

Veterinary Reputation Management Toolkit

Dr. Jessica Vogelsang & Danielle K. Lambert



A #SnoutSquad collaboration featuring women-led veterinary brands:



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THE VETERINARY REPUTATION MANAGEMENT TOOLKIT

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<i>Repeat after us: clinics are not restaurants. Different rules apply.</i>	

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WHAT MAKES VETERINARY REVIEWS UNIQUE?

01

Reviews are the bane of every vet clinic. For the Yelp elite, reviews are both an art form and a weapon.

For businesses where the stakes are low, such as your average restaurant, the surly back-and-forth is a form of must-see entertainment for the masses. Unfortunately, veterinary clinics face unique challenges that make review responses a very delicate situation.

The typical online review has two elements we do not:

1. It's a short term relationship. You engage in a restaurant for one meal versus the entire life of a loved one.
2. A bad meal isn't nearly on the same plane as an ill or deceased pet. The normal rules don't apply here.

We need to respect the emotional nature of the relationship when we respond. As veterinary professionals, people expect us to be calm and measured, no matter what.

Remember: Reviews are meant as a form of communication from a current client to a potential client. You're a bystander in this equation.

Relationship repairs between you and a client happen offline. Given that the review audience is potential clients, your review responses are also there for them, not the person writing the review.

Your response is where you demonstrate your customer service skills.

THE 4 ELEMENTS OF A GOOD RESPONSE TO A BAD REVIEW

Veterinary clinic reviews are fairly predictable, given the repetitive nature of what we do.

With over a decade observing the evolution of the veterinary clinic review, I've come up with the eight most common types of bad reviews as well as some guidelines as to how to address them.

Regardless of the type, there are a few things to keep in mind that apply to any response.

[0 1] Acknowledge with Sympathy.
“We’re sorry to hear about your bad experience” is a neutral expression of empathy that does not admit fault. Use the pet’s name if possible.

[0 2] State How You Do Things.
Describe the usual customer experience versus discussing this specific instance. If you didn’t live up to that, apologize. If that is exactly what you did, no apology needed.

Caveat: Avoid using your business name or keywords in your response. Why make this review more likely to show up in search results?

[0 3] Move Offline.
Ideally with a salvageable client you’ve already attempted to contact them. If you couldn’t reach them or this is someone you don’t particularly want to engage with, provide your contact information in the review so others can see you are open to discussing a bad situation with a disgruntled client.

[0 4] Keep It Short.
4-5 sentences is ideal. If you’re needing paragraph breaks, it’s too long.

THE #1 REVIEW RESPONSE *mistake*

Do not argue about the specifics of the visit. Resist the urge. Calling a client a liar, even if they are, appears patronizing and cold. It also invites a long argument on your page about what happened, which you don't want. It draws more attention to the review. It's hard not to be upset by these reviews, but you have to respond in a way that conveys compassion and professionalism if you want people to believe that is who you are.

*THE 8 TYPES OF BAD REVIEWS
(AND HOW TO RESPOND LIKE
DR. VOGELSANG)*



1

THIS VET ONLY CARES ABOUT MAKING TONS OF MONEY

Why it's hard: Most of these reviews stem from owner frustration and guilt that they were not able to afford the treatment. To justify their displaced anger they decide it is your responsibility to take on the risk.

So how do you respond without getting defensive or seeming to "blame" the owner?

Do: State your payment offerings, and that's it.

Don't: Apologize for not offering payment plans, explain your financial operation, or talk about all those people who don't pay you back, the veterinary suicide rate, what messed up car you drive, your student loans. No one cares.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Hi (CLIENT NAME),
We are sorry to hear about your experience. It's important to us to offer as many options as we can to help people afford these unexpected expenses while providing top notch care to our patients. While we are unable to offer payment plans, we do offer (LIST ALL PAYMENT OPTIONS). If we can answer any questions for you about our payment services, I welcome the chance to speak with you at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL).

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

WHY IT WORKS:

Remember, your audience is the general public. You want to attract clients who understand you need to pay for services. The more you talk about your generosity the more you're going to get the freeloaders coming in. If you offer reasonable methods for people to pay, that's all you need to say.

2

YOU KILLED MY PET!

Why it's hard: This is an incredibly emotional time for people, and they often use the reviews as a place to vent their frustration, guilt, and anger that they have transferred on to you.

People reading the review want to know you can handle these emotional moments with grace and compassion.

Do: Express sympathy for their loss, and keep the lines of communication open. Death or other negative outcomes should always be bookended with an expression of empathy.

Don't: Go into details, admit fault, argue, or get defensive.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),
We are so sorry about the loss of (PET NAME). We understand this is a very difficult time for your family. It is important to us to be available to answer any questions about the sequence of events and listen to your concerns.

I would welcome the chance to speak with you at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) if we can discuss this with you further. Again, our deepest condolences for your loss.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

WHY IT WORKS:

You're not here to litigate your competence. Your only goal in these reviews is to assure the reader you are open to discussing bad outcomes and that you feel badly about what happened.

3

DOCTOR OR STAFF WAS RUDE

Why it's hard: There is often some element of truth to this. People who are already upset read a lot into small things and, let's face it: we're all human. It's impossible to be 100% sunny all the time.

Do: Talk to the team members involved and investigate this one before answering. If your reviews show a pattern of poor customer service, take this as an important red flag. Remember: more than anything this person wants validation for their feelings. Call the client before answering the review, and let them vent.

Don't: Go into details, argue, or get defensive. Everyone has bad days, but you don't need to justify it. If your staff was perfectly fine and the client is making things up, skip to review response #6.

YOUR RESPONSE FOR MOST SCENARIOS:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),

We are sorry to hear about your experience. We pride ourselves on customer service and regret that we missed the mark. We'd like to hear more about what happened so we can do better in the future. I can be reached at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL).

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

YOUR RESPONSE FOR SOMETHING TRULY BAD:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),

We are sorry to hear about your experience. We pride ourselves on customer service and regret this situation as it does not reflect our core values. The individual in question is no longer employed at the practice. I can be reached (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) to discuss any further concerns.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

WHY IT WORKS:

People understand that everyone has a bad day here and there. They want to know they are being heard and that you don't accept crummy customer service as just the way it is. Post office, anyone?

4

EX-EMPLOYEES AND THEIR FRIENDS/FAMILY ARE ATTACKING YOU

Why it's hard: This is one case where Facebook, Google, and Yelp should address the situation as it is not a legitimate review.

Always flag these and attempt to get them removed. Unfortunately when it's an ex-employee making allegations about your hospital, the last thing you want to do is get into a public discussion.

Do: Try to get it removed. If need be, have your lawyer let them know (offline!) they are liable for libel.

Don't: Get into the specifics of a messy employment situation.

YOUR RESPONSE:

If it is the former employee making the review, don't respond.

If it's their friend or family member, go with:

Hi (REVIEWER), we don't have any records of you as a client. We'd be happy to discuss if this record is in error at (PHONE/EMAIL).

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

WHY IT WORKS:

This is a lose-lose for everyone involved. Try as hard as you can not to have to deal with this one publicly. Most of the time it will blow over fairly quickly.

5

THEY COUDN'T GET ME IN, MADE ME WAIT, OR COULDN'T SEE ME FOR AN EMERGENCY

Why it's hard: Some larger practices do go out of their way to fit in every patient on demand. A smaller clinic can't necessarily do that.

Do: Be honest and brief; you want the public who reads the reviews to understand your clinic policy. If they expect a clinic open twelve hours a day, seven days a week and you are not that- let them move on and find that place. Everyone will be happier for it. Emphasize what great things you DO offer.

Don't: Get into the weeds about how you only have one doctor and she needs a lunch too you know.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),

We are sorry to hear about what happened. We appreciate your bond with (DVM NAME), and our clinic does try to accommodate sick pets as much as possible while making sure every patient gets the full attention of the staff. In those cases where a pet needs attention and our doctors are not available, our priority is making sure they get the needed care ASAP which may result in a referral to our emergency clinic. We hope (PATIENT NAME) is well and welcome the chance to speak with you and see how we can best meet your needs at (PHONE/EMAIL).

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

WHY IT WORKS:

The tradeoff for a longer wait is the personalized attention. Remind people of that in your response without denying that yes, sometimes you can't get people in on demand. People are used to referrals to urgent cares for their own health problems; it's not a foreign concept.

6

SOMETHING THAT IS JUST... COMPLETELY UNTRUE

Why it's hard: Calling someone a liar on social media rarely works to your advantage. In a he said-she said scenario, the public has no idea who to believe. Worse, it encourages a long, drawn-out argument- which is the LAST thing you want. A 34 response thread is clearly going to draw attention.

A better solution is to state your company policy: they can't argue with that since they didn't write it. The policy is X. You're not actually stating how it relates to this situation, so the public can make the reasonable conclusion.

Do: State your policy on the matter.

Don't: Get into specifics.

There are so many potential situations like this, so here are a few examples and responses:

#1: CLAIM VS REALITY: "They did things without permission" when you have a signed estimate.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),
We are sorry to hear you were unhappy with your experience. It is our policy to have a signed estimate by the pet's owner or designated caregiver before performing any procedures. I can be reached at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) to answer any further questions or concerns.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

#2: CLAIM VS REALITY: "They don't call you back" when the person called every 5 minutes demanding to speak to the vet and had to wait a couple hours tops.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),
We are sorry to hear you were unhappy with your experience. It is our policy to have a staff member answer all messages by the end of the business day. I can be reached at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) to answer any further questions or concerns.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

SOMETHING THAT IS JUST... COMPLETELY UNTRUE (CONTINUED)

#3: CLAIM VS REALITY: “The doctors are stupid/ mean/ dismissive” when the client was abusive.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),

We are sorry to hear you were unhappy with your experience. While we pride ourselves on compassionate customer service, we have a zero tolerance policy at our hospital for threatening or abusive behavior towards staff.

I can be reached at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) to answer any further questions or concerns.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

#4: CLAIM VS REALITY: “They misdiagnosed” when client declined referral and you had severe constraints.

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),

We are sorry to hear you were unhappy with your experience. Our primary concern is always the well-being of our patients. Our policy is to always offer referral when indicated and, if this is not possible, to work with clients to the best of our abilities.

I can be reached at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) to answer any further questions or concerns.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

WHY IT WORKS:

You never actually contradict their story, so they have nothing to come back and continue to argue about.

7

"I DIDN'T GET TO SEE MY FAVORITE DOCTOR"

Why it's hard: They're unhappy because they love your doctor SO much they are disappointed when they can't see them!

How do you acknowledge their loyalty without encouraging them to be unreasonable in their expectation, and also showing you have faith in all your doctors?

Do: Validate and appreciate their preference.

Don't: Set unrealistic expectations, get into details about how everyone needs time off from work, etc.

YOUR RESPONSE, if DVM was simply not available at that time:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),
We are sorry to hear about what happened on your visit. We appreciate your bond with (DVM NAME), and our clinic does try to accommodate preferences as much as possible. In those cases where (PATIENT NAME) needs attention and (DVM NAME) isn't available, our priority is making sure (PATIENT) gets the needed care ASAP from any of our trusted veterinarians. We welcome the chance to speak with you and see how we can best meet your needs at (PHONE/EMAIL).

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

"I DIDN'T GET TO SEE MY
FAVORITE DOCTOR!"
(CONTINUED)

YOUR RESPONSE, if they had an appointment with Dr. Favorite, but she was out sick and the client wasn't notified.

Dear (CLIENT NAME),
We are sorry to hear about what happened on your visit. We appreciate your bond with (DVM NAME), and our policy is to communicate with our clients when a doctor is out ill and discuss the options before the appointment.

We are sorry we did not do that and are taking steps to ensure that won't happen in the future. We hope (PATIENT) is doing well and (DVM WHO SAW PATIENT) was able to get her on the road to recovery.

I can be reached at (PHONE AND/OR EMAIL) to answer any further questions or concerns.

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER NAME)

Why it works:

This walks the fine line between validating their preference and letting them know that while you do try to honor it, you also want their pet to get care in a timely fashion. It's a reasonable position a good client will understand.

8

RANDOM ONE-STAR WITH NO EXPLANATION

YOUR RESPONSE:

Dear (CLIENT NAME),

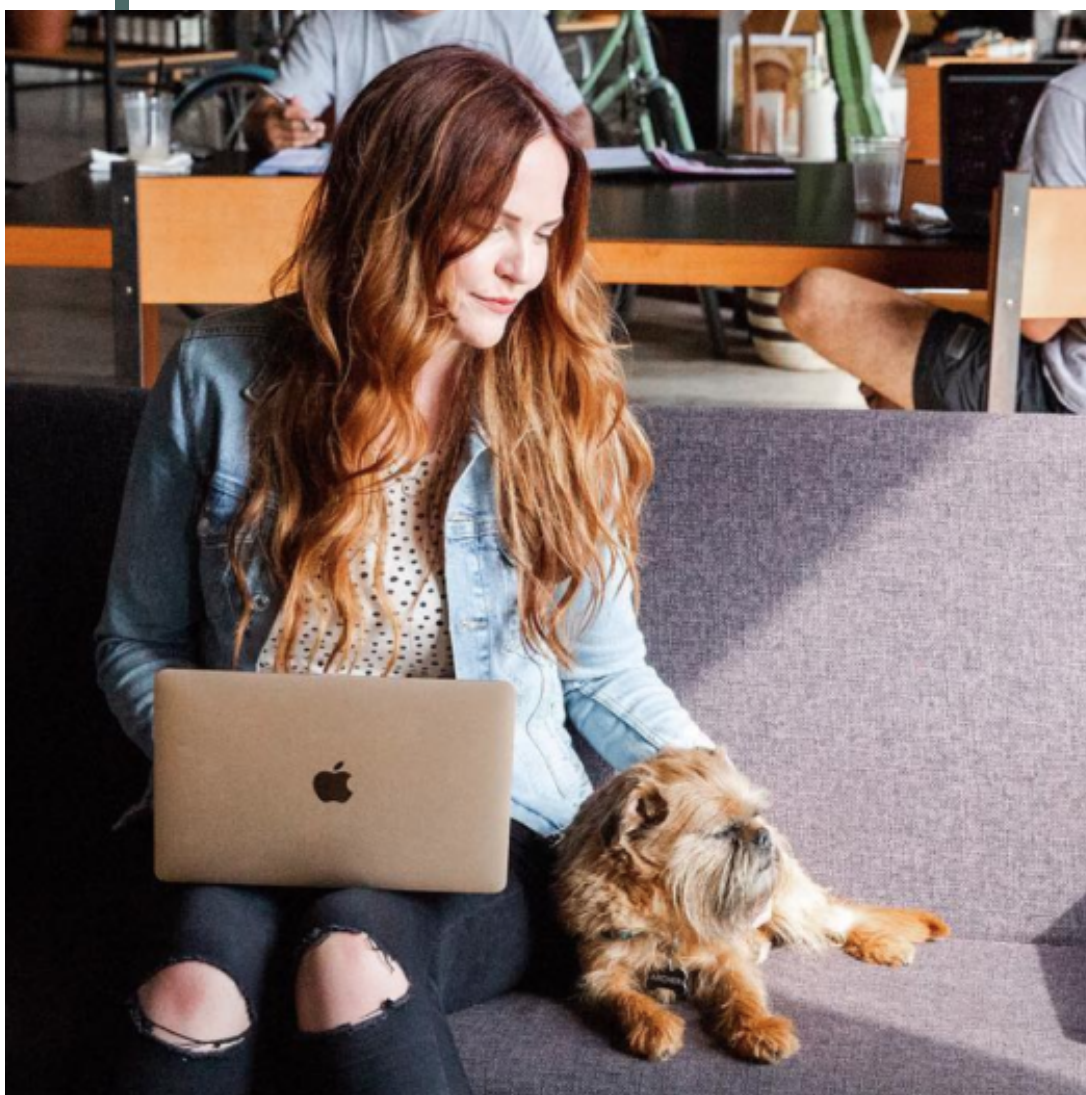
We are sorry you have an experience that you feel deserves only one star. We're trying to locate your record so we can review what happened but we need a little more information! We take our feedback very seriously and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this situation, learn what happened, and see if there is something we could have done differently."

-(CLINIC OR TEAM MEMBER
NAME)

RECAP:

- 1) Reviews are for the public. NOT the reviewer. NOT the staff. NOT you.
- 2) DON'T ARGUE SPECIFICS
- 3) Don't blame the client
- 4) What happened is much less important than how you respond to it.
- 5) Be brief. Less is more.
- 6) Respond to your positive reviews too!

*100+ WORDS DANIELLE WANTS YOU
TO BAN FROM YOUR FACEBOOK
RIGHT MEOWWWW!*



BAN BAD WORDS BEFORE THEY BECOME A PROBLEM

IMPORTANT:

THE WORDS YOU BAN ARE NOT BANNED FROM REVIEWS, ONLY POSTS AND COMMENTS.

THE PERSON POSTING AND THEIR FRIENDS WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THE POST, BUT IT WILL BE GRAYED OUT FOR OTHER USERS.

- 1) From your Facebook business page, click settings.
- 2) Scroll to page moderation, and paste the words listed on the next page. Additionally, put in any common brands or products.
- 3) Change "profanity filter" to medium.
- 4) Make sure you have saved all changes.

The screenshot shows the Facebook Page Settings interface. The 'Settings' tab is selected and highlighted with a red box. The 'Page Moderation' section is also highlighted with a red box, showing a list of blocked words including: abuse, abused, abuses, abusing, abusive, amputate, amputated, amputates, amputating, amputation, amputations, botch, botched, botches, botching, cash, charge, charges, charging, chop, chopped, chopping, chops, claw, claws, cost, costly, credit, crop, cropped, cropping, crops, de-claw, de-clawed, de-clawing, de-claws, dead, death, deaths, declaw, declawed, declawing, declaws, die, dies, dock, docked, docking, docks, dying, ethical, ethics, expensive, extort, extortion, finger, fingers, hurt, hurting, hurts, inhumane, inhumanity, kill, killed, killer, killers, killing, kills, misdiagnose, misdiagnosed, misdiagnoses, misdiagnosing, misdiagnosis, money, murder, murdered, murderer, murderers, murdering, murders, mutilate, mutilated, mutilates, mutilating, mutilation, mutilations, nail, nails, overprice, overpriced, overprices, overpricing, paid, paw, paws, pay, paying, pays, poison, poisoned, poisoning, poisons, price, priced, prices, pricing, steep, suffer, suffered, suffering, suffers, toe, toes, torture, tortured, tortures, torturing, unethical, unethically.

The 'Profanity Filter' section is also highlighted with a red box, showing it is set to 'medium'.

Setting	Value	Action
Others Tagging this Page	People and other Pages can tag my Page.	Edit
Page Location for Effects	Other people can use your Page's location for photo and video frames and effects.	Edit
Country Restrictions	Page is visible to everyone.	Edit
Age Restrictions	Page is shown to everyone.	Edit
Page Moderation	Posts containing these words are blocked: abuse, abused, abuses, abusing, abusive, amputate, amputated, amputates, amputating, amputation, amputations, botch, botched, botches, botching, cash, charge, charges, charging, chop, chopped, chopping, chops, claw, claws, cost, costly, credit, crop, cropped, cropping, crops, de-claw, de-clawed, de-clawing, de-claws, dead, death, deaths, declaw, declawed, declawing, declaws, die, dies, dock, docked, docking, docks, dying, ethical, ethics, expensive, extort, extortion, finger, fingers, hurt, hurting, hurts, inhumane, inhumanity, kill, killed, killer, killers, killing, kills, misdiagnose, misdiagnosed, misdiagnoses, misdiagnosing, misdiagnosis, money, murder, murdered, murderer, murderers, murdering, murders, mutilate, mutilated, mutilates, mutilating, mutilation, mutilations, nail, nails, overprice, overpriced, overprices, overpricing, paid, paw, paws, pay, paying, pays, poison, poisoned, poisoning, poisons, price, priced, prices, pricing, steep, suffer, suffered, suffering, suffers, toe, toes, torture, tortured, tortures, torturing, unethical, unethically	Edit
Profanity Filter	Set to medium	Edit
Similar Page Suggestions	Choose whether your Page is recommended to others	Edit

PASTE THE FOLLOWING IN "PAGE MODERATION" ON FACEBOOK

Abuse, Abused, Abuses, Abusing, Abusive, Amputate, Amputated, Amputates, Amputating, Amputation, Amputations, Botch, Botched, Botches, Botching, Cash, Charge, Charge, Charges, Charging, Chop, Chopped, Chopping, Chops, Claw, Claws, Cost, Costly, Credit, Crop, Cropped, Cropping, Crops, De-claw, De-clawed, De-clawing, De-claws, Dead, Death, Deaths, Declaw, Declawed, Declawing, Declaws, Die, Dies, Dock, Docked, Docking, Docks, Dying, Ethical, Ethics, Expensive, Extort, Extortion, Finger, Fingers, Hurt, Hurting, Hurts, Inhumane, Inhumanity, Kill, Killed, Killer, Killers, Killing, Kills, Misdiagnose, Misdiagnosed, Misdiagnoses, Misdiagnosing, Misdiagnosis, Money, Murder, Murdered, Murderer, Murderers, Murdering, Murders, Mutilate, Mutilated, Mutilates, Mutilating, Mutilation, Mutilations, Nail, Nails, Overprice, Overpriced, Overprices, Overpricing, Paid, Paw, Paws, Pay, Paying, Pays, Poison, Poisoned, Poisoning, Poisons, Price, Priced, Prices, Pricing, Steep, Suffer, Suffered, Suffering, Suffers, Toe, Toes, Torture, Tortured, Tortures, Torturing, Unethical, Unethically

ADDITIONALLY, DANIELLE RECOMMENDS BANNING
SPECIFIC BRAND NAMES AND PRODUCT NAMES
