5 Rules for Protecting Your Online Reputation
Online Patient Reviews
Online patient reviews are a top of mind concern for dentists, since they significantly impact practice success. Reviews not only affect prospective patients’ perceptions of your practice, they also impact your overall online reputation in your local community. This Sesame Guide to Practice Success provides five simple rules for dealing with online patient reviews and protecting your online reputation.

1 Marketing Land 4/9/13

90% of people are influenced by online reviews when deciding whether to purchase a product or service1
It is a numbers game – quantity rules

It is impossible for you to control all the reviews that patients post online. The key is to generate enough positive reviews to outweigh any negative voices by automatically generating as many reviews as possible each month. A comprehensive patient engagement system can drive reviews effectively and efficiently via emailed patient post-appointment surveys and website click-to-review functionality. For example, a recent study by Sesame Communications found that practices with Dental Sesame™ or Ortho Sesame™ and a Healthgrades Enhanced profile generated, on average, 22 new online published patient reviews per month.²

²Sesame Research Brief, Patient Acquisition Performance Metrics, February 2014
It is a value game – quality rules

A key to developing a positive online reputation is ensuring the high quality of the reviews. Certified patient reviews are the gold standard. You can make certain that online reviews of your practice come from actual patients by publishing your own reviews. More sophisticated patient reviews will provide an objective rating for multiple criteria and the ability for patients to grade each of them. For instance, Healthgrades reviews rate a practice on 9 core variables including timeliness and provider knowledge.

70% of patients say that online reviews are as important as the dentist’s credentials.

3 Review Trackers 5/6/13
It is a location game – placement rules

Publishing quality patient reviews online is valuable only if existing and prospective patients see those reviews. The leading vertical search website for dentistry is Healthgrades.com, where over 20 million consumers each year log on to schedule an appointment with a dental practice. The best way to rank prominently and leverage your positive reviews on Healthgrades is to activate an Enhanced Profile, which will allow your practice profile to be in a rotation of the top preferred providers in your area and remove any competing dentist’s information from your profile. Enhanced profiles also provide prospective patients with an easy way to request an appointment by phone or email.

94.3% of dentists with a Healthgrades Enhanced Profile stated it is important to the success of their practice

*Sesame Member Survey 2014*
Provide Excellent Customer Service

Of course the best way to protect your online reputation is to consistently provide exceptional service to your patients, and while you can’t make everyone happy, it’s best to have the positive experiences far outweigh the negative ones (see Rule 1). When you consistently provide your patients with a great experience, your reputation will be strong enough to weather the occasional unhappy patient.

81% of consumers are more likely to give a company repeated business after good service.footnote
Resolve Any Negative Reviews

When it comes to addressing negative reviews, engagement is the key. If a patient posts a negative review of your practice, acknowledge it. If you ignore the review you run the risk of being perceived as rude by prospective patients. It can be a daunting task to respond to an unhappy patient, but you need to look at it as an opportunity to change their mind. Even better if you’re successful, you may convince them to write a new positive review that will replace the old one!

41.4% of businesses count on referrals for over 80% of their sales 6

6 Active Rain 2011
Final Thoughts
Online reviews significantly impact prospective patients’ choice of dental practice. To gain the most out of your reviews make certain you generate the right quantity and quality of reviews, and publish them where it matters.