kids+

Anti-Anti-Vaxx Toolkit

A Strategy Guide to Prepare For, Defend Against, and Clean Up After a Facebook Anti-Vaxx Attack

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION | *The Wild, Wild West*

To advocate for the health and wellness of children, you have to speak directly to parents and caregivers — to the people making the decisions about the health and wellness of the children in their charge. You need to advocate for a lot of things, but you especially need to advocate for vaccines.

You need to do it in the office, of course. But in the age of social media, you also need to do it online.

In your clinic, from the front office to the back office to the exam room, you control the message. But online, from Facebook to Twitter to YouTube, the message can control — and confound, and sometimes even undermine — both you and the important work that you do. It's the Wild (Wild) West out there, and Anti-Vaxxers are some of the loudest, most determined woo-slingers whose paths your patients will cross.

To protect your patients and families, to lay the groundwork for their visits (and especially their vaccinations) in your office, you need to be posting and tweeting and sharing clear, concise, evidence-based information on the power and importance of vaccines. Regularly. And unreservedly.

When you advocate for vaccines in the office, you open yourself to doubts and questions and concerns from the parents and caregivers you see. And you're more than willing to do that. When you advocate online, however, you open yourself to doubts and questions and slings and arrows and memes and gifs and around-the-clock,all-around-the-world attacks on your social media pages, your practice, your providers, and even your parents and followers.

This can happen to you.

We know, because it happened to us.

In this toolkit, we'll tell you our story. We'll take you behind the scenes of our attack. And, much more importantly, we'll share much of our accumulated knowledge and wisdom and experience: our successes, our failures, and all of the good, hard lessons we learned along the way.

We'll empower you (we hope), and give you the tools (we know)m to *Prepare For, Defend Against,* and *Clean Up After* a Facebook anti-vaccine (or other anti-science) attack.

We'll begin with a case study…

CASE STUDY | *Six Days in September*

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred battles.

- Sun Tzu

Before we show you the best ways to Prepare For, Defend Against, and Clean Up After an Anti-Vaxx attack, we think it's important to show you how an attack unfolds.

The timelines and specifics of what you may face — like those of the other victimized providers and practices we've interviewed — will likely be different than what we faced. No two attacks unfold in the same way. But the themes and tactics of the attackers, and the overwhelming senses of anger and frustration felt by the defenders, are always the same. Getting a sense of how the action unfolds will provide valuable context and perspective for how best to join the fray.

In short: we want to show you the game before we show you how to play.

So here's what happened to us.

Wednesday, August 23rd, 2017, 8:45am
"We Prevent Cancer," a 90-second video on the importance of the HPV vaccine, goes live on all of our social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Pinterest) and on our web site. Because we think the video, which we produced entirely in-house, speaks nicely for itself, it's accompanied only by a brief intro:
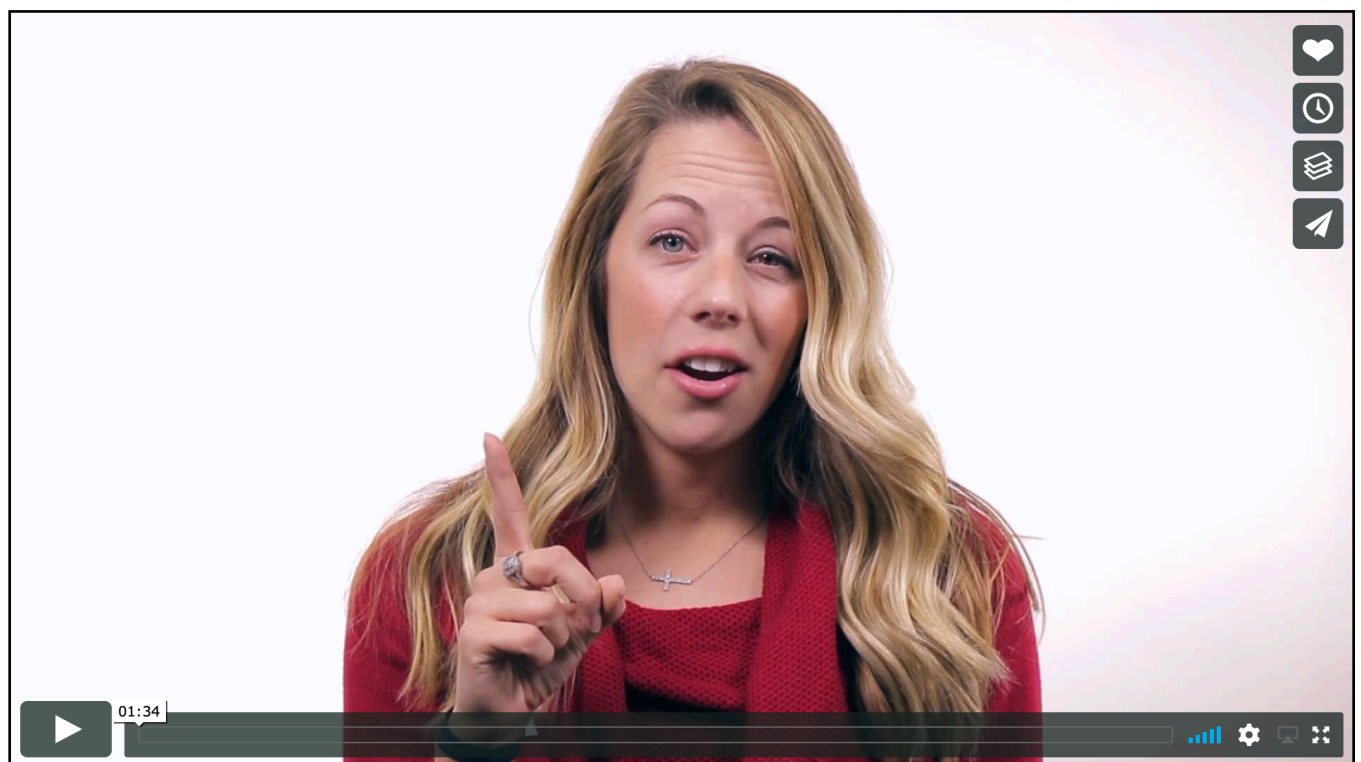
At Kids Plus, we're thrilled to provide the HPV vaccine. In this video, our providers tell you why. We were proud of the video. We thought we had a right to be. Other people agreed.

The video met with enthusiastic acclaim. We got lots of love (and likes) on our Facebook page. We received compliments from the AAP, the CDC, the HPV Roundtable, the American Cancer Society, and many other pediatric practices around the country. Most importantly of all, the video was a big hit with our parents, many of whom contacted us to ask how they could get the vaccine for their own children. This was, of course, exactly the response we'd hoped for.

So we were feeling pretty darned good about ourselves. But you know what happens — especially in Shakespearean tragedies, primary care pediatrics, and 21st Century social media campaigns — when you start to feel too good about yourself: the universe comes around and smacks you upside the head. In this case, the anti-science, anti-vaccine trolls came around and smacked us upside the Facebook page, the Google listings, and the Yelp reviews (among many other locations).

But it didn't happen right away.

The attack began 23 days, 4 hours, and 30 minutes after we first posted the video.

After that amount of time, the video was long gone from our feed and almost forty posts down on our page — which, in social media time, may as well have been a million and forty. The post was no longer new. But it was about to become fresh again in a hurry. With a vengeance.

Friday, September 15th, **1:15pm: The First Shot**
Our Facebook notifications alert us to a comment on the "We Prevent Cancer" video. It reads:

Is this some kind of joke? This vaccine kills people.

We respond by assuring the commenter, whose California home was a long way from our Pittsburgh practice, that the video is quite serious, and that the vaccine saves lives.

Friday, September 15th, **1:58pm**
Two more comments — one from Texas, another from California — appear on the video. We handle them the same way.

Friday, September 15th, **2:07pm**
Two more comments from two new commenters who, like the first three, are not our patients and do not live in our state. Both post the same "news" article about VAERS vaccine injury settlements.

Five different commenters in less than an hour on a three-plus-week-old post smells to us like a concerted, coordinated effort. So we stop responding, ban the commenters from our Facebook page, and delete the comments.

At the time, we thought it was amusing. We didn't think that for very long.

Friday, September 15th, **11:20pm: The End of Day One**
Our Communications Director, no longer amused and now thoroughly disgusted and exhausted, finally gives up for the day and goes to bed. In the interim, he bans 71 more attackers and deletes more than 250 comments from the Kids Plus Facebook page — not just beneath the HPV video, but also beneath many other posts and notes and videos, including some made that same day.

This is only the beginning.

Saturday, September 16th - Sunday, September 24th: The First Six Days
The attack continues, in earnest, for five more days. Days 3, 4, and 5 are the worst: 17 more attackers post on the seventh and eighth days. Finally, after eight straight days under siege, we experience our first 24-hour span without a single attack post.
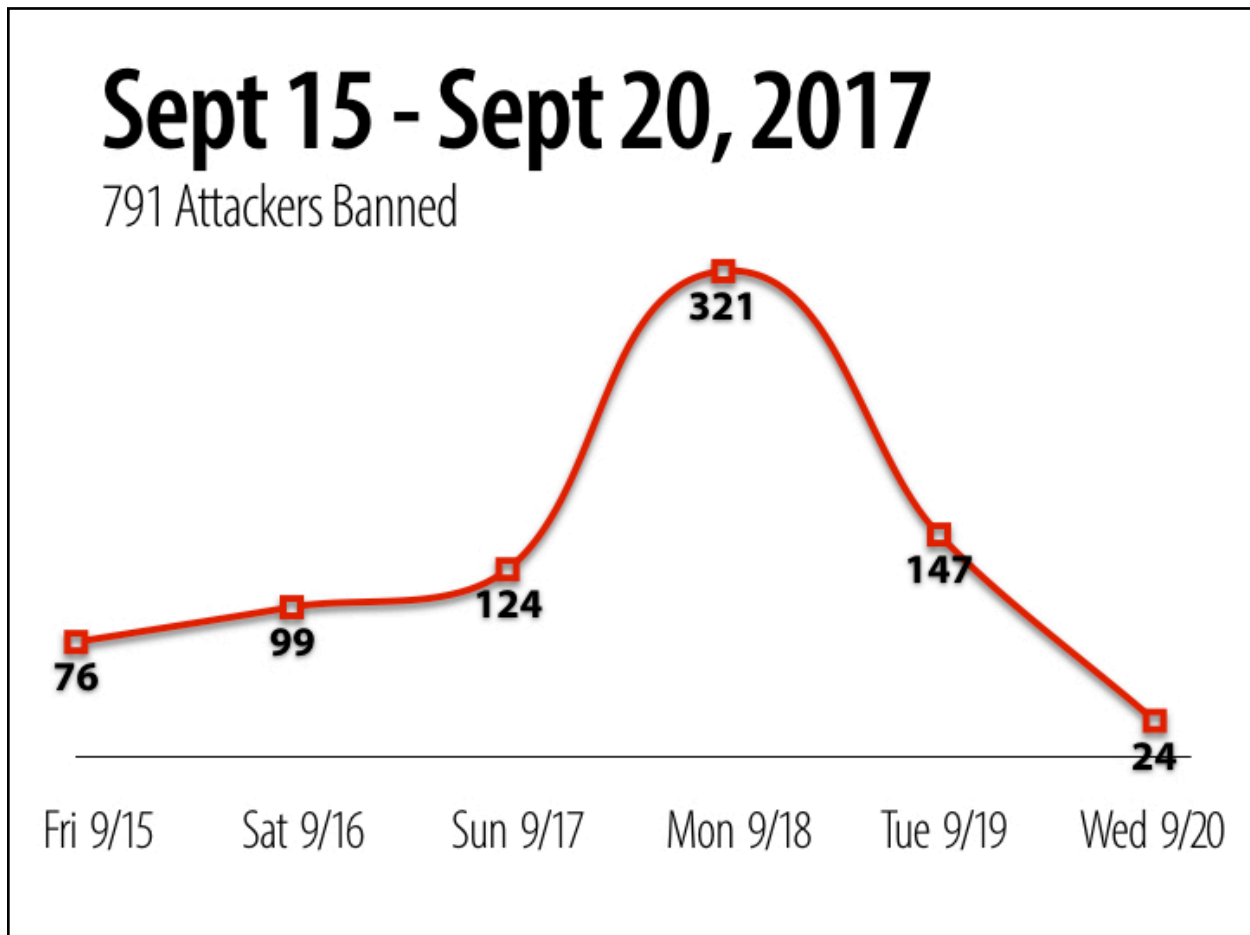
(We still get them from time to time — even now more than two years later — as Anti-Vaxx trolls once again find the video and are compelled to comment and/or attack.)

