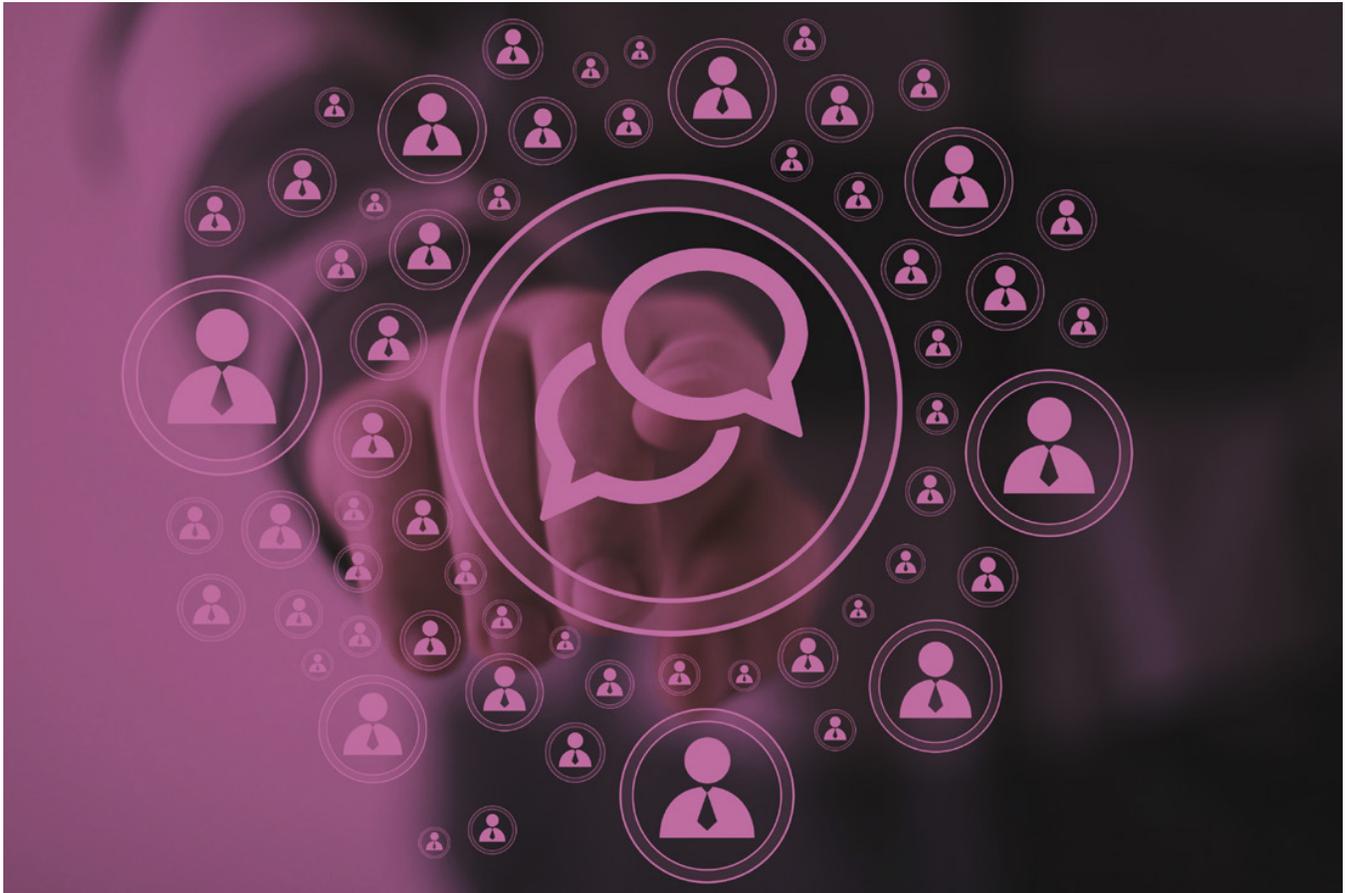


# What Your Hospital Should Know About Yelp 'Ask the Community'

Article by Justin Vandenberghe, Managing Director of Marketing, iVET360



Yelp has grown rapidly since its inception, and is becoming more than just a resource for friends looking to figure out where they want to grab sushi. iVET360 discussed the merits of Yelp at length in our State of the Industry report, specifically focusing on Yelp ads, check-ins and reviews—but businesses should also be aware of Yelp's 'Ask the Community' feature, which operates in a similar manner to Google Questions and Answers.

## How exactly does Yelp Ask the Community Work?

Yelp's Ask the Community tool functions as a message board for your practice where users can ask—and answer—questions about your hospital. Since this option

for getting information is community driven, any Yelper can ask anything they want, and anyone with an account can answer any question. People can vote on comments as either "Helpful" or "Not Helpful," with Yelp taking these votes into account to determine display order.

Along with the Yelp community, business owners can also answer questions, and their profiles will display a different badge to let the public know that they are affiliated with the business, offering an aura of authenticity.

This feature is great for veterinary hospitals as it offers a quick resource for people to find out details about your

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hospital that may not be listed on your website. The information posted on your Yelp listing will also save your staff valuable time since they won't have to answer as many questions through the phone, leaving them free to handle important tasks such as helping more companion animals.

### Are there any challenges with this feature?

As with any open-forum option, Yelp Ask the Community poses its own challenges, specifically regarding engagement, accuracy and content. As we mentioned in our State of the Industry report, 82 percent of veterinary hospitals have claimed their business listing, which secures them as the business owner on Yelp. As the business owner, it is necessary to stay active with your Yelp listing, including monitoring your page for interactions.

Since this feature is open to anyone with a Yelp account, beware, because people can post questions or answers that are harmful to your business. For example, a local competitor can offer misleading comments to deter customers from bringing their pets in, or a disgruntled former employee can divulge company information and disguise it as a question or answer.

