

A//GOOD

FREE PLAYBOOK

The Local Healthcare Practice **Marketing** **Playbook**

How dental, med spa, psychiatry, and specialty practices fill the schedule — without wasting ad spend or tripping over HIPAA.

A practical guide for practice owners and office managers. Win the local search that happens before a patient ever calls, turn that visibility into booked appointments, and stay compliant doing it.

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Educational only — not legal or compliance advice. Confirm HIPAA specifics with qualified counsel.

INTRODUCTION

The patient decides before they ever call

For a local practice, marketing is won or lost in the few minutes a prospective patient spends searching "dentist near me," reading your reviews, and glancing at your website on their phone.

By the time someone picks up the phone or clicks "book," they've already compared you to three competitors on the map, scanned your star rating, and decided whether your site looks trustworthy. Most practices pour money into ads while quietly losing this earlier, cheaper battle — the one for local search visibility and first impressions.

This playbook walks the whole path in order: own the map, earn the reviews, get found in local search, convert the website visit, run ads that actually pay back — and do all of it without creating a HIPAA problem. No theory. Just the levers that move appointments.

SECTION 1

Own the map: your Google Business Profile

For local healthcare, your Google Business Profile (the map listing) is the single highest-ROI asset you have. It's free, and it outranks your website for most "near me" searches.

Get the fundamentals right

- **Claim and verify** the profile, and lock down accurate name, address, phone, and hours.
- **Choose the most specific primary category** (e.g., "Pediatric dentist," not just "Dentist") and add relevant secondary categories.
- **Fill every field** — services, service areas, attributes, booking link, and a real description.
- **Add real photos** of the office, team, and exterior. Listings with quality photos get meaningfully more clicks and direction requests.

Then work it weekly

- **Post updates** (offers, new services, team news) — an active profile signals a live, trustworthy practice.
- **Answer questions** in the Q&A section before competitors or randoms answer them for you.
- **Keep hours accurate**, especially around holidays — nothing kills trust like a wrong "closed."

WHY THIS WINS

A fully optimized, active profile can outperform paid ads for local intent searches — at no media cost. Most competitors set theirs up once and forget it. Working it weekly is an edge hiding in plain sight.

SECTION 2

Reviews: the new word of mouth (and a HIPAA trap)

Star rating and review count are often the deciding factor between you and the practice next door. They also hide one of the most common HIPAA mistakes practices make.

Generate reviews the right way

- **Ask at the moment of peak happiness** — right after a great visit or outcome.
- **Make it one tap** — a short link or QR code straight to your Google review form.
- **Build it into the workflow** — a follow-up text or email (with appropriate consent) after the appointment.
- **Never buy or incentivize reviews** — it violates platform policy and erodes trust.

Responding to reviews — carefully

Responding shows you're engaged. But here's the trap: **a public reply that confirms someone is your patient, or references their care, can be an impermissible disclosure of protected health information** — even if the patient posted about it first, and even if you're just defending yourself against a negative review. Practices have faced HIPAA enforcement for exactly this.

THE RULE OF THUMB

In any public reply, never confirm someone is a patient or mention anything about their treatment. Thank them generically, and take specifics offline: "Thank you for the feedback. We'd like to make this right — please call our office manager at [number]." Train whoever manages reviews on this.

SECTION 3

Get found: local SEO basics

Beyond the map, you want to show up when people search your services. A handful of fundamentals do most of the work for local practices.

- **Consistent NAP** — your name, address, and phone should match exactly across your website, Google, and every directory. Inconsistency confuses search engines and costs rankings.
- **Service + location pages** — a dedicated page for each major service (and key locations you serve) ranks far better than one page trying to cover everything.
- **Real, useful content** — answer the questions patients actually ask ("Does a root canal hurt?", "How much is Botox?"). Helpful pages rank and build trust.
- **Local schema markup** — structured data that tells search engines your hours, location, and services so they can display them richly.
- **Mobile speed** — most local searches are on phones; a slow site loses patients before it loads.

PRIORITY ORDER

If you only do three things: nail your Google Business Profile, build consistent service pages, and earn steady reviews. Those three carry most of the local-search results for a practice.

SECTION 4

Convert the visit: your website's only job

Traffic is worthless if it doesn't book. For a local practice, your website has one job: turn a visitor into an appointment with as little friction as possible.

