



There's no doubt about it: social networks are an excellent showcase for your veterinary practice. They're a great way for you to share news, promote your expertise and provide information on your services and activities. But above all, they're an ideal tool for reaching out to your customers and engaging them in a discussion.

Social media gives people the freedom to express their concerns, feelings and opinions. So what should you do if your practice is the target of a negative comment or opinion online?

Responding to a negative comment

Imagine this: you've just logged into your practice's Facebook page. You get a notification that an obviously unsatisfied client has left a very disparaging comment on a recent post.

Your first reflex may be to ignore this criticism. But by doing that, you might send a signal that you don't really care about what your customers have to say.

Should you delete the comment? In a word: never! All that will do is reinforce the customer's negative perception. Instead, you have to show them that you really want to resolve the situation and that you're listening to them.

Go on the offensive!

You should look at this criticism as an opportunity to turn this unsatisfied customer into a satisfied customer. What's more, by offering a response, you can change the perception of other people who visit your Facebook page.

The best thing to do is recognize that the person had a bad experience and find a solution by coming up with a response as quickly as possible.

Because your answer will be public and accessible to everyone, the most important thing is to respond in a courteous and professional manner. Try to use an empathetic and understanding tone. If there is a practical explanation, share it. If your practice has made a mistake, apologize. If there is a lesson to

be learned, thank the customer for their criticism. Here is an example of an appropriate response: “Hello Jessica. We are sorry that you were not satisfied with your experience at our practice. Our number one priority is always the well-being of your pet. We suggest that you... (*propose a concrete solution to the situation*).”

End your response by encouraging the customer to contact you directly to solve the problem. In this way, you can take the conversation offline, making it more personal. Your customers will feel like you’re listening to them and they’ll appreciate the chance to speak to the professionals in your clinic.

Take advantage of social media comments to evaluate and revise your service practices. You should see them as an opportunity to review and improve the customer experience!

What about positive comments?

Good online reviews are the perfect compliment. They are essentially free advertising for your practice and they let you know that someone has taken the time to say nice things about you. It’s very important to respond to each of them with a personalized thanks, for example: “Hello Jessica. Thank you for taking the time to write this nice comment to us. It’s always nice to hear from our satisfied customers! Greetings to Carlos the cat!”

As much as possible, try to take a proactive approach in order to generate positive comments on your social media. Ask your customers to give positive feedback online. Keep in mind that if the majority of the comments you receive are positive, you shouldn’t worry about one or two negative comments.

In Short

- **Take a reactive approach** by replying to the customer as promptly as possible
- Take the time to offer a **personalized, professional and courteous response**
 - **Thank** the customer for taking the time to make a comment, even if it was negative!
 - **Apologize** for the fact that the customer is disappointed
- Continue the conversation by **inviting the customer to contact you privately**

Customers essentially want to know that you’re listening to them, especially when it comes to their pet. While you can’t control what they say about you online, you can control your reaction. Responding in a courteous and professional manner is the right thing to do for your customers, your practice and your reputation.

For more communication tips, contact your CDMV Strategic Advisor. (cdmv.com)