This is why it is very important to constantly stay updated on your Yelp listing and look out for harmful posts. If you see one of these comments, unfortunately you cannot delete them, but you can alert Yelp.

### How can I use this tool to help my hospital?

If strategically used, Yelp Ask the Community can be a valuable resource to disseminate important information about your hospital. For instance, if you are the only veterinarian in your area that offers laparoscopic spaying, you could come up with your own question and answer to highlight this feature and separate your hospital from the others. Or, if you are a certified Fear-Free or Cat-Friendly practice and your competitors aren't, this would be a great thing to point out to pet owners (without mentioning your competitor's names, of course).

Once again, it is very important to make sure your practice has claimed your Yelp listing and you or your staff is constantly checking it to make sure things are accurate. This is the best way to curb false or predatory information, and lets the Yelp community know that you are an engaged hospital with a digital presence.

### What can iVET360 do to help my hospital's Yelp listing?

iVET360, a professional services and software company, specializes in online marketing and veterinary software. You can visit our page to view our State of the Industry report for 2017, where we researched 1,000 accredited veterinary hospitals and analyzed their websites along with their Facebook, Google and Yelp profiles.

Our services also include social media work, where we can improve your hospital's web presence and make sure it stays accurate and true to your character. We can also help your practice come up with informative questions and answers that can be posted on Yelp and Google for clients to see.

For additional information and more details about how we can help your practice grow clients and increase profit, contact us at <https://ivet360.com>.



Justin Vandenberghe is managing director of marketing at iVET360, which he co-founded in 2013. Under his leadership, iVET360 has developed veterinary marketing initiatives that reach millions of people each year. iVET360 provides private practice, primary-care veterinary hospitals with management services, including staff development trainings, marketing campaigns and financial, operational and customer care analytics. In addition to 17 percent growth in revenue, iVET360's clients saw a 24 percent increase in new client growth on average in 2015.



