

A close-up photograph of a dog's face, likely a Weimaraner, is visible in the background. The image is partially obscured by a semi-transparent teal overlay that covers the left side of the frame. The dog's eyes are looking directly at the camera.

**STATE  
OF THE  
INDUSTRY.**

**DIGITAL  
MARKETING  
REVIEW BY  
iVET360.**

WE REVIEWED,  
TESTED AND  
SCORED  
THE DIGITAL  
PRESENCE  
OF 1,000  
ACCREDITED  
HOSPITALS.  
HERE ARE THE  
RESULTS.

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: DIGITAL MARKETING REVIEW

A veterinary hospital's success, particularly its ability to find and keep pet owner clients, relies heavily on the practice's digital presence. Though there are many facets of digital marketing, the two most important in the veterinary industry are websites and social media like Facebook, Google and Yelp. Clients are more likely to trust veterinary hospitals with professional, responsive websites and by making the hospital available on social media, you lend more personality to your practice and get your practice in front of pet owners more often.

Unfortunately, not all veterinary hospitals have figured out the dos and don'ts of online marketing, and many hospitals pay a lot of money for monthly digital marketing services but receive little to no ROI in return. To benchmark the industry and its use of best practices, we analyzed the digital presences of 1,000 accredited veterinary hospitals around the country, compiling 25,000 data points. We also analyzed iVET360's accredited clients separately. We chose to look at accredited hospitals due to their diversity in size and their dedication to practicing excellence in veterinary medicine. All hospitals reviewed serve companion animals; we did not include equine, emergency or specialty hospitals.

Our study is the largest, most comprehensive and most in-depth digital marketing study ever completed in the veterinary field. All checkpoints were based on yes or no questions. We used only facts to build this study—no judgments. We also broke this data down by marketing provider, so we could see how veterinary service companies score when it comes to getting their veterinary hospitals up to speed in the digital space.

We produced this bias-free report to help practice owners and managers understand what to look for when selecting a marketing company. We're presenting it here to show all veterinary hospitals where they can look to improve their digital footprint.

# 709/1000

Had Their Website Domain Set Up Correctly

# 852/1000

Had A Mobile-Friendly Website

# 55/1000

Had A Secure Website With A SSL Certificate

# 367/1000

Had The Basic SEO Components Installed

# 697/1000

Had Google Analytics Tracking Installed

# 6.65 Seconds

Was The Average Website Page Speed Load Time

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

### Veterinary Websites

First, we looked at these hospitals' websites to see if they followed common online marketing best practices. Your website is your veterinary hospital's face. It's often the first place customers find you, whether they find you from search engine results (SERPs) or by going to your site directly. It's the backbone of everything else your hospital does online, so it's an absolutely crucial aspect of digital veterinary marketing. But it's not enough just to have a website. It needs to be functional and trustworthy.



# 70.9%

## HAD THEIR WEBSITE DOMAIN SET UP CORRECTLY

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

#### Domain Name Setup

Your veterinary hospital's domain is the address where your practice can be found online. For example, iVET360's domain is iVET360.com. Notice the "www." is left out—that's because we've standardized our domain name so as not to confuse search engines like Google and Bing. While [www.YourHospitalName.com](http://www.YourHospitalName.com) and [YourHospitalName.com](http://YourHospitalName.com) will go to the same website—your homepage—search engines classify those as separate links. And when they do that, they split your SEO value in half, as both will show up in search engine results for your practice. Domains should be set up so search engines only point users to one URL, with or without the "www."

