

# Client Online Complaints

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## THE PROBLEM

A client complains on Yelp<sup>1</sup> that she was kept waiting a long time with no apology or explanation from the customer service representative (CSR), who was snippy when she questioned the wait.

## THE SOLUTIONS

**1** Identify the reviewer by clicking on their name or photo to determine if the review is legitimate, solicited, paid, or fake. (See Legitimate or Not?) If the review is real, a practice team leader should:

- Discuss the review with all team members to ensure they understand the complaint and the client's needs. Ask the team how they perceived the interaction, and to see the situation from the client's point of view.
- Speak privately with any team member mentioned in the complaint.
- Contact the client, privately, by telephone. The caller should apologize and invite the client to explain what happened, or to vent. Then, stay silent and listen, making only empathetic comments (eg, *I am sorry. I will take action to ensure you are satisfied when you visit next time*).

**2** Subscribe to a middleware software (ie, provides services beyond the practice operating system) that enables team members to solicit and post reviews they can control, respond to negative reviews, and post positive reviews.

- Products worth consideration include Reputation Management Service, from Vetstreet, and Reputation Builder, from ePetHealth.
- Some software tools are fully integrated with social media sites and alert the practice when a response is received. Positive client comments can be posted to the practice website.

These tools link to the customer database and send client surveys. Ask clients who respond positively to post a review and contact clients who send negative survey responses.

**3** Provide team members with training in engagement and communication skills.

- Train all team members to appreciate the importance of client interaction.
- Include training for listening to clients' feelings and responding with empathy.
- Evaluate the front-office (eg, inviting, comfortable, handling delays).

## Legitimate or Not?

Determine a review's legitimacy by:

- Watching out for reviews generated by someone who has not visited the practice
- Being skeptical of a review from someone who does not usually write reviews <AU: Why?>
- Questioning a review from someone who has no profile information (eg, profile photo, additional information, link to Facebook).
- Suspecting any review that is strongly slanted, lacking details, or from a different location than the practice

## THE IMPACT

Clients who care enough to take the time to post their complaints want a response. Listening to them and showing empathy for their concerns will likely win them over as loyal clients and may reveal their perceptions of the practice that the team should know. ■■

## Reference

1. Couzin G, Grappon J. *Yelp for Business: The Quick-Start Guide to Managing Your Reviews*. Indianapolis, IN: John Wiley & Sons. 2014.



Like the complicated cases in your practice, some challenges may need a different approach or original solutions. For more ideas and direction, consider looking for an individual consultant or someone with a specific area of expertise at [vetpartners.org/directory](http://vetpartners.org/directory)