- **Online booking** — let people book without calling. Phone-only loses every patient who's searching after hours.
- **Click-to-call everywhere** — a tap-to-call button that follows the visitor on mobile.
- **Above-the-fold clarity** — who you are, what you do, where you are, and how to book, all visible instantly.
- **Trust signals** — star rating, credentials, insurance accepted, real team photos. Patients are choosing who to trust with their health.
- **Speed and mobile-first design** — assume the phone, not the desktop.

THE METRIC THAT MATTERS

Track **cost-per-booked-appointment**, not just traffic or clicks. Like cost-per-admit for treatment centers, it's the number that ties marketing to revenue — and it tells you which channels actually fill the schedule.

SECTION 5

HIPAA-aware marketing for local practices

You don't have to be a SUD facility to have HIPAA obligations in your marketing. These are the rules that most commonly trip up local practices.

Testimonials & before/after photos

A patient's image, story, or before/after photo is protected health information. Using it in marketing generally requires a **valid, written HIPAA authorization** from that patient first — a casual "is it okay if we post this?" isn't enough. Get a proper signed authorization on file before anything goes public.

Texts, emails, and reminders

Appointment reminders are generally fine. **Marketing** communications are treated differently and can require authorization. And any message containing health details needs appropriate safeguards — don't put diagnoses or treatment specifics in an unsecured text or email.

Website tracking

The same pixel caution that applies to treatment centers applies to you: standard ad/analytics pixels on patient-facing pages can transmit protected information to third parties. Be deliberate about what your tracking sends, especially on booking and intake pages.

Your vendors

Any vendor that handles patient data on your behalf — including a marketing agency, booking tool, or CRM — should have a **Business Associate Agreement (BAA)** in place before that data flows.

BOTTOM LINE

HIPAA doesn't stop you from marketing — it sets the guardrails. The practices that get burned are the ones who post a patient's photo or reply to a review without realizing they've made a disclosure. A little process prevents nearly all of it.

This is a simplified, general summary of HIPAA considerations and is not legal advice. Requirements depend on your specific situation — confirm authorizations, communications, and vendor agreements with qualified healthcare counsel.

SECTION 6

Ads that actually pay back

Once your profile, reviews, and website are working, paid ads pour fuel on a fire that's already lit. In the wrong order, they just burn money.

Channel	Best for	Why it works locally
Local Services Ads (Google Guaranteed)	Many practice types	Pay per lead, show at the very top with a trust badge, and appear above standard search ads.
Search ads (geo-targeted)	High-intent "near me" and service searches	Catch people actively looking to book, tightly targeted to your service area.
Retargeting	Visitors who didn't book	Inexpensive reminders to people who already showed interest.
Social (awareness)	Med spa, cosmetic, elective	Visual results and offers drive demand for elective services.

SPEND IN THE RIGHT ORDER

Don't run ads to a weak profile and a slow website — you'll pay premium prices to lose patients at the last step. Fix the free fundamentals first, then scale with paid.

SECTION 7

Your local growth checklist

Work through this with your team. Most practices are missing more of these than they'd guess.

- Google Business Profile claimed, fully completed, and posted to weekly.
- Most specific primary category selected; services and booking link added.
- A system that asks happy patients for reviews at the right moment.
- Whoever responds to reviews is trained never to confirm patient status or care details.
- NAP is identical across website, Google, and directories.
- A dedicated page for each major service; key questions answered in content.
- Online booking and tap-to-call on every page; site loads fast on mobile.
- Cost-per-booked-appointment is tracked by channel.
- Signed HIPAA authorizations on file before any testimonial or photo is used.
- A BAA in place with every vendor that touches patient data.
- Free fundamentals fixed before scaling paid ads.

FINALLY

Win the search, fill the schedule

Local healthcare marketing isn't about the biggest ad budget. It's about owning the moments a patient uses to choose — and removing every reason for them to pick someone else.

Get the map, the reviews, and the website right, stay clean on HIPAA, and add paid ads on top of a foundation that already converts. That's how a local practice grows predictably instead of hoping the phone rings.

Want your practice to own its local market?

We help healthcare practices turn local search into booked appointments — compliant by design, measured on what actually fills your schedule. No bloated retainers, no vague deliverables.

Book a no-pitch strategy call and we'll show you where your practice is leaking patients and what to fix first.

Book a Free Strategy Call →

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