

# Stake a Claim: How to Manage Your Online Directory Listings

A simple guide for making sure your listing is accurate.

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In a previous article, we discussed that online directories are today's version of the once-dominant Yellow Pages, meaning prospective patients are using these sites to gather basic—but important—practice information (visit [PracticalDermatology.com/2018/01](http://PracticalDermatology.com/2018/01) to read the article). Often, it is from this information that people decide whether to do business with you. Therefore, it is important that correct and consistent information about your practice can be found on these directory listings.

Yet, many practice listings contain incorrect, inconsistent, or incomplete information, due to a lack of management by practices. Ensure that's not the case for your listings; follow this simple guide for managing your online directory presence.

## 1. ASSIGN A CHAMPION

Like any practice project, a staff member needs to be responsible for managing directory listings. This person will be your project leader—your online directory “champion.” The person who takes on this responsibility needs to be internet-savvy. This task will be part of the employee's regular job duties and, as such, will use employer-paid hours. For this reason, management buy-in is likely necessary. The person you select to be your “champion” will likely be one of the following types of individuals:

- An internal Millennial or Generation Y'er (born between early 1980s to mid-1990s) looking for additional responsibility and/or development who already has an elevated comfort and interest level in online media.
- A marketing staff member or other internal online marketing employee with availability and an expressed interest in taking on a more diverse role within the practice.
- A new employee or a contracted third-party who has the skill set to manage online directories within the practice's financial means.

## 2. CREATE REFERENCE SHEETS AND GAIN QUORUM

To aid your champion in evaluating the information on directories, detailed reference sheets should be developed, kept up to date, and made easily available. These sheets should include all pertinent information about the practice and its physicians. Reference sheets should be finalized, agreed upon, and approved by key practice stakeholders before use. Below is the specific information that should be included on these sheets.

- **Practice basics:** Preferred practice name, address, and phone number (NAP); hours of operation; services and products; practice specialty/business category (i.e., dermatology, plastic surgery, medspa, etc.); providers; and any other important practice information. (*Note: If the practice has multiple locations, a reference sheet should be created for each location.*)
- **Provider information:** List each physician provider (with preferred spelling), credentials (including any board certifications, medical specialty, etc.), short biographies, and insurance plans accepted. For tradi-

### IS A THIRD-PARTY CONTRACTOR NEEDED?

If your practice does not have the capacity or capability to fully conduct directory listing management internally, you may want to hire an outside party to manage this ongoing responsibility. In addition to your website and SEO provider, there are many vendors that can assist you in this process. Two of the more common ones are Moz Local ([moz.com](http://moz.com)) and Yext ([yext.com](http://yext.com)). Do your research and pick the third-party contractor right for your practice. Before you know it, your online presence will improve.

tional practices, list all providers (MD and non-MD). Meanwhile, for medical spas, list onsite providers and medical directors.

### 3. CONDUCT ONLINE SEARCHES

To find out what information is online about the practice, your champion should conduct a search for: 1.) the practice's name, 2.) keywords likely associated with the practice, and 3.) practice services and providers. The champion will likely find the practice listed in at least one of these three online directory types: Search engine directories (i.e., Google, Yahoo!, and Apple Maps), medical directories (i.e., Healthgrades, Vitals, RealSelf, and RateMDs), and business directories (i.e., YP, Yelp, and Citysearch). Top directory search results—those listed on Page 1—should be examined and updated first by your champion, since those are more likely to be seen by potential patients.

### 4. CLAIM AND UPDATE YOUR LISTINGS

The first step in updating your directory listings is claiming them. While the claiming process may vary from site to site, each site will have easy-to-follow instructions for claiming your listing. Many sites have a link toward the bottom of the listing titled, "Is this your business? Click here to claim your listing." Once the listing is claimed, your champion can then use the approved reference sheet(s) to update each listing with current, accurate, and consistent practice information. Each directory listing has different rules and features (i.e., allowing photos and customer reviews). The project champion should take full advantage of each directory's unique characteristics when updating listings.

### 5. MONITOR AND REPLY TO REVIEWS

Some directory listing sites allow reviews. Be sure your champion regularly checks popular directories for new reviews and responds to all of them—positive and negative—in a timely, appropriate manner following set scripts. When responding to a review, it is important to not violate any privacy laws. Erring on the side of caution, most practices opt to simply thank reviewers for their feedback while offering practice contact information to discuss a negative experience with displeased reviewers in private.

### 6. MANAGE, MANAGE, MANAGE

Initially, the directory listing project will be a significant task. After your listings are claimed and updated for the first time, ongoing management will be much less arduous. Your practice champion should spot-check the directories regularly—reviewing popular listings and those with reviews more frequently—when not updating them with new information. In some cases (i.e., an office

#### PICK A CHAMPION

Your champion will access directory listings, monitor them, and make updates as needed. Choose the best person for the job, such as:

- An internal Millennial or Generation Y'er looking for additional responsibility and/or development.
- A marketing staff member or other internal online marketing employee with availability and an expressed interest in taking on a more diverse role within the practice.
- A new employee or a contracted third-party who has the skill set to manage online directories.

relocation or the addition of new a provider), directories may revert to previous listed information. Over time, this will fix itself, but in the short term it is incumbent that your champion be on the lookout for such reversions. It is important that online directories for the practice are up to date and accurate for potential patients and search engine optimization (SEO).

### STRAIGHTFORWARD PROCESS

Directory listings are an increasingly important part of your practice branding and marketing efforts and should not be ignored. Following the straightforward process mentioned above will assist you in claiming and updating your directory listings, so that you are found by potential patients, optimized online, and presented as a quality practice. ■

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