**How to check your site:** Type your domain name into your browser's address bar, including the "www." (example: [www.YourHospitalName.com](http://www.YourHospitalName.com)). Once the page loads completely, remove the "www." from the address bar and hit return. If your domain reloads and displays without the "www." (as "[YourHospitalName.com](http://YourHospitalName.com)"), your website is duplicated. If it reloads with the "www." automatically, you're setup correctly.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**





# 85.2%

## HAD A MOBILE-FRIENDLY WEBSITE

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

#### **Mobile-Friendly Website**

A mobile-friendly website is one that is as functional on a mobile device as it is on a desktop device. But making it easier for your clients to navigate your website on their smartphones isn't the only reason these dynamic sites are so important. In 2015, in a move recognizing the growth of mobile devices, Google started considering websites' mobile usability in its ranking algorithm. That means mobile-friendly sites now rank higher in Google searches than sites that aren't mobile-friendly. Plus, according to Google, 90% of smartphone users are not absolutely certain of the specific brand they want to buy when they begin looking for information online. Being available on mobile devices gives you a chance to be one of those options. We have seen a large shift in compliance since Google considered usability in its rankings. However, 165 of the 852 mobile-friendly sites we tested opted for a separate mobile website instead of optimizing their standard website to be fully responsive.

**How to check your site:** Visit [search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly](https://search.google.com/test/mobile-friendly) and enter your veterinary hospital's website address. Google will do the rest.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



5.5%

HAD A SECURE  
WEBSITE WITH A  
SSL CERTIFICATE

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

### SSL Certificate

An SSL certificate is a protocol that establishes an encrypted link between your computer's browser and the website you are viewing. When a website has an SSL certificate installed, it means all data inputted by the user will be sent under an extra layer of protection. There are two easy ways to tell if a website has an SSL certificate installed: 1) by a lock symbol and the word "secure" in front of the URL in your address bar and 2) by the "https" in front of the web address. These tell you that your communications with the website are secure. Last year, Google began marking sites without SSL certificates as "not secure," so when a user tries to go to a site with just "http" in front of its domain, Google will alert the user that they're about to travel to an unprotected site, which may make the user question the legitimacy and safety of the site altogether. Google also now places sites with SSL certificates higher in search rankings. Of the 55 that had SSL installed, however, only 39 sites had done so properly. So, 96.1% of the websites we tested were not secure and were vulnerable to hacking.

**How to check your site:** Pull up your veterinary hospital's website. Check the address bar of your browser to see if there is a lock symbol in front of your domain name. This will be present on all major browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, Safari and Edge. On Google Chrome, this lock will be green and it will have the word "Secure" next to it. If the lock symbol does not show, you do not have an SSL certificate. You can purchase an SSL certificate from any major domain registrar, including GoDaddy and Network Solutions.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 36.7%

## HAD THE BASIC SEO COMPONENTS INSTALLED

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

### SEO Completed

SEO, or search engine optimization, is a way to boost your website's organic (non-paid) search engine results. There are many facets of successful SEO, and for this study, we looked at whether or not a website had title tags and meta descriptions for every single page. Title tags are elements of your website's code that tell the browser the name of the page it's displaying. These title tags appear as page titles on search engines. Meta descriptions are short explanations of what you'd find on the page, and they appear under each page title on search engines. Measuring success of a site's SEO goes far beyond this, but for this study, we simply answered "yes" or "no" to whether title tags and meta descriptions were filled out. This is the easiest place to add value and meet Google's minimum SEO requirements, but most websites we visited did not pass.

**How to check your site:** This one is a bit more challenging, as you have to download a program to review these stats. Screaming Frog is a free tool you can use to review the backend of your website, including SEO. It's our go-to for running tests like this. You can download it here: [screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider](https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider).

