



# Best Practices for Curating Provider Profiles

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 healthcare marketer, managing your providers' online brands 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 a name, specialty, and phone number in each one, converting site visits into booked appointments requires that you carefully curate all aspects of your doctor's 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. Online provider profiles can thus be a powerful sales funnel for healthcare marketers who take the time to provide the information consumers are searching for.

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

1/3

OF CONSUMERS  
ACTIVELY SEARCH  
FOR INFORMATION  
ABOUT NEW DOCTORS  
AND SPECIALISTS

## Here are the ingredients you need to build a high-converting provider profile

### 01

#### BE SOCIAL: ATTRACT AND MONITOR PATIENT REVIEWS

Fifty-five percent 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 the doctor's office may look impressive, a string of five-star ratings decorating an 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, according to year-over-year data from Kyruus' [2017](#) and [2018 Patient Access Journey Report](#). One-third described this social proof as "extremely important" in 2018, compared to just 26% the previous year.

It's important to understand that doctor directories that allow 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 work with your doctor to craft helpful responses, with the goal of improving overall ratings.

If possible, add links to your doctor's (or practice's) 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.

# 55%

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

### 02

#### BE RELEVANT: PROVIDE INFORMATION ON THE DOCTOR'S 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 the doctor's specialty is a must. In addition to checking any relevant boxes, be sure to detail where the doctor trained in his or her specialty and list any board certifications to earn some extra credibility.



### 03 **BE CREDIBLE: DETAIL THE DOCTOR'S EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE**

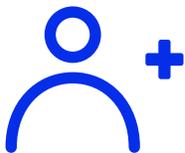
Patient ratings may reign supreme but a doctor's credentials remain important. When searching for information about doctors online, 36% of healthcare consumers surveyed by Comscore said they are interested in reviewing the doctor's education and professional experience. In fact, educational background 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 the doctor went to medical school but also where he or she completed internships and residencies. Specifying how many years of experience the doctor has is also an effective strategy.

Perhaps most important are a doctor's board certifications, which succinctly communicate to patients that they 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.

### 04 **BE AVAILABLE: SPECIFY THAT YOU'RE ACCEPTING NEW PATIENTS**

Put yourself in the patients' shoes: After a comprehensive online search for a highly rated physician, the patient calls to make an appointment and is told that the physician isn't 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 the doctor is available. 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. 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.

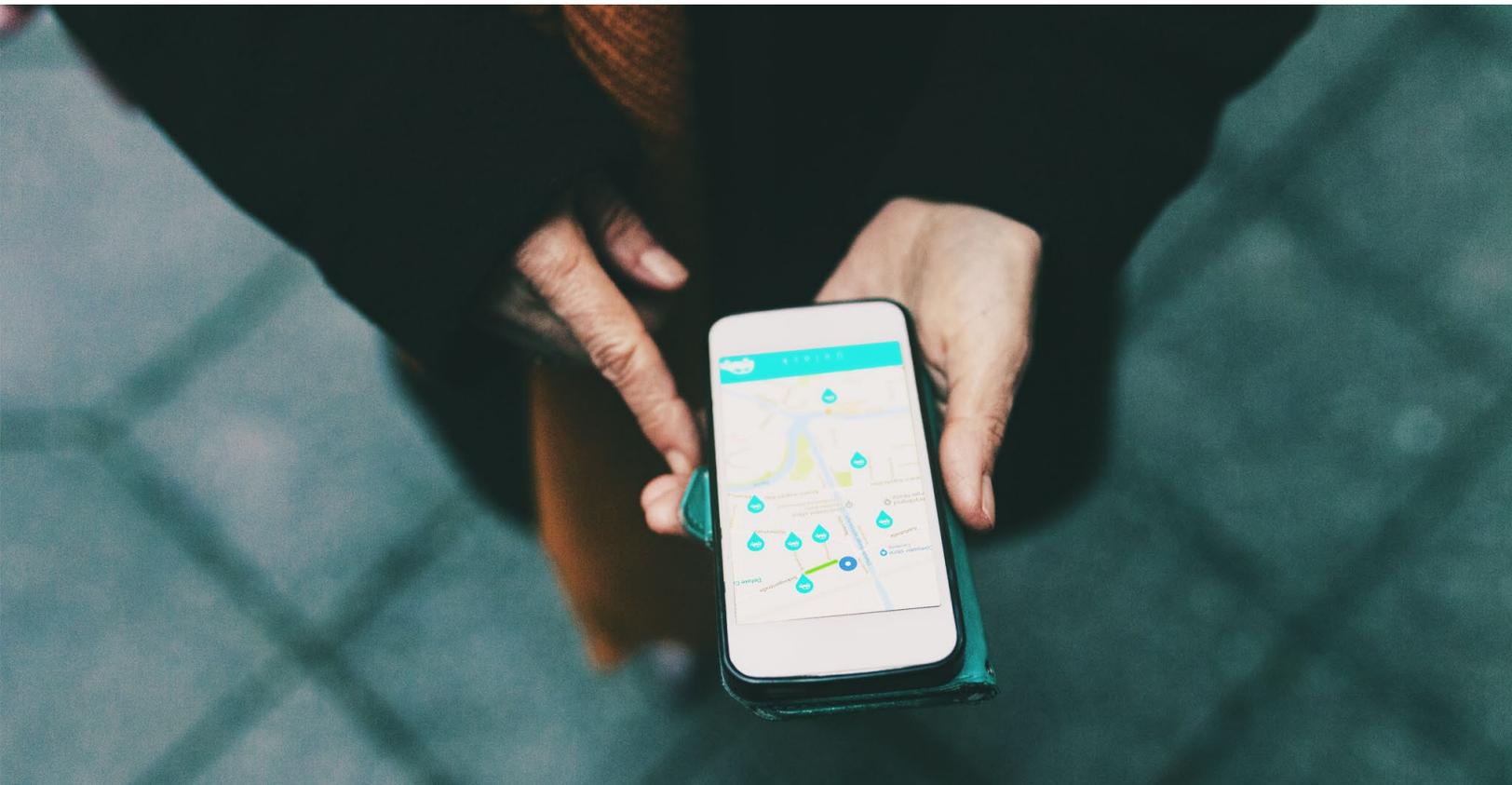
## 05 **BE REACHABLE: PROVIDE CURRENT CONTACT INFORMATION**

Over 40% of doctors, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants don't "check or correct" listings, according to a [2018 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.

**OVER  
40%**  
OF DOCTORS, NURSE  
PRACTITIONERS,  
AND PHYSICIAN  
ASSISTANTS  
DON'T "CHECK OR  
CORRECT" LISTINGS





61%

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

## 06 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 the doctor as not just a healer, but also a caring individual with whom prospective patients can relate on a personal level. You might even consider creating a video of the doctor speaking about his or her care philosophy, as these are both top-7 factors healthcare consumers consider when choosing a doctor.

Even the most subtle content changes can make a difference. For example, consumers are slightly more likely to choose a profile that includes a photo of the physician over a profile with a higher star rating but no picture, [according to the Health Management Academy](#).

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, does your provider have a less-than-perfect star rating but at least 20 years of experience in their 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.

[partners.healthgrades.com](https://partners.healthgrades.com)

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