Over the course of the 8-day attack, **we ban 808 attackers and delete more than 10,000 comments.**

And by "we," we mean "one guy." Our Communications Director worked eight straight 18-hour days, single-handedly monitoring, defending against, and cleaning up after the attack on Facebook —plus accompanying attacks on Yelp, Google, Twitter, the Facebook pages of some of our followers, and even the phone lines of our offices.

For a little perspective: in the entire 6-year, 11-month history of the Kids Plus Facebook page before the attack, we banned a total of 35 people and deleted fewer than 100 comments. Most were spammers who came to the page to hawk and sell their wares. A few were abusive or used vulgar language.

If you come to our page, and you're anti-vaccine or anti-science or anti-anything, but you come in good faith and ask us fair and reasonable questions because you have both genuine concern and genuine curiosity, we're always happy to engage. We'll answer your questions, address your concerns, and provide links and resources with good, evidence-based information. We're eager to discuss, to debate, to do our best to set the record straight. We do it all the time.

But this was not good faith.

This was a coordinated, global attack from people with no interest in learning or debating or discussing or even listening to anything we, or science, has to say. They simply want to harass, frighten, insult, intimidate, and spread a nasty, festering contagion of fake news, alternative facts, and increasingly wilder claims and conspiracy theories.

Monday, September 18th: The Cavalry Arrives
As you see from the graph, the number of attackers rose steadily for the first three days, then spiked dramatically on the fourth. It seemed that word had spread to all corners of the globe, and the attackers were rested and ready to go after the weekend, because they came out guns and keyboards blazing on Monday.

What you don't see is *why* the peak occurred on Monday, or why that day was the turning point.

By mid-day, the attack showed no signs of waning. It was, in fact, still continuing to escalate, ramping up even more dramatically in both quantity of attackers and intensity of attacks.

So what changed?

In short: the cavalry arrived.

The attack coincided with the 2017 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference and Exhibition. Our CEO, Dr. Todd Wolynn, who was attending the NCE and also keeping abreast of the attack through texts and phone calls, began to recruit and marshal some troops to come to our

aid. He began with the good and fiery forces of SOAPM (the AAP's Section on Administration and Practice Management), then moved on to other assorted providers, practices, and allies. Late Monday afternoon, with the attack still escalating, those allies began to rally to our defense.

So, too, did a large and passionate and totally fabulous group that is now our favorite Facebook collective of all time: Physician Moms Group. The members of PMG rock. We love them for many reasons — not least of which is that, early Monday evening, they too learned of the attack. One of their members messaged us to let us know that our attack had been posted in their group, that *these mommas don't mess around*, and that we should *watch the comments*, because *the Power of PMG is insane!*

She wasn't kidding.

Within minutes, literally hundreds of their members roared to our defense, adding their voices to the dozens of others who'd already arrived. Together, these reinforcements helped turn the tide.

We learned an important lesson that Monday: light the signal fires of Gondor and SOAPM and PMG and anyone and everyone else you can. (More on how to do this later in the document; we've created a single Anti-Vaxx organization, Shots Heard Round the World, to unite the forces and summon the many disparate cavalries.)

In short: bring reinforcements as fast as you can.

Why? Because:

1. Now, you're triangulating fire. You're forcing the Attackers to fight a two-front war.

They want to attack you and your page, and you're fighting back by banning and deleting, but now, in addition to being banned by you and fought off by your page's regular followers, they're also being attacked — in ways you'd like to, and with comments you'd like to make but can't, because you're trying to maintain some level of decorum and professionalism on your page — by the reinforcements who've now come to your defense.

2. Anti-Vaxx Attackers, like every other bully in the world, lose interest in punching when they start getting punched back.

Once the cavalry arrives, and it's no longer just one page (or one person) fighting back against the Attackers.The numbers start getting more balanced, and it suddenly isn't as much fun for the attackers, who've come to the page not just because they want to bully a practice or a provider into silence, but because they like it. (Yes, they seem legitimately to enjoy leaving these posts and making these attacks.)

Even after the cavalry arrives, plenty of attackers will still be hanging around and taking their shots, but the masses quickly lose interest and recognize a lost cause.

The Source of the Attack
The attack against us originated inside a private Anti-Vaxx Facebook group: the creatively named "VaccineChoices - Fact VS Fiction, Conversations & Research." At the time of the attack, the group boasted over 39,000 members. (It's numbers grew to more than 42,000 members, until, just a few months ago, Facebook removed it in a purge of anti-vaxx, anti-science groups. One other group lost in the purge, "Stop Mandatory Vaccinations," also launched attacks against us.)

We have screen caps sent to us from inside the group — pro-vaccine people go undercover in these groups to monitor them, so we had our own version of Woodward & Bernstein's "Deep Throat" feeding us information as the attacks unfolded — in which our attackers virtually and digitally high-five each other, complimenting one another on the "great post"s and "sick burns" they left on our page. In some cases, the Attackers posted links to their own comments, so their cohorts could go straight to the post to see specific comments they had left and specific damage they had done.

In addition to attacking us, the Attackers also attacked many of the people who had posted positive comments on our video, and/or who came to our aid in the first few days of the attack. And not just in the comment threads beneath the video. Many Attackers visited the personal

Facebook pages of our parents and supporters and left vile comments there. Some also private messaged our parents and supporters, spewing links and insults and alternative facts at them in that way too. They knew no boundaries, and evinced no shame.

Through our research, we discovered several hotbeds — Anti-Vaxx terror cells, if you will — of activity, specific geographic locations in which large numbers of the Attackers were clustered: Central Ohio; the Panhandle of Florida; Texas; California; Oregon; Australia; New Zealand; England; Italy.

Yes. This was a truly *global* attack.

We would defend the Facebook page all day, go to bed, wake up six hours later, and find dozens (sometimes hundreds) of new attacks and hundreds (sometimes thousands) of new comments we needed to deleted. This attack raged around the clock and from 26 different countries across the globe. All coordinated from within two Facebook groups full of anti-vaccine zealots.

This is not the only group of its kind on Facebook. Far from it.

There are literally dozens of these groups on Facebook, and they're terrifying. Just simply and ontologically because they exist, much less for the ignorance and misinformation they spread, and for the damage they inflict.

A Profile of the Attackers
We've worked with the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health to dig through the data on both the attack and the Attackers, to get an in-depth look at the Attackers in hopes that it might shed light on the attacks and the groups in which they originate. <u>Our findings were published</u> in the journal *Vaccine*.

The full details appear there, but here are some important highlights:

OVERWHELMINGLY FEMALE
In the first wave of 808 attackers over 8 days, 95% were female. That number has remained consistent, as more people have found and commented on the video since that first wave.

BIMODAL AGE DISTRIBUTION
Though the Attackers ranged all across the age spectrum, two large, distinct cohorts emerged: Women 18-24, and Women over 50. This is consistent with what our providers see and hear in our exam rooms; most vaccine hesitancy we encounter in our offices comes from young Moms, and/or from Grandmas who come to their grandchildren's well visits and try to convince Mom and/or Dad not to get vaccines.

UN(DER)EDUCATED/EMPLOYED
Among our Attackers there were, of course, plenty of educated and credentialed people who should demand refunds from their institutions of higher learning. But the vast majority of them present as un- or under-educated, and/or un- or under-employed.

HARD LEFT *AND* HARD RIGHT

The Attackers hailed from all across the political spectrum, but two distinct cohorts emerged from the left and right extremes. Attackers who support Anonymous, Antifa, and Bernie Sanders mixed with attackers who identify as white nationalists, 9/11 Truthers, and Donald Trump supporters. This odd mix suggests that, like politics, vaccines make strange bedfellows. And it reminds us of a great Clint Eastwood quotation: *Extremism is so easy. You've got your position, and that's it. It doesn't take much thought. And when you go far enough to the right, you meet the same idiots coming around from the left.*

To illustrate the strange bedfellows point even further, here's a look at some of the major ideological cohorts that emerged from our study of the attackers. (Lines indicate repeated intersections.)
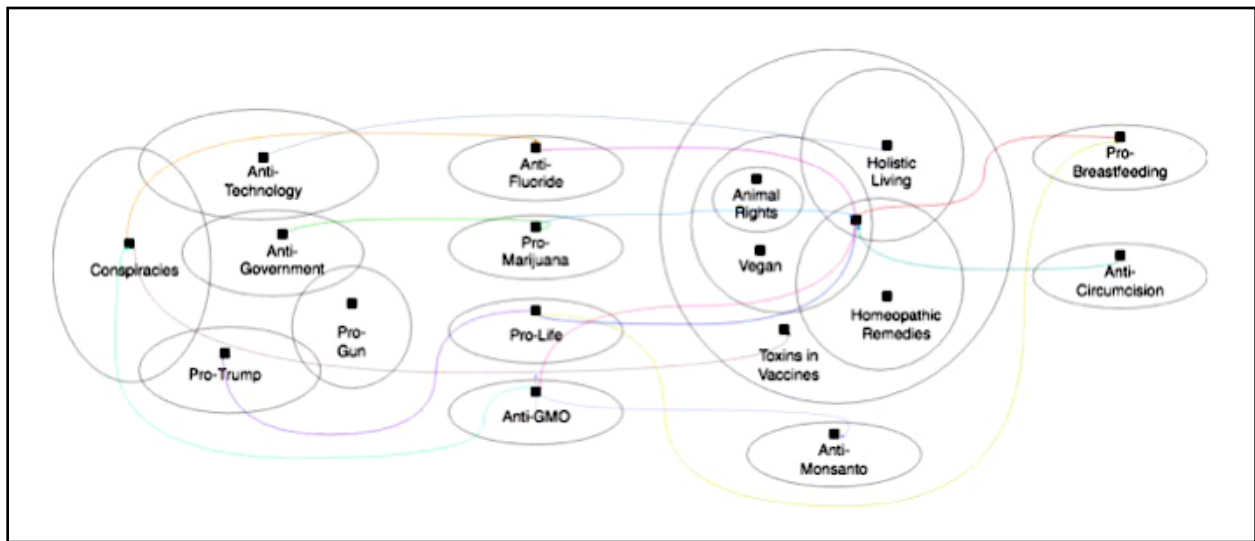
SNAPCHAT FILTERS & SELFIES