**96.4% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 69.7%

## HAD GOOGLE ANALYTICS TRACKING INSTALLED

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

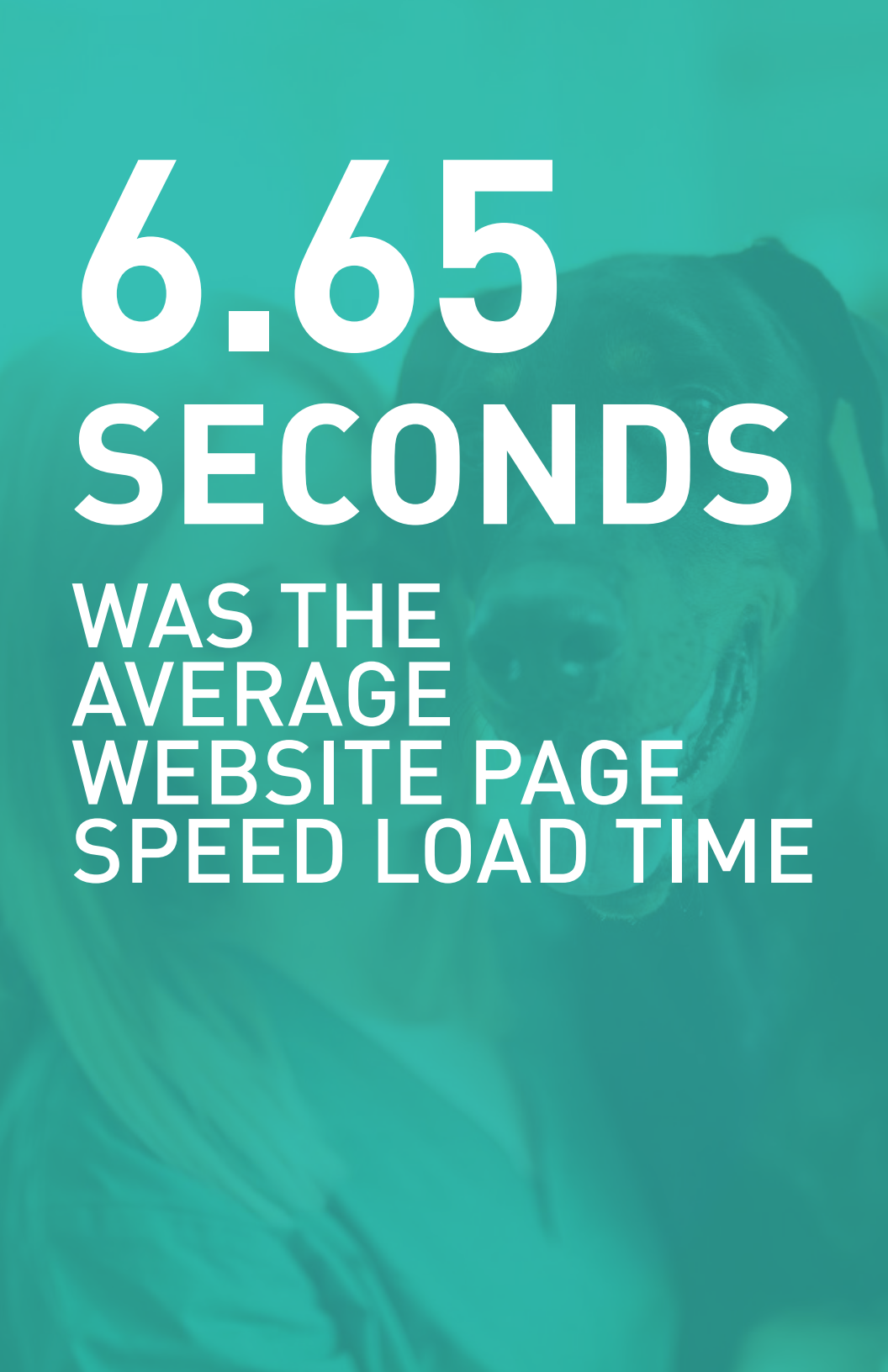
### Google Analytics Installed

Google Analytics gives you important insight into who is looking at your website. It tells you where site visitors live (not addresses, of course, but general locations) and what websites send visitors to your site. Installing Google Analytics is crucial for understanding the success of your marketing initiatives. For example, it can tell you how many people were directed to your website from a Facebook ad you placed, and then how many of those site visitors scheduled appointments online. If you're not tracking your data, you can't improve it.

**How to check your site:** You'll need to view the source of your website files to check this component. You can do so by first visiting your website in your browser. In Chrome, go to the top menu. Select View > Developer > View Source, or hold Option, Command and U all at once on your keyboard. This will open a new tab in your browser. Once on this tab, search for "UA-" to locate your Google Analytics code. The code will look something like this: "UA-45947023-1." You might also find a line of code that contains "UA-Compatible." That line of code is not affiliated with Google Analytics, and you don't need it for this. If you do not find a Google Analytics code, go to [analytics.google.com](https://analytics.google.com) to get one for free.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**





**6.65  
SECONDS**

**WAS THE  
AVERAGE  
WEBSITE PAGE  
SPEED LOAD TIME**

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: WEBSITES

### Page Speed

Your site's page speed is the length of time it takes for a page on your website to load fully. Google considers page speed in their search engine rankings, so when pages load slower than their recommended 3 seconds, that page is likely to end up lower in their rankings. Plus, the slower the page speed, the more likely visitors are to "bounce," or leave the site altogether. Across the 1,000 sites we studied, the average page speed was 6.65 seconds. At this page speed, the likelihood of bounces increases 106%, which results in a 24% estimated visitor loss. For comparison, Google considers top performers in the "Pets and Animals" industry to have page speeds starting around 3.8 seconds.

**How to check your site:** You can test your site here: [testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-us](https://testmysite.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/en-us).

**iVET360's websites tested at 5.89 seconds.**

# 610/1000

Had Their Facebook Page Branded To Their Hospital

# 756/1000

Had A Vanity URL For Their Facebook Page

# 231/1000

Had Verified Their Facebook Page

# 896/1000

Allowed Direct Messaging On Facebook Page

# 58.05

Average Number Of Reviews On Facebook

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: FACEBOOK

### Facebook Business Pages

After analyzing websites, we looked at these hospitals' Facebook pages. Facebook offers veterinary hospitals huge potential for outreach, as Facebook's user base is gigantic. As of June 2017, Facebook claimed 2.01 billion active monthly users. But just being present on Facebook doesn't guarantee your success on the platform. Success on Facebook all depends on how you use it.



# 61%

## HAD THEIR FACEBOOK PAGE BRANDED TO THEIR HOSPITAL

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: FACEBOOK

#### **Page Branded to Hospital**

Your hospital's visual branding should extend to your Facebook page so your clients and other members of the community recognize you immediately. Your hospital name should be listed exactly as it is at your practice and on any signage you use, and the logo you use online should be the logo you use everywhere else. Most clients will only see your posts in their feeds, not on your actual Facebook page, so the most important part of this is actually your profile picture. It's best to use a high-resolution version of your hospital's logo here so you stand out in news feeds. A generic photo profile picture will make you look like any other Facebook user.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 75.6%

## HAD A VANITY URL FOR THEIR FACEBOOK PAGE

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: FACEBOOK

#### **Vanity URL**

A vanity Facebook URL is a customized web address your clients can use to find your Facebook page. When you first create your hospital's Facebook page, Facebook assigns you a randomized URL with lots of numbers appended. When you create a vanity URL, you simplify your address and make it easier for your clients to find you on Facebook. For example, our vanity URL is [FB.com/iVET360](https://fb.com/iVET360). That's much easier to remember—and it looks much better on marketing materials than [facebook.com/pages/iVET360/839408](https://facebook.com/pages/iVET360/839408).

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**





# 23.1%

## HAD VERIFIED THEIR FACEBOOK PAGE

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: FACEBOOK

#### **Page Verified**

When you verify your Facebook page, Facebook adds a small check mark to the right side of your hospital name. With this verification symbol, you add more credibility to your Facebook page and you show Facebook users that you are an established company. Plus, Facebook prioritizes verified pages in searches, so verified pages are easier to find. This is an extremely easy add yet a majority of the industry has missed this update.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 89.6%

## ALLOWED DIRECT MESSAGING ON FACEBOOK PAGE

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: FACEBOOK

#### **Allows Direct Messaging**

According to Facebook, 53% of people are more likely to shop with a business they can interact with directly, and 56% of people would rather message a company online than call a customer service line. By making your hospital available on Facebook Messenger, you open your practice up to more conversations. Messenger offers unique advertising opportunities you could take advantage of as well.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 58.05

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF REVIEWS ON FACEBOOK

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: FACEBOOK

#### **Average Number of Facebook Reviews**

More and more consumers are turning to Facebook to see how others enjoy particular businesses. While Google and Yelp reviews are also important, Facebook reviews are often easier to obtain as there's a good chance most of your clients are already on Facebook. This means writing a review of your hospital won't require them to sign up for a new account. And, when a Facebook user writes a review, their friends see it too, so your hospital gets in front of more people. You can increase your Facebook reviews by asking loyal, satisfied clients to write you reviews after visiting your practice. There's a good chance you pay a company to monitor, track and help gain new reviews. As our study found, the industry's leading social media companies actually scored lower total reviews than the industry average.

**iVET360's tested hospitals average 77.64 reviews.**



# 908/1000

Had Verified Their Google Business Listing

# 30/1000

Were Utilizing Google Business Indoor Street View

# 17/1000

Utilized Google Posts

# 40.14

Average Number Of Reviews On Google

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: GOOGLE

### Google Business Pages

After taking an in-depth look at websites and Facebook pages, we looked at these hospitals' Google Business pages. Google is far and away the world's largest search engine, and when clients are looking for a hospital on Google Search or Maps, having yours show up correctly and professionally is imperative to the visibility of your hospital. Your Google listing is not your website—rather it complements your existing website to lend credibility to your business.





# 90.8%

## HAD VERIFIED THEIR GOOGLE BUSINESS LISTING

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: GOOGLE

#### **Verified Google Business Listing**

The power of Google lies beyond search capabilities—it has become a phenomenon for businesses looking to grow and stand out. Your hospital's identity needs to include a verified Google My Business profile, which will allow you (and not a random person or competitor) to control your business listing and update crucial information such as your hours, contact information and a link to your correct website. Along with being able to manage this data, you can also add appointment links and updated holiday hours—all of which are important for those clients who rely on your Google listing for accurate information. Verification is simple—depending on your eligibility you can be instantly verified, or your options include through postcard, phone or email. Once verified, you will be able to completely manage your business information on Google Maps, Search and other Google properties. You will also be able to use Google Posts (see below) to share fresh, relevant content with people who search for your hospital.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 3%


## WERE UTILIZING GOOGLE BUSINESS INDOOR STREET VIEW

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: GOOGLE

#### **Google Business Indoor Street View**

Google Business Indoor Street View is a tool that gives searchers a virtual look inside of your business through a series of 360-degree photos. This allows people to get an inside look of your hospital and acts as a tour of your facility—think of it as Google Street View but for the interior of your company. Business View does more than just show off your hospital—online viewers are 115% more likely to book a location after a virtual tour or video. Since such a small percentage of hospitals currently use Business View, this virtual tool can give you a strong edge over the competition. Having a convenient visual tour inside of your hospital is not only informative and convenient, it also increases traffic, which will make you more relevant in local searches.

**66% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**

A person is writing on a whiteboard. The image is overlaid with a solid red color. The text '1.7%' and 'UTILIZED GOOGLE POSTS' is written in white on the red background.

# 1.7%

## UTILIZED GOOGLE POSTS

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: GOOGLE

### Google Posts

Google Posts is a new feature that was rolled out in mid 2017 (and is separate from Google+ Posts). With Google Posts, you can share content with people who are searching for your hospital—these posts will then show up on your Knowledge Panel (the box of information that appears on the right of Google Search results). You can make posts of up to 300 words in length that can also include a photo. Posts are ideal for promoting an event with a date range or if you wish to post a link with a call to action. Google Posts have a limited life span of one week of display on the Knowledge Panel—event posts will last as long as the event timeframe, and up to 10 posts will show simultaneously via a carousel-type display which users can scroll through to see them all.

**84% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 40.14

AVERAGE  
NUMBER OF  
REVIEWS ON  
GOOGLE

# 54.10

AVERAGE NUMBER OF REVIEWS ON  
GOOGLE FOR BUSINESSES THAT  
ALSO HAD GOOGLE BUSINESS  
INDOOR STREET VIEW

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: GOOGLE

### Average Number of Google Reviews

Google reviews offer a real-world example of how your hospital functions. When a client leaves a review, it will show up next to your listing in Google Search and Maps, and can help your business stand out. By reminding loyal clients to leave reviews, you can increase your business rating, and replying to these reviews helps build trust among your client base. The more Google reviews your business has, the more prominent your position is in the search results.

**iVET360's tested hospitals average 61.14 reviews.**



A red-tinted background image showing a hand typing on a laptop keyboard.

# 822/1000

Had Claimed Their Yelp Business Listing

# 119/1000

Were Utilizing Yelp Ads

# 50/1000

Had A Yelp Check-in Offer

# 23.35

Average Number Of Reviews On Yelp

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: YELP

### Yelp Business Pages

After we analyzed hospital websites, Facebook pages and Google pages, we researched Yelp. With 142 million unique users per month, Yelp is a powerful tool for gaining new clients and managing your reputation. Similar to Google, Yelp thrives on customer reviews and claiming your Yelp listing, which allows you to personalize your page and make sure your content is relevant. You can also use Yelp ads to grow your hospital and target customers who you usually wouldn't reach. Much like your website, Facebook page and Google page, it is essential to properly utilize the tools offered by Yelp to maximize your hospital's online presence.



# 82.2%

## HAD CLAIMED THEIR YELP BUSINESS LISTING

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: YELP

#### **Claimed Yelp Business Listing**

It is important to claim your Yelp page so you know that you are updating your hospital's listing rather than some stranger or competitor. According to Yelp, "On average, businesses with complete profiles receive five times more customer leads per month." With a claimed Yelp page, you'll be able to update business information, respond to reviews, add photos and maximize your SEO. A thoroughly completed page will give people more information, which will help in gaining trust and increasing your clientele.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



**11.9%**  
**WERE UTILIZING  
YELP ADS**

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: YELP

### Yelp Ads

Yelp Ads are an additional way to highlight your hospital. These paid ads are targeted towards consumers who search for a business like yours, and they help drive users to your Yelp page. Ads get promoted across all Yelp platforms including desktop, mobile website and the mobile app. Along with appearing in all relevant search pages, they even show up on competitor business pages. Options for Yelp Ads include restricting competitors' ads, having an editable slideshow of your best photos and adding a call to action button on your business page which will take clients directly to an order form, coupon image or other custom landing page on your website.

**17% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**



# 5%

## HAD A YELP CHECK-IN OFFER

### STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: YELP

#### **Yelp Check-In Offer**

Yelp Check-In is a smart marketing option that provides incentives to loyal customers to check-in to your hospital on Yelp. When clients use the check-in feature on the mobile app, this broadcasts to their friends that they're at your business. To encourage these check-ins, businesses can create special offers such as a discounted price, free item or a percentage off to reward client loyalty—these offers can be added or removed at any time. Yelp Check-In features measurable results including viewing the number of check-ins to your business and keeping track of the number of redeemed offers.

**100% of iVET360's tested clients met this requirement.**





# 23.35

**AVERAGE  
NUMBER OF  
REVIEWS ON YELP**

# 53.29

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF REVIEWS ON  
YELP FOR BUSINESSES ALSO USING  
YELP ADS**

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY: YELP

### **Average Number of Yelp Reviews**

Yelp reviews are a powerful tool for your hospital's search rankings. The more reviews you have, the better your search results will be. Yelp relies on an algorithm that dictates which reviews appear and the order of their appearance. This algorithm depends on how active the reviewer is, and takes into account factors such as number of reviews written by the user and whether or not they have a picture on their account. Yelp also strongly advocates against asking your clients for reviews, and monitors this. There are however, ways to encourage your customers to pen reviews. You could add a Yelp button to your website that prompts returning customers to review, or you could add the Yelp Review button to your email signature. Additionally, you could inform clients that you are on Yelp by posting something in your storefront. As stated earlier, the more reviews you have, the better your search results will be, which will affect your traffic and hospital's success.

**iVET360's tested hospitals average 47.18 reviews.**

This report was created to establish a benchmark you can use to measure your hospital's marketing efforts. A survey this grand and all-encompassing has never been produced before.

To receive your veterinary hospital's score, contact iVET360 and tell us your hospital name, website and email address, and we'll provide a complimentary all-inclusive digital report for your hospital within 24 hours.

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