma and a 4-star rating.

In fact, the value healthcare consumers place on positive patient ratings and reviews is trending upward. In a [Kryuus study](#) in 2020, 66% indicated the quality of online ratings and reviews were very or extremely important, compared to 61% in 2017.

It's important to understand that doctor directories allowing public comments and ratings are a form of social media and should be treated as such. That means you must track consumer reviews — especially complaints — and craft helpful responses, with the goal of improving your overall ratings.

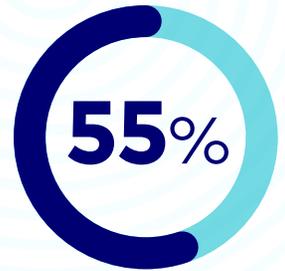
If possible, add links to your social media profiles. By a 10% margin, healthcare consumers [surveyed by the Health Management Academy](#) placed a higher value on Facebook likes and Twitter followers than the number of ratings on the doctor's directory profile.

2

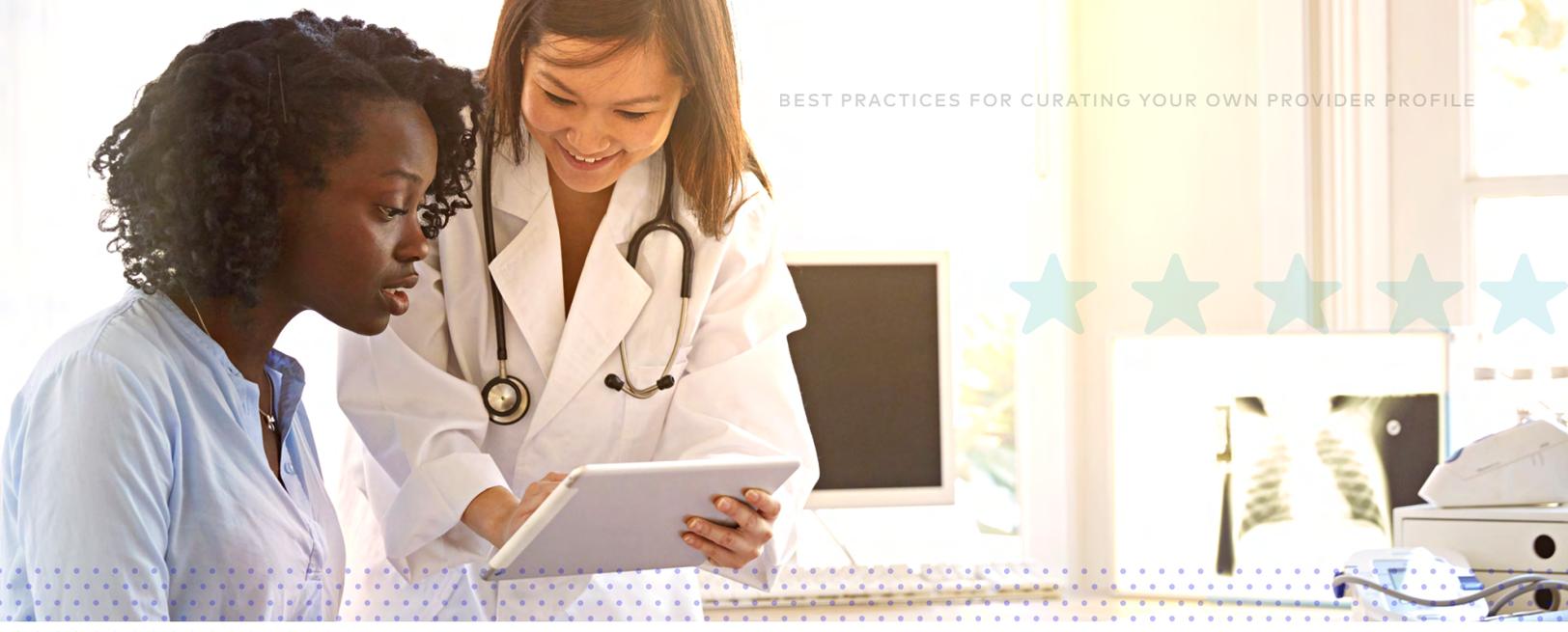
BE RELEVANT: PROVIDE INFORMATION ON YOUR SPECIALTY

The Comscore survey revealed that nearly half of healthcare consumers say they search for doctors by medical specialty. According to a 2018 study published in the [Journal of Medical Internet Research](#), which analyzed 212,933 providers on healthgrades.com, viewing doctor ratings by specialty helps healthcare consumers "more meaningfully assess online physician ratings," which often have a narrow range that skews toward 3- to 5-star ratings. In other words, it's easier to glean meaningful insights into a doctor's past performance when comparing specialists side by side.

For this reason, highlighting your specialty is a must. In addition to checking any relevant boxes, be sure to detail where you trained and list any board certifications to earn some extra credibility.



OF HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS SAY THEY LOOK SPECIFICALLY FOR PATIENT REVIEWS WHEN RESEARCHING A DOCTOR ONLINE



3

BE CREDIBLE: DETAIL YOUR EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Patient ratings may reign supreme, but a doctor's credentials remain important. When searching for information about doctors online, 36% of healthcare consumers surveyed by Comscore said they are interested in reviewing the doctor's education and professional experience. In fact, educational background is the second most important factor considered in their decision-making process.

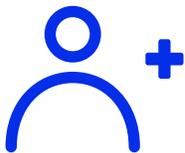
For this reason, it's a best practice to list not only where you went to medical school but also where you completed internships and residencies. Specifying how many years of experience you have is also an effective strategy.

Perhaps most important are your board certifications, which succinctly communicate to patients that you have met the requirements of national medical specialty boards. A board-certified doctor is more likely than a non-board-certified doctor to have the most current skills and knowledge about treating specific medical conditions.

4

BE AVAILABLE: SPECIFY THAT YOU'RE ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS

Put yourself in your patients' shoes: After a comprehensive online search for a highly rated physician, the patient calls to make an appointment and is told that you're not taking new patients. The patient must start over, which is a frustrating experience that may lead to calling several doctors before finding one that's available. Your office, on the other hand, must screen a handful of calls like this every day—adding to the already heavy workload faced by your practice's administrative staff.



In this context, it makes sense that one-third of healthcare consumers view only doctors who are accepting new patients, according to Comscore. That's why it's important to make clear that you are available for new patients. Given this information, healthcare consumers can feel confident that they're on the right track.

Perhaps the most important aspect is whether your practice accepts their insurance. In the [2020 Kyruus study](#), 92% indicated "accepts my insurance" was extremely or very important when selecting a provider. Yet 52% of doctors [surveyed by the American Medical Association](#) admit that, at least once every month, their patients experience coverage issues as a result of inaccurate information encountered in payer directories. So, be sure to highlight which insurance providers you work with and keep that list up-to-date to ensure a pleasant patient experience.

5

BE REACHABLE: PROVIDE CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION

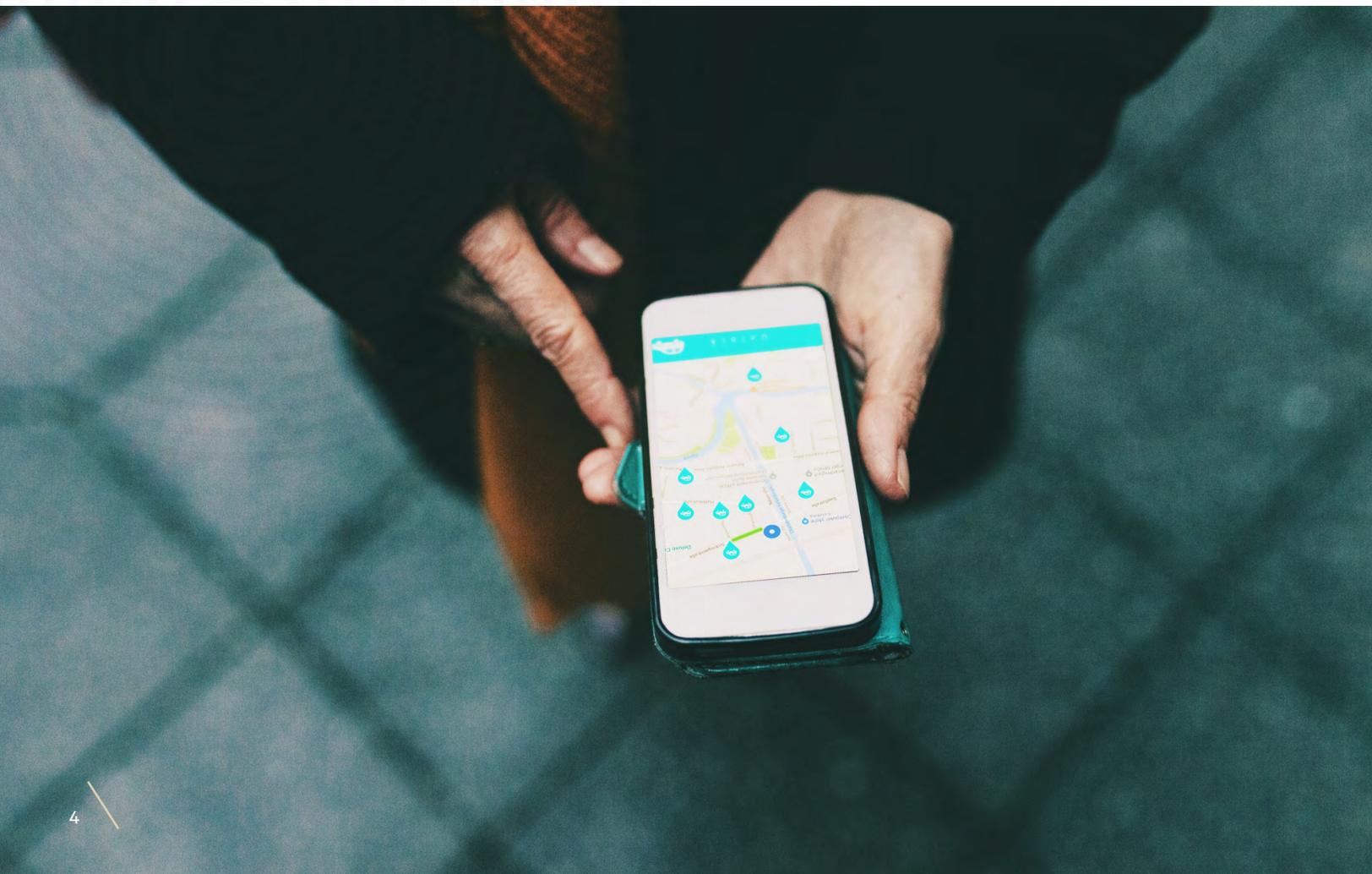
Over 40% of doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants don't "check or correct" listings, according to a poll by [HealthLink Dimensions](#). Inaccurate contact information can leave new and existing patients understandably frustrated and unable to get the care they need when they need it.

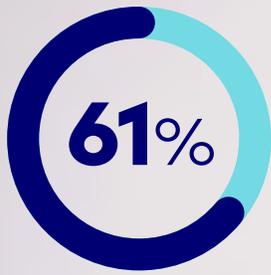
This isn't limited to third-party directories, either. Many network and payer directories aren't nearly as reliable as they should be. For instance, almost 49% of provider locations listed in Medicare Advantage Organization directories contain inaccuracies, most commonly listing a doctor at the wrong location, [according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#).

Making contact information easy to find—and, perhaps more importantly, keeping it up-to-date—can have a significant impact on the success of your practice. Not only does it ensure new patients can reach your office and set up their first appointment, but it also breeds loyalty in existing patients, 28% of whom search online for their doctor's contact information, according to Comscore.

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61%
OF HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS
PREFER PHYSICIANS WITH
4-STAR RATINGS AND 20+
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



6

BE PERSONAL: TAILOR YOUR PROFILE TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Modern branding is all about making a personal connection with the customer, and the interaction between doctor and patient is among the most intimate of customer relationships.

Use text and imagery to highlight yourself as not just a healer, but also a caring individual with whom prospective patients can relate to on a personal level. You might even consider creating a video where you speak to your care philosophy.

Even the most subtle content changes can make a difference. For example, consumers on Healthgrades engage with profiles that have photos 60% more often.

If you dig deep enough, you'll find that every business has at least one area where they brand well — otherwise, they wouldn't still be in business. Health provider practices are no exception.



For instance, do you have a less-than-perfect star rating but at least 20 years of experience in your specialty? Push the experience, says the Health Management Academy, which found that 61% of healthcare consumers prefer physicians with 4-star ratings and 20 years of experience over physicians with 5-star ratings and just four years of experience.

You don't need to navigate the online profile landscape alone. Forge a partnership with review and profile sites willing to provide you with the technological tools, proven reach, and specialized marketing expertise to develop a great brand and bring it to market.

Claim your free profile:
update.healthgrades.com