We're not sure what this means, but it was statistically significant. During the eight days of the attack, every person who visited our Facebook page and featured a Snapchat filter on her/his profile photo was an Anti-Vaxx Attacker. Every single one.
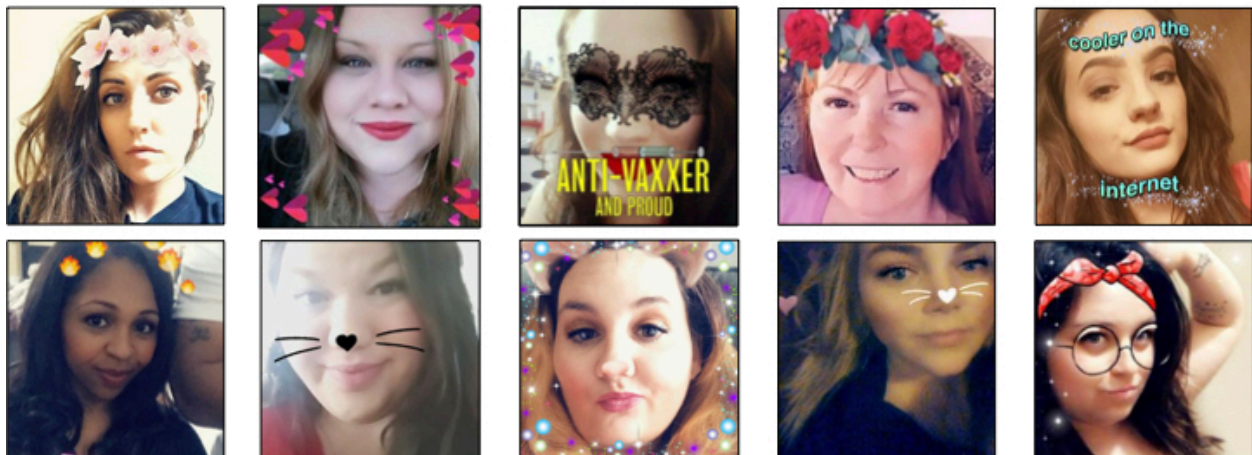
The Tactics They Use to Attack
Once the attack gets rolling, and the Attackers start arriving in numbers, you'll soon notice —
and this should come as no surprise, given their woeful and often willful ignorance of evidence-
based medicine and science and sometimes even simple reality — that anything goes. You'll
stare down an incredible cornucopia of nonsense, twaddle, junk science, fake news, alternative
facts, vulgarities, conspiracy theories, threats, insults, condescensions, GIFs, memes, emoji,
creative spelling, rampant illogic, and a steady, repugnant stream of incoherent claims and
accusations that barely survive their own utterance.

WHEN THEY ATTACK, THEY WILL…

…Comment relentlessly on the post that inspired the attack.

…Comment relentlessly on other people's comments on the post that inspired the attack.

…Comment on other posts on your Facebook page, including some days or weeks or years old.

…Send direct messages to your Facebook page.

…Send direct messages to, and post on the pages of, people who support or defend your page.

…Post fraudulent reviews on Facebook, Yelp, and Google.

…Call your office directly to scream invective and/or jam up your phone lines.
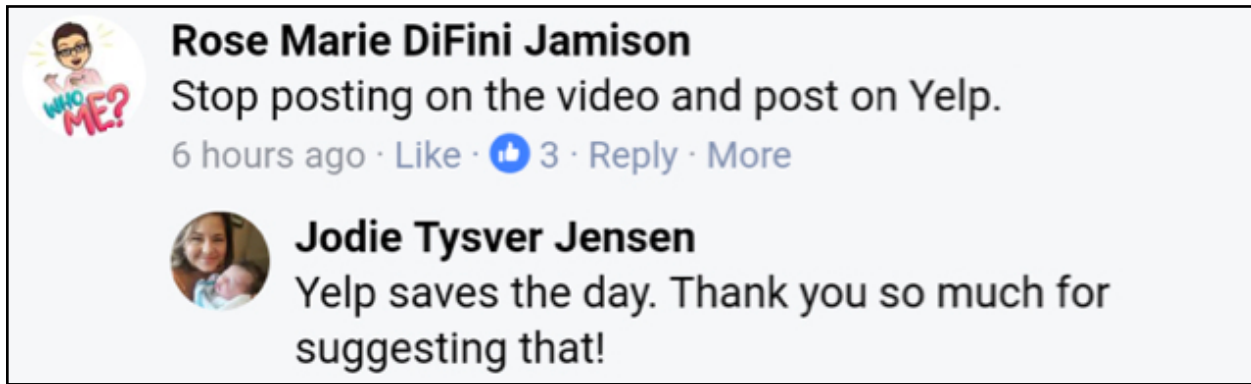
Those first four are bad, and infuriating, enough. But the last three are especially low and ugly.

We heard from many parents and followers of our page, including many who did not directly
engage any of the attackers, that they had received posts and direct messages to their personal
Facebook profiles from anti-vaccine Attackers. Some messages tried to scare them. Others
merely insulted them. All were obviously unsolicited, and at least several crossed the line into
bona fide threats and harassment.

As soon as we began banning attackers from our Facebook page, new attackers shifted their
focus and directed their energy in an attempt to inflict harm on the practice. The first thing they
went after were our Facebook ratings and reviews. Those are easy enough to shut down (we'll
show you how later), but less easy to report and clean-up.

Once we shut down the Facebook ratings, the Attackers rerouted to Yelp and Google to hammer
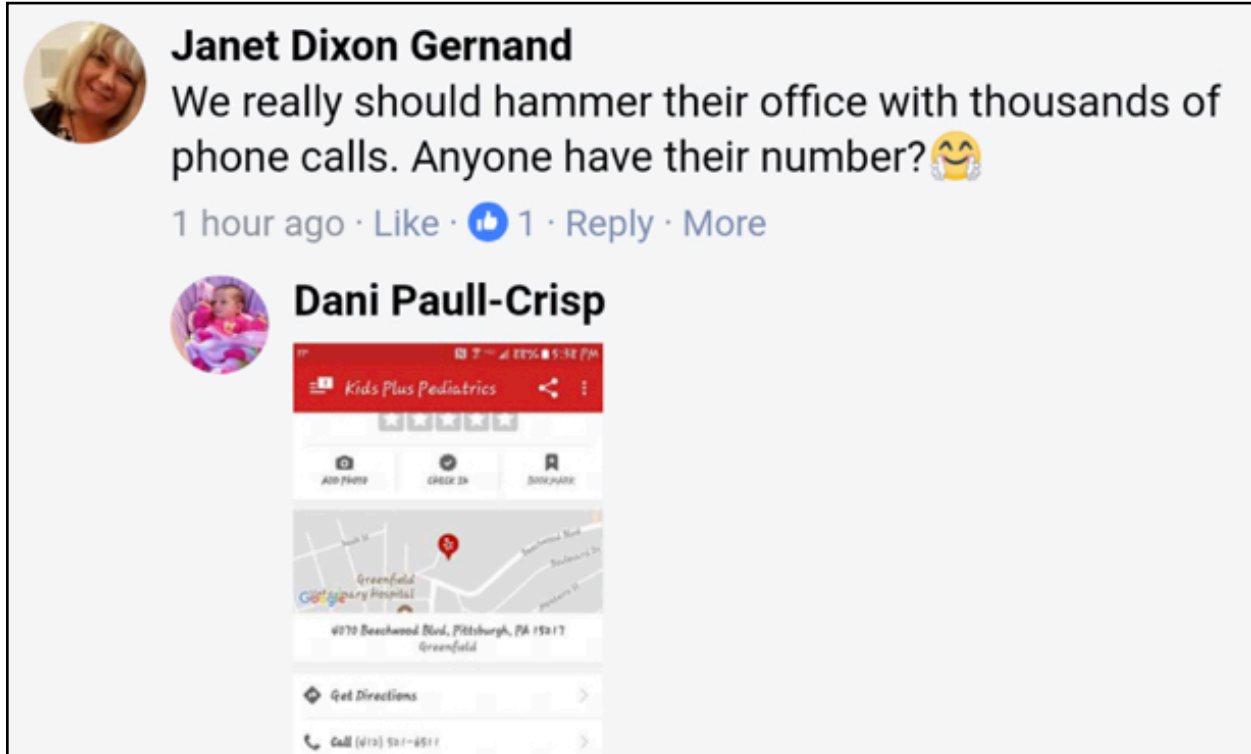us with fraudulent reviews.

Here's a screen cap from inside the Facebook group that attacked us, in which they discuss the
new tactic.

Rose Marie DiFini Jamison
Stop posting on the video and post on Yelp.
6 hours ago · Like · 👍 3 · Reply · More

Jodie Tysver Jensen
Yelp saves the day. Thank you so much for suggesting that!

Again: these were coordinated, real-time terror attacks intended to inflict harm on our practice.

Within in the first 2 days, we saw more than 60 fraudulent reviews on Yelp and Google. We know we would have had many more on Facebook, had we not immediately shut down the ratings. Our aggregate review score went from 4.5 stars to 1.3. This is important not so much for the individual reviews, which are transparently fake and silly, but for the average. A number like that, popping up in search feeds and presenting an allegedly objective crowd-sourcing of the quality of your office and your providers, can do significant financial harm to your practice.

Significant harm to your practice, and to your patients, can also be done through a Denial of Service attack. Though our Attackers went so far as to gather our phone numbers, post them to the group, and issue a call to attack, we only received three phone calls.

Janet Dixon Gernand
We really should hammer their office with thousands of phone calls. Anyone have their number? 😊
1 hour ago · Like · 👍 1 · Reply · More

Dani Paull-Crisp

On this front, we were both happy and disappointed.

Happy, for obvious reasons. Disappointed, because this sort of attack is the one thing the Attackers would have done that would also have been prosecutable. We have a robust digital phone system that records the number of every incoming call we receive, so we could have legally gone after anyone who came after us in this way. It would have been expensive. It would have been time-consuming. And it would have been immensely satisfying. We would have happily led that charge. Even as we were even more happy, for the sake of our front office associates and especially our patients, that we never had to.

WHEN THEY POST, THEY WILL…

…Toss around every last tired, discredited autism/mercury/thimerosal/blood-brain barrier trope.

…Provide links to junk science, spurious claims, fake news, alternative facts, random Google docs, unhinged YouTube videos, natural health news sites, plus all sorts of woo and snake-oil and fantastical pseudo-science.

…Declare that you are money-grubbing, bonus-receiving shills for Big Pharma.

…Declare that you receive all that filthy lucre for poisoning and killing children.

…Declare that you should, and will, "burn in hell for killing babies."

…Tell you, over and over again, that you "need to do your research."

Irina Ruiz
September 19 at 6:53am

If you are a real doctor you should know that there are many strengths of HPV, & that the body fights it off without harm in a healthy person! It's an unnecessary vaccine that has horrible side effects, including death.

…Discount, dismiss, distort, or just simply ignore any link, evidence, or argument you provide.

…Insult and condescend to anyone, including doctors, who speak from evidence and experience.

Rosiane Alfinito Roeder Absolutely! Any of us who have cut out and reconstructed cervical, vaginal, vulvar and penile cancer, would rather be out of a job than test another patient with a preventable cancer.
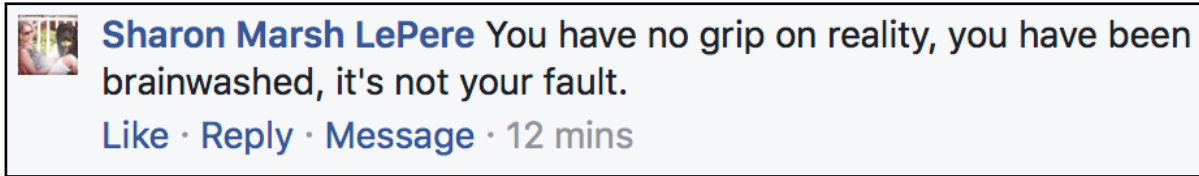Like · Reply · Message · 👍 2 · 49 mins

Janice Marie You're an idiot and a robot to believe this vaccine works
Like · Reply · Message · 5 mins

…Make repeated, incoherent claims about clinical trials, vaccine inserts, placebos, and adjuvants.

…Spew vile, vulgar, cruel, and personal insults at you, your practice, and your patients.

…Profess to know "the truth" about "what really goes on" in medical offices and Pharma labs.

Sharon Marsh LePere You have no grip on reality, you have been brainwashed, it's not your fault.
Like · Reply · Message · 12 mins

…Exhibit an odd fascination with GIFs, vomit emoji, and Ryan Reynolds memes.

…Espouse all sorts of wild and crazy and deeply unhinged conspiracy theories, including:

- Flu vaccines contain mind-control nano chips
- All vaccines contain the AIDS virus
- Airport scanners alter your DNA
- Big Pharma pays med school loans and provides secret bank accounts for docs
- Cancer has been cured, but the government and Big Pharma won't release it
- . There is no such thing as weather; the government controls the climate with lasers
- Vaccines are part of a secret genocidal plan to eliminate [insert "victim" group here]

We're not making this stuff up. Really. Not even a great fiction writer could make this stuff up. And believe us when we say this is just the tip of a great, unhinged iceberg.

The Lessons We Learned From the Attack
You now have a good sense of what a Facebook Anti-Vaxx attack looks and sounds like. And you can probably imagine how it feels. But you really have no idea. And we hope you never do.

But in case you do — and if you're serious about promoting vaccines and advocating for public health and wellness on your Facebook page, you may — the rest of this document will help you handle it.

We'll tell you what we learned.

We'll tell you what to do, and we'll tell you how (and why) to do it.

We'll help you PREPARE for, DEFEND against, and CLEAN UP after one of these attacks.

Because these people and their madness can't go unchecked. They can't be allowed to endanger children or compromise public health or, in the short term, harm you and/or your practice simply because you have the temerity to advocate for vaccines and evidence-based medicine.

So let's get started.

PREPARE | *Batten the Hatches*

This can happen to you. So be ready.

First Principles

Real estate wisdom: *Location, location, location*.

Social media wisdom: *Preparation, preparation, preparation*.

To some readers, the steps we're about to describe may seem obvious. You may already have done them. In fact, we hope you have. But in our travels and discussions, our emails and interviews these past two years, we've been alarmed to discover that many of our colleagues have not done these things. Indeed, many of the providers and practices we've talked to didn't know how to do these things, or even that you *could* do some of these things.

We're here to tell you that you can. How you can. And that you sure as heck should.

Consider these steps the Facebook equivalent of always wearing your seatbelt: they don't require a lot of time or effort, and chances are they won't ever have to make a difference in your day. But you sure want to be using them if your Facebook page should ever crash head-on into a group of Anti-Vaxxers.

The steps we outline here won't prevent an Anti-Vaxx attack, but they will put you in the best possible position at the start of one.

If you follow these suggestions, you can limit the damage done by the first wave of attackers, and you'll be in excellent position to respond, to counter and to defend not only your Facebook page, but also your Yelp and Google listings, as the attack continues.

Consider them prophylactic treatment for all the vile and virulent contagion spread by Anti-Vaxx attackers and other science deniers.

In other words: take some precautions, and follow these prescriptions.

Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst.

In the Office

If you're posting online, the attack will likely come from Facebook, and the battle will be waged almost entirely in the digital realm, but you'll still need to do a few things to prepare your office.

Alert Anyone Who Manages or Monitors Your Social Media

If you have one person who manages your social media presence, he or she will obviously already be alerted. If you have multiple people who manage and/or monitor your social media presence, they'll all need to be prepared.

Anytime you post any sort of vaccine advocacy, everyone should be on heightened alert. Know the material, the tools and strategies, that appear in this toolkit, and be prepared to use them. You should also be prepared, for at least the first couple of days, to spend *much* more time than usual monitoring and checking on the page. The faster you detect the attack and begin to respond, the better able you will be to contain and defend against it.

Urge Everyone to Sound Alarms, But Stand Down

If other members of your practice — providers, nurses, administrators, MAs, anyone — regularly visit and participate on your social media sites, alert them too. Let them know that a pro-vaccine post is coming, and that an anti-vaccine attack is possible. Ask them to advise the social media manager/team if they see anything happening, and advise them also to refrain from any sort of comment or defense from their own personal social media accounts; this will protect them from any sort of attack or engagement on their on their own personal pages. And, of course, you'll want to coordinate the defense of your practice page through your official account.

Alert Anyone Who Answers Phones

As you saw in the case study, and as we have seen and heard from other practices that have come under attack, there is always the possibility that Anti-Vaxx Attackers may call your office or even try to flood your phone lines. So you'll want to alert anyone who answers your phones that these calls could be coming. And tell them exactly what you want them to do if the calls do come.

We recommend a few simple principles:

- Do not engage or debate (no matter how much you might like to).

- Maintain a calm, professional demeanor (even in the face of obvious harassment).

- Deflect by directing to a voicemail box you can use to record (in case of any threats or harassment) and delete (for all the rest of the calls) as appropriate.

- Deflect by taking a message and promising a call back (that will never come).

- If you have a phone system that displays and/or records the numbers of incoming calls, make liberal use of it. And feel free to tell callers that their numbers are being recorded.

- If all else fails, just hang up

Facebook

Short of not posting any vaccine info at all — and we all know that's not an option — there's simply no way to prevent a Facebook attack. But there several things you should do to prepare before you post.

Pick Your Posting Time Wisely

This may seem like an overabundance of caution, or maybe even paranoia, but it's good advice — for all social media use, and especially for vaccine advocacy posts.

Assume that any time you post or share pro-vaccine content, you have opened yourself to a possible Anti-Vaxx Attack. (Because you have. The events of the last two years on Facebook have demonstrated that quite nicely.) So be sure that when you do post, your social media manager and/or team are rested and ready and available to commit the kind of time and energy it will take to defend against an attack.

Though attacks can sometimes come days or even (as ours did) weeks after the initial post, over 90% of the ones we've chronicled occur within 24 hours of the original post. As we demonstrated in the case study, attacks come around the clock and can last for days. So you need to be prepared for *at least* 48 hours — but really, more like 72-96 hours — in the immediate aftermath of a post. Be sure all hands are on deck and ready to go, with no big deadlines or projects or vacations or holidays in the immediate future.

Practice Constant Vigilance

At the risk of sounding like Mad-Eye Moody preaching to Harry Potter… We recommend, if not hyper-vigilance, at least *constant vigilance* in the first 24-48 hours after you post.

Watch the page. Monitor it regularly. Refresh it (almost) obsessively.

You're literally on sentry duty, watching for the first signs of trouble or incursion. The sooner you spot the aggression, the sooner you sense the first shots fired or catch the first glimpse of troops amassing on your digital borders, the sooner you're able to shift into DEFEND mode. And the sooner you do that, the better your chances of containing the attack and the damage it will bring.

Every hour — indeed, every minute — counts.

Disable Reviews & Recommendations

As you saw in the case study, Anti-Vaxx Attackers want to punish you for your pro-vaccine stance. They want to harm you, and they especially want to harm your practice. One of the first, and easiest, ways they will seek to do that is by leaving negative reviews on Facebook.

It's easy to cut off that line of attack: simply disable your reviews and recommendations before you post.

Here's how.

1. On your Facebook page, click *Settings*.

2. In the *General* Menu, click *Reviews*.

3. Check the radio button for *Disable reviews*.

4. Click *Save Changes*.
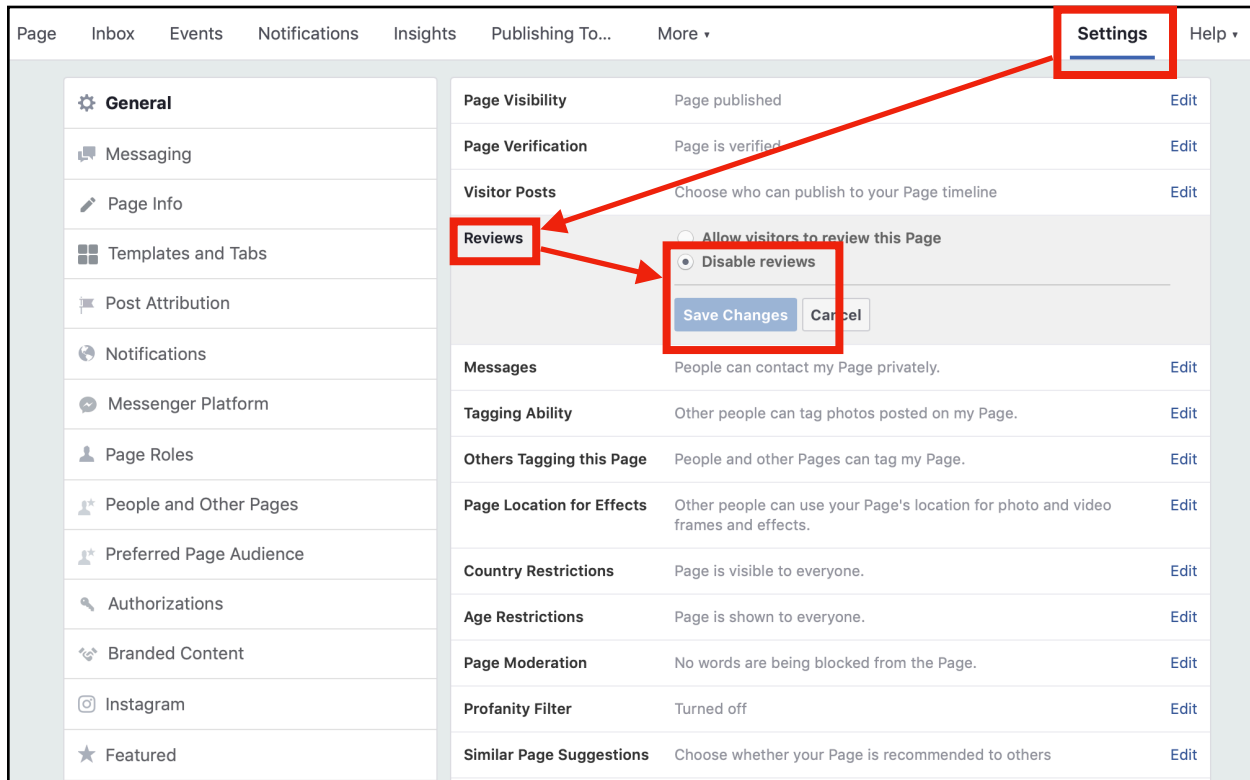
* Note: When Facebook ratings are disabled, existing reviews and aggregate numerical ratings no longer appear on your page. So if Attackers do leave fraudulent reviews before you disable them, they'll remain hidden until you have time to address them in the CLEAN-UP phase.
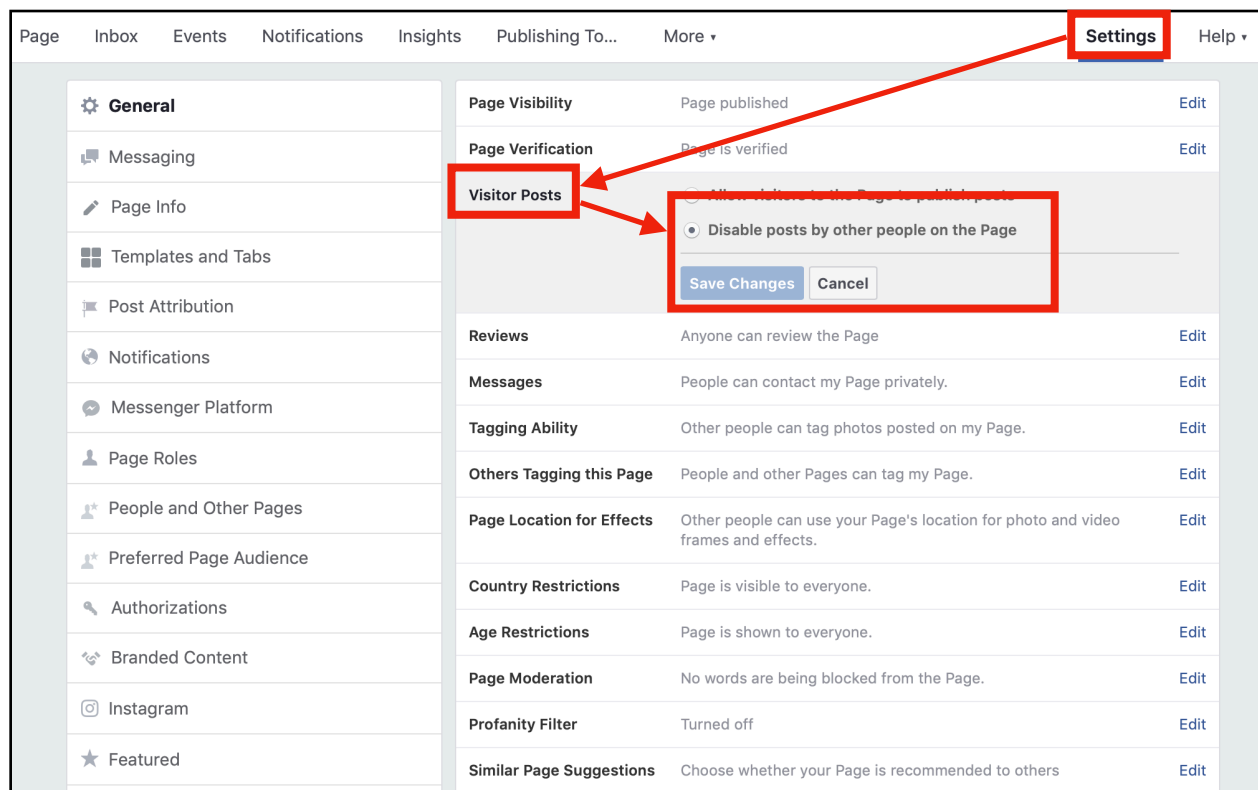
Disable Visitor Posts
The name of this option is a bit deceptive. You can't actually disable *all* visitor posts on your Facebook page. (And, even if you could, you likely wouldn't want to, even at the height of an attack; that step would shut out your attackers, but it would also shut out your admirers and defenders.)

There's no way to disable visitor posts on a particular post, photo, or video of yours. But you can, and should, turn off the ability of visitors to make a general post to your Facebook page. In the past, before the latest page redesign, this would have been called "Writing on Your Wall."

Now the posts appear on a separate "Visitor Posts" section. Whatever they're called, and wherever they appear, you don't want Anti-Vaxx Attackers to have this option. Because that's just one more front on which you have to fight, and one more type of damage you'll need to CLEAN-UP later.

Here's how.
1. On your Facebook page, click *Settings*.

2. In the *General* Menu, click *Visitor Posts*.

3. Check the radio button for *Disable posts by other people on the Page*.

4. Click *Save Changes*.

Enable Email Notifications for Posts & Messages

We recommend that for everyday, run-of-the-mill use of your Facebook page, you should already have these options enabled.

To manage a good and engaging and responsive Facebook page, you need to know when and what people are posting. But the time-sensitivity of that knowledge — think of it as real-time

intel on the tactics and positions of enemy forces — is never more critical than in the midst of an Anti-Vaxx attack.

Here's how to be sure you're getting it:

1. On your Facebook page, click *Settings*.

2. In the Dashboard, click *Notifications*.

3. Beneath *Messages, c*heck the radio button for *Get a Facebook notification when someone uses Messenger to send your Page a message*.

4. Beneath *Email*, check the radio button for *Get an email each time there is activity on your Page or an important Page update*.
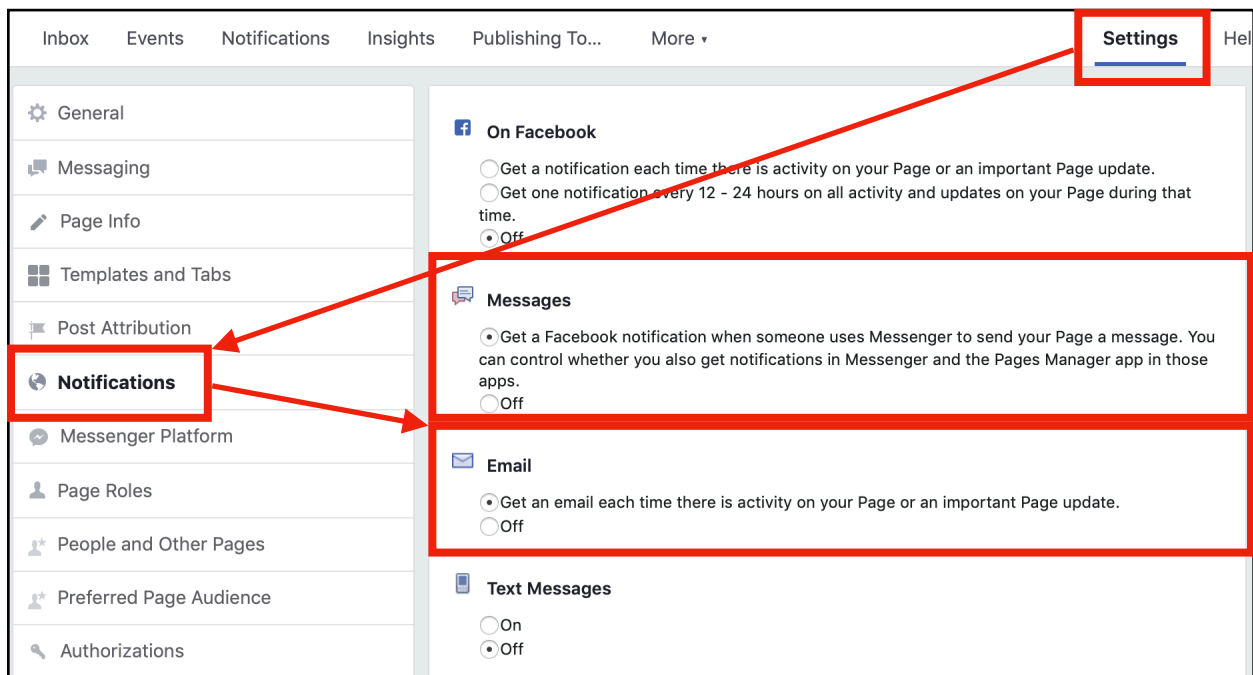
As you will see later in the DEFEND section, receiving and following your Notifications is a critical way to monitor, and be sure you do not miss, every single attack on any part of your Facebook page.

Yelp

As you'll see in the DEFEND section, Yelp is the gold standard for how social media platforms should respond to attacks and to the ensuing waves of fraudulent reviews they can bring. The team at Yelp provides outstanding support and a surprisingly rapid response when you notify them that you and/or your practice are under attack.

But.

The true power of that support and the blazing speed of that response are made available only to practices that have already claimed their own business listing. Once you've claimed your listing, you will have access to a dashboard that provides a robust series of reporting tools to aid in your defense.

So…

Claim Your Business
The first step is to claim your business listing. Yelps's own instructions for the process appear below, as found on their support page here: https://biz.yelp.com/support/claiming

Once you claim your listing, you can manage it through your Yelp for Business Owners account.


In the YOUR BUSINESS tab, you'll have access to a full dashboard for that location, which gives you the ability to customize your listing, manage information, monitor analytics, and

directly read, report, and respond to reviews. (More on that absolutely vital process in the CLEAN-UP section of this toolkit.)

Enable Email Notifications for Reviews
In the ACCOUNT SETTINGS tab, under the "Language & Notifications" settings, be sure *Send me an email when someone reviews my business* is checked, so that you receive an instant notification when someone posts a review.
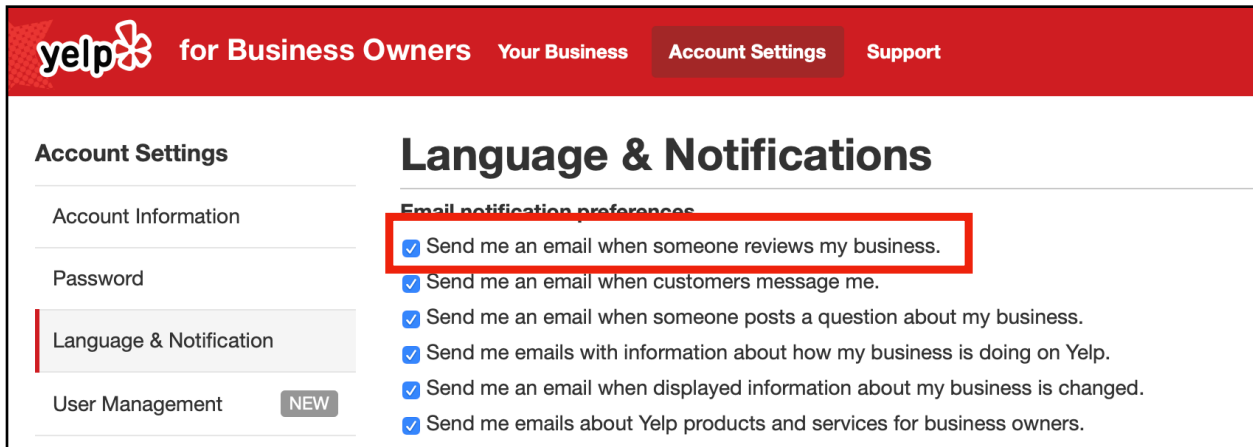
Even without an Anti-Vaxx Attack, claiming your Yelp listing and having access to your information is an important step for monitoring both your presence and your reputation on a platform that brings your office to the attention of literally hundreds — and sometimes thousands — of people each year.

If you *do* suffer an Anti-Vaxx Attack, you'll want full access to and control of your listing already. Because, as you see here, attacks bring a considerable spike in your traffic and attention.
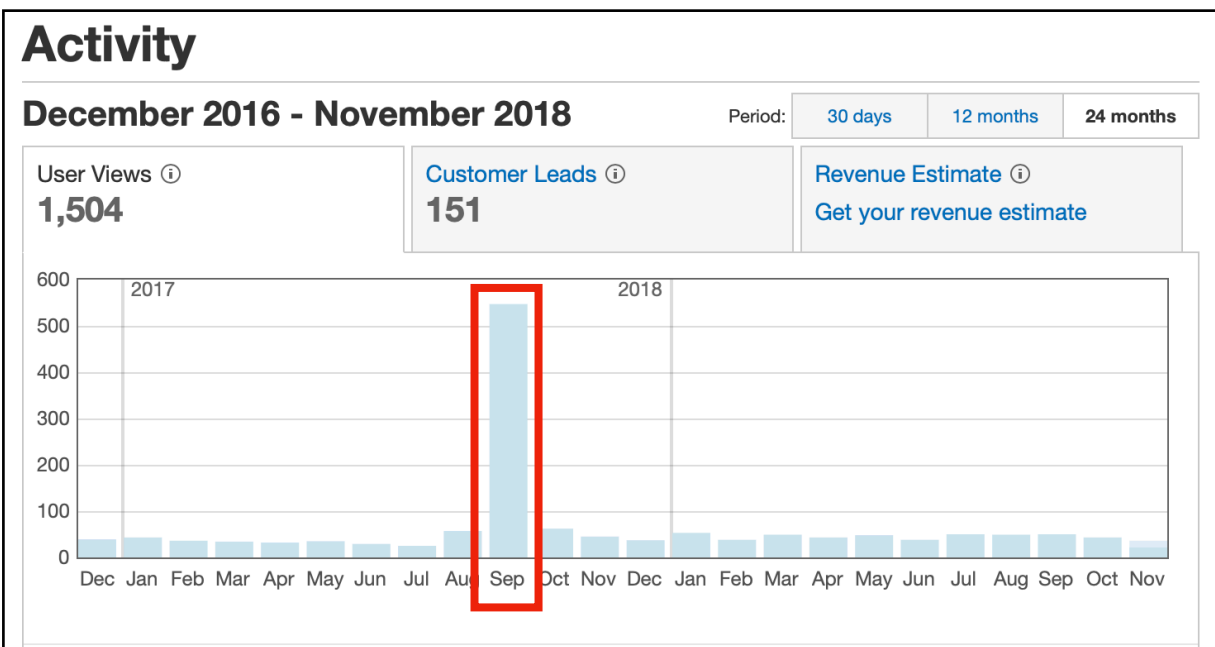
Google

Though Google offers neither the same resources nor the same responsiveness as Yelp, you'll still want to control, and be able to access, your business listing as it appears in search results and on Google Maps.

Claim Your Business Listings

The first step is to add or claim your business listing. Google's own instructions for the process appear below, as found on their support page.

Add or claim your business listing

To add your business information to Google Maps, Search, and other Google properties, create a Google My Business listing (or get access to one, if it exists). Use Google My Business for free to manage how your business information appears across Google, including Search and Maps. Follow the steps below to add or claim your business listing:

Computer ⌃

1. Go to google.com/business ☐ and click **Start now** at the top right corner.
2. Sign in ☐ to your Google Account, or create one if you don't already use Google services.
3. Enter the name of your business and click **Next**.
   Note: You can also select your business from the suggestions that appear as you enter information.
4. Enter the street address of your business and click **Next**. You may also be asked to position a marker for the location of your business on a map.
   a. If you manage a service-area business, follow these extra steps:
      i. Check the box for *I deliver goods and services to my customers.* Optionally, check the box for *Hide my address (it's not a store) Only show region –.*
      ii. Click **Next**.
      iii. Select a delivery area option and click **Next**.
5. Use the search field to select a business category and click **Next**.
6. Enter a phone number or website URL for your business, then click **Next**.
   Note: You'll also have the option to create a free website based on your information.
7. To complete sign-up and verify your connection to this business, click **Continue**.
8. Select a verification option:
   a. To verify at another time, select **Try a different method** and click **Later**. If you're not authorized to manage the business, find the person in your organization who's authorized and continue the process.

Note: If you see a page that says "This listing has already been claimed," click **Request access** and follow the directions to claim your business. Learn more about requesting ownership.

Mobile ⌃

1. Open the Google My Business app.
2. Sign in with the Google Account you'd like to use to manage your business.
   • **If this is your first time adding a business to Google**, sign in with the Google Account you'd like to use to manage your business and tap **Continue**.
   • **If you've added a business before**, tap **More**, then tap the name of your business to reveal a list of all listings in your account. Scroll to the bottom of the page and choose **+ Create new business**.
3. If you see a dialog letting you know that someone else has verified the business, follow these steps.
4. Enter your business name and information and agree to the Terms of Service. Tap **Continue** when you're ready to create a listing for your business.

Use Google Maps to claim your business

To claim your business on Google Maps, follow these steps:

1. Open the Google My Business app.
2. Search for your business.
3. Open the business information panel, then scroll down and tap **Claim this business** ✔.

If you have offices in multiple locations, it's likely that each office will have its own discrete listing. (Google — unlike Yelp, which defaults to a single listing no matter how many locations you have — distinguishes separate locations for the purposes of geo-locating on Google Maps.) So you'll need to go through this process for each individual location.

Once you claim your listings, you can manage all locations through your Google My Business account.
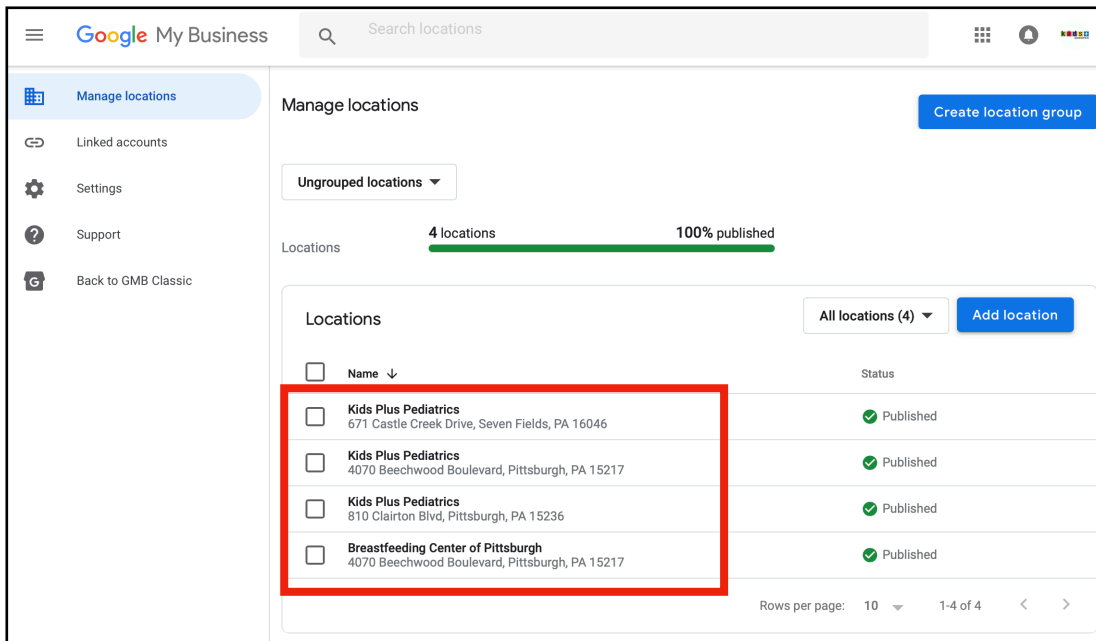
Enable Email Notifications for Customer Reviews & Questions and Answers
In the SETTINGS tab, be sure "Customer reviews" and "Questions and answers" are both
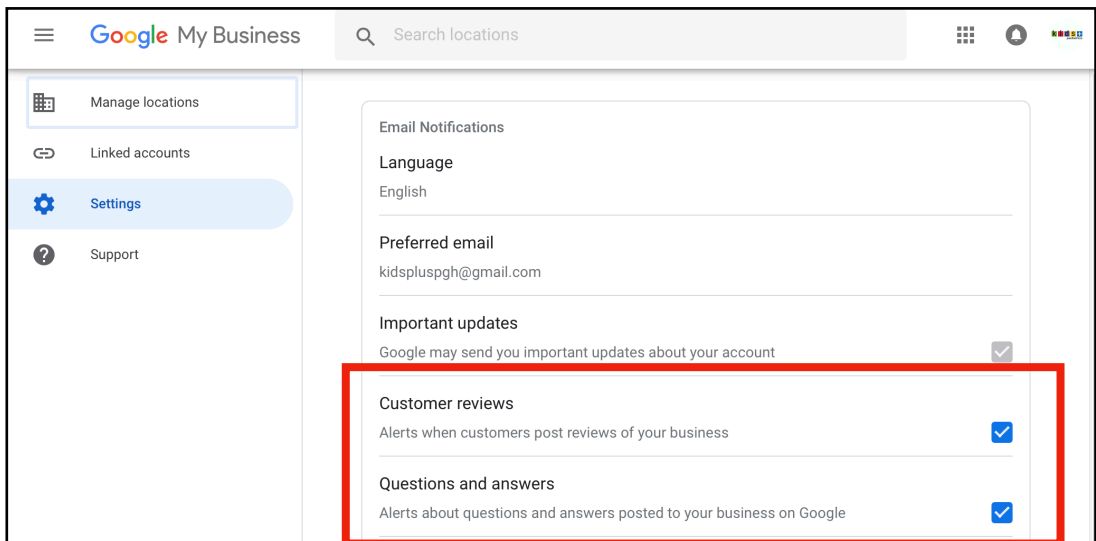
checked, so you'll receive notifications any time someone posts a review or addresses a question to your listing.

When you click on a location in the MANAGE LOCATIONS window, you'll have access to a full dashboard for that location, which gives you the ability to customize your listing, manage information, monitor analytics, and directly read, report, and respond to reviews. (More on that process, for better and for worse, in the CLEAN-UP section of this toolkit.)

Even without an Anti-Vaxx attack, owning your Google listings and having access to your information is an important step for monitoring both your presence and your reputation on a platform that brings your office to the attention of literally thousands — or, as in our case above, tens of thousands — of people each month.

If you *do* suffer an Anti-Vaxx Attack, you'll want full access to and control of your listing already. Because an attack can bring a considerable spike in your traffic, and every second will count.

Ready Your Reinforcements

As you saw in the CASE STUDY, the arrival of the cavalry — an organic, unorganized collection of reinforcements who all came to our aid on the same day — marked the turning point of the attack. The firepower those reinforcements brought provided us considerable cover fire, and bought us a pivotal series of hours that allowed us to get caught up in our defense and that effectively dissuaded, or at least greatly diminished, the attackers and their efforts.

As you can probably guess, a key strategy in the DEFEND section will be to call for reinforcements. We had the benefit of AAP NCE timing, and so the opportunity for many people across the pediatric social media landscape to learn about what was happening to us. Your timing may not be so fortuitous, your network not so extensive.

So we've gone and created a network for you. And we'll have the cavalry always at the ready.

Shots Heard Round the World is our social media rapid-response network, created to aid in the defense of any pediatric practice or provider suffering an Anti-Vaxx attack. Currently 250+ members strong, and with more members enlisting all the time, Shots Heard is your social media 911.

You notify us for help, and we dispatch a battalion of first (and second, and third) responders — providers, health care workers, vaccine researchers, and other pro-science advocates, all ready and eager to come to your aid.

To join, email **join@shotsheard.com**

To call for help or report an attack, email **alert@shotsheard.com**, or send a direct Facebook message to **our Facebook page**.

Thanks to Shots Heard Round the World, your reinforcements are always ready.

DEFEND | *Unto the Breach*

This is happening to you. So saddle up.

First Principles

Fair warning: You will be angry. You will be frustrated.

You'll be enraged, outraged, embattled, embittered, disgusted, disgruntled, exacerbated, exasperated, and just generally incensed in ways you never thought possible.

Your stomach will turn, your toes will curl, and your head will almost certainly threaten to explode.

You'll shake with rage and shiver with revulsion.

You'll want to laugh, cry, scream, and shout. (Usually in waves, but sometimes all at once.)

You'll want to throw your computer, your tablet, your phone, and any other digital device within reach across the room or against the wall or out a window or anywhere else that will prevent you from having to face any more of this madness.

You probably think we're exaggerating. But we're not.

You'll endure your own, visceral version of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief:

DENIAL
This isn't happening. It can't be happening. These people can't really believe these things…

ANGER
These people are crazy. They're denying science and endangering lives, and I'd really love to…

BARGAINING
Please, God or Allah or Paul Offit or Mark Zuckerberg, just make it stop. I'll do anything…

DEPRESSION
I can't do this anymore. There's no point. We're doomed. The world is going to hell in a handcart…

ACCEPTANCE
This is happening. These people are crazy. But I have right and might and science and sanity on my side. I'm going to keep fighting as long as it takes. I'm going to continue to stand up for health and wellness and evidence-based medicine that protects children and families from death and disease.

You probably think we're being melodramatic. But we're not.

Really. We're not.

We're trying to prepare you for how it will feel when you have to defend against the kinds of attacks, fake news, alternative facts, nonsense, twaddle, fantasy, intellectual dishonesty, condescension, and science denial with which you will be regularly and fiendishly bombarded. We're not kidding, nor are we exaggerating, when we say that the emotions of the defense are often much more difficult to manage than the logistics.

It's also worth noting, before we get to the specifics of those logistics, that it will almost certainly be tempting to spare yourself and/or your practice the work and the aggravation and simply delete the post that spawned the attack. That is natural and understandable. And utterly unadvisable.

Don't remove the post.

Don't couch or justify or otherwise rationalize it with notions of civility or illusions of gentility or the good and genuine intentions of sparing or protecting anyone from anything.

Don't submit.

Don't surrender.

Don't let the terrorists win.

If you relent and remove your post — if you do not outwit, outplay, and outlast your attackers — you lose. We ALL lose. Especially the children and families whose lives may one day be affected, or ended, by the awful errors in judgement that these Anti-Vaxx forces enable.

If you remove your post, if you take your ball and your evidence-based medicine and your principles and your commitments to science and public health and go home, you embolden them. You effectively support them. And that is the last thing anyone needs.

In the words of Winston Churchill: *never give in — never, never, never, never.*

Or, if your proclivities lean less to politics and more to pop music, in the words of Tom Petty:

Well, I won't back down
No, I won't back down
You can stand me up at the gates of hell, but I won't back down.
No, I'll stand my ground
Won't be turned around
And I'll keep this world from draggin' me down
Gonna stand my ground, and I won't back down.

Remember, of course, that Facebook options are always changing. In fact, there are already some options available to page owners that we didn't have during our attack. This is a good thing. It's not enough — and that's why we're going to continue to pursue this issue until we get a sit-down with key decision makers at Facebook — but it's a start. And a help.

As new options become available, we will update this (living) document.

So here, as of this writing, is your best defense…

Wait For It

You'll know it when you get it.

If your Facebook page has any sort of following or public reputation, and you ever post anything about vaccines or vaccination, you've almost surely already been hit with a post, a link, a meme, or maybe some leading question masquerading as sincere inquiry but offered merely as a leaping-off point for an increasingly off-the-rails series of fake news, alternative facts, medical nonsense, and holistic twaddle dropped in the shadow of your post.

Been there, responded to that. Went back and forth a few times. And then, when either you or the poster tired of the dance, just left it there in the comments as a bitter reminder that not everyone believes in evidence-based medicine, a badge of honor that you answered conspiracy with science. Or maybe you deleted it because you just couldn't stand to look at it any longer.

If you were unlucky, your anti-vaccine poster may have brought along a friend or two. But the dance was the same, and it didn't last long. They moved on, in part because they likely found another link or page to follow, but also because there just wasn't enough excitement. Or affirmation. Or spectacle.

In our experience, and in the experience of the providers and practices we interviewed, it's the spectacle these attackers want. The affirmation they crave. And the excitement, especially when notes can be compared back in the relative safety and insanity of a closed (in both enrollment and logic) Anti-Vaxx group, that necessarily follows.

When THE ATTACK comes, you'll know it.

The comments will dribble in at first: one or two in the first few minutes. Then a third. A fourth. A fifth. Probably all in the first half hour or so.

Then the floodgates open. Your Facebook notifications start lighting up like a pinball machine, your email alerts like a virtual reality video game.

It will be, as the kids like to say these days, *lit*. So lit, in fact, that there will be no mistaking it. And, for a while at least, almost impossible to keep up with it.

But you'll be ready.

Do Not Engage

First rule of Fight Club: *You do not talk about Fight Club*.

First rule of Anti-Vaxx Attack: *You do not talk to Anti-Vaxx Attackers*.

Don't engage. Don't debate. Don't respond at all.

Don't try to convince or counter them with science or data or resource materials or peer-reviewed research or links to good sites with good, reliable information or anything else that resembles evidence-based medicine.

It won't do any good. And it will only waste your time.

Just ignore them. Eliminate them. Obliterate them.

Wipe them, and their ability to harm your Facebook page or anyone who views it, right off the face of your phone, tablet, or computer screen.

These people can't be reasoned with — especially in this context. They're resistant to evidence, impervious to reason, averse to logic, and allergic to intellectual consistency.

While you take the time to craft a careful, thoughtful, evidence-based response, the original poster — and dozens or even hundreds more — will be busy (metaphorically) defecating all over your page. They'll respond to your careful, thoughtful, evidence-based response with memes, GIFs, derision, condescension, and links to YouTube pages with channels that (ahem) prove vaccines kill children, and that prove the earth is really flat.

Seriously. We're not making this up. Here's one they posted to our page:
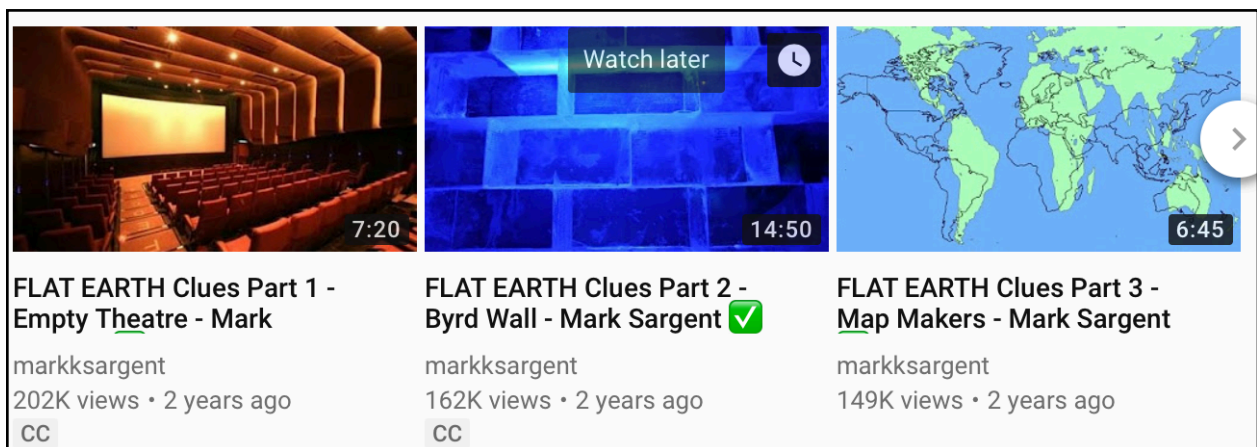
The only thing more depressing than the notion that one of our attackers provided us with this link (and another about vaccine cover-ups and conspiracies) when demanding that we *do our*

research is the thought of how many times those videos have been viewed (and presumably believed) by impressionable minds.

This is what, and who, you're dealing with.

So is this…

> **Gina Bertarelli** Petitions don't do a thing. We're in WW3. We need to be as covert as the government is and take care of business. In WW2 there were underground networks of people who would forge ID cards so people could eat or travel and covert NAZIS who would help people. We can't protest or vote our way out of this. Why can't people SEE that? The militaries around the world need to get together and stop this insanity.

That's right. People who compare vaccines to the Holocaust and pediatricians to Nazis and advocate a global military uprising to stop them both.

These people aren't going to read, or consider, or even acknowledge any potential credibility of anything you have to say or post or link, no matter how factual or compelling. Every second you spend attempting to engage them is a second you could be banning and deleting them.

This thought does, of course, run counter to your training, to your impulses, to the very core of your being that believes in teaching and helping and protecting people with evidence-based medicine. But Anti-Vaxxers can't be taught. They refuse to be helped. And, no matter how much they may need it, they deny the necessity, and indeed the validity, of your well-intentioned protection.

Perhaps they can be reached, someday, someway. We certainly hope that they can. But in the middle of a raging Anti-Vaxx attack is neither the time nor the place to do it.

Are we over-making the point? Probably. But that's because it's one of the most important and helpful we have.

So, one more time, just to be sure:

DO NOT ENGAGE.

Dismiss and (virtually) destroy.

Now let's get to it.

## Disable Your Facebook Reviews & Recommendations

In the PREPARE section of the toolkit, we suggested that you consider proactively disabling your Facebook reviews the day before you make a high-profile vaccine post. And we stand by that suggestion. But if you choose not to, or you forget to, or you turn them back on because you didn't receive an attack after a few weeks, but then the Anti-Vaxxers belatedly find your post…

You need to do this first, before you do anything else.

Because it's a quick, easy target. Because it's often where the Attackers go first. Because it's the action with the potential to do the most harm. And because it's the action that requires the most concerted efforts of time and attention to repair.

Here's how.

1. On your Facebook page, click *Settings*.

2. In the *General* Menu, click *Reviews*.

3. Check the radio button for *Disable reviews*.

4. Click *Save Changes*.

36
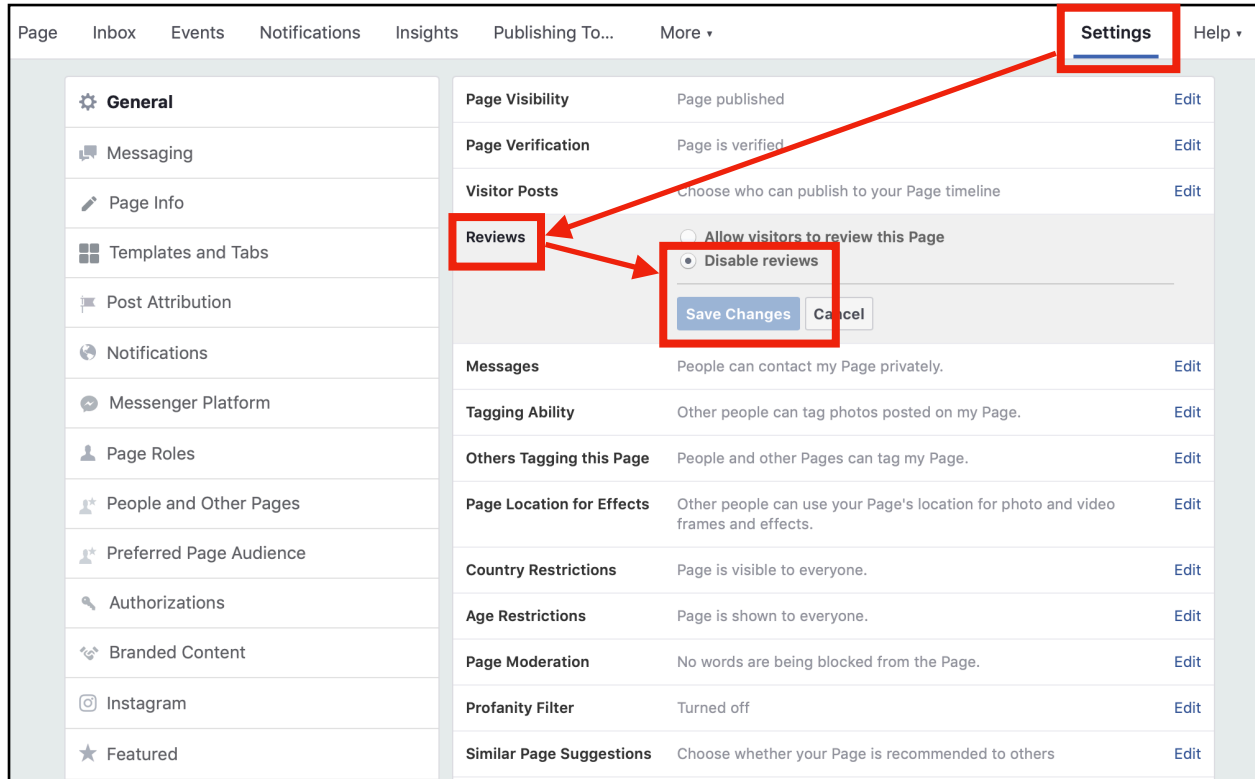
Note: When Facebook ratings are disabled, the existing reviews and aggregate numerical rating no longer appear on your page. So if Attackers do leave fraudulent reviews before you disable them, they;ll remain hidden until you have time to address them in the CLEAN-UP phase.

Ban Facebook Attackers Without Hesitation, and Without Remorse

Once again: don't engage. Don't debate. Don't even respond. Just nuke 'em. Wipe them, and their ability to do any more damage, right off the face of your Facebook page.

The longer the Attackers have access to your page, the more damage they can and will do.

In the eight days of our siege, we banned over 800 Attackers. But, even banning as fast as we could, we still had to delete more than 10,000 comments. That's an average of over 12 comments per attacker.

Some Attackers — especially those working in the wee hours, when we had no one awake to ban them or just generally impede their efforts — posted dozens, even hundreds of comments, both on the video itself and on many other posts all across our Facebook page, including many that had nothing to do with vaccines and many others that were weeks, months, or even years old.

Other Attackers become the social media equivalent of graffiti taggers; they're happy to click around your page and leave their tell-tale marks in as many places as they can. Sooner or later, you have to clean up their mess. Better to do it before they make it.

Here's how.

1. Hover the cursor just to the right of the comment bubble, and an ellipsis will appear with the option to *Hide or embed this* comment. Click *Hide Comment*.
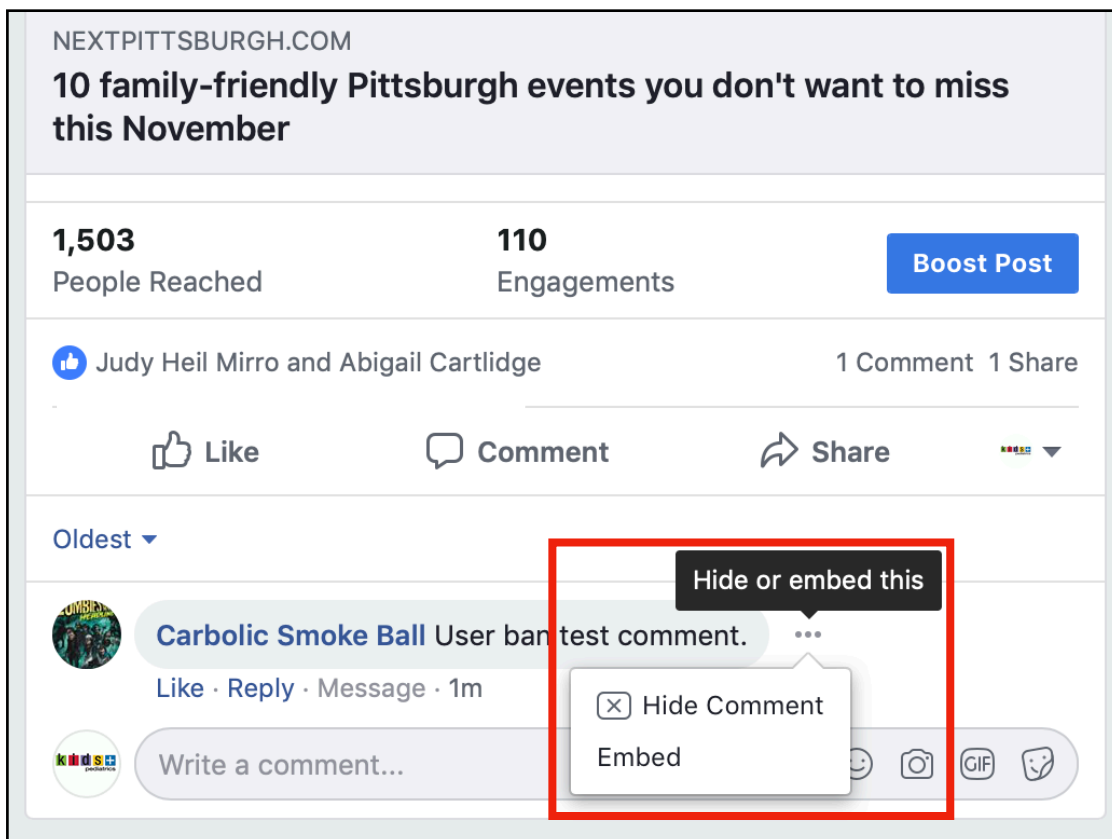
2. Once the comment is hidden, click *Ban [the Attacker]*.
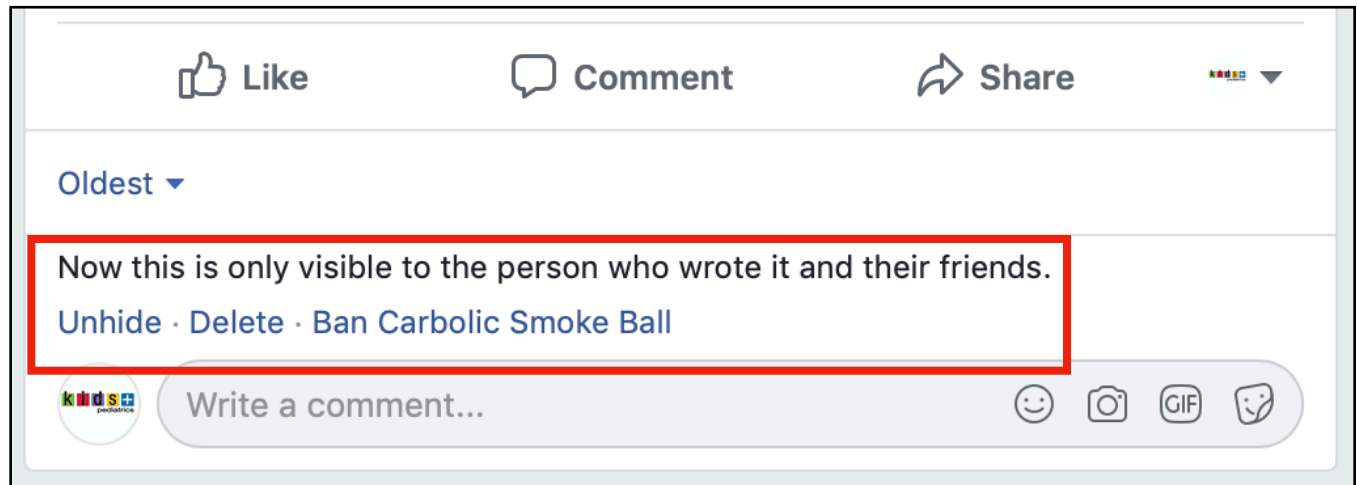
3. Once the Attacker has been banned, click *Delete* to remove the Attacker's comment.

When you ban a user, he/she can no longer post on, comment on, nor even see the contents of your Facebook page. Your page effectively becomes invisible to him/her. All other comments The Attacker has made on your page, besides the one you just used to ban and delete, will remain on your page until you manually delete them. They will not, however, be visible to the public — only to you, and to Facebook friends of the Attacker who wrote them.

It will be tempting, especially if the Attacker you just banned was a prolific commenter before the banning, to scour your page for his/her other work and delete those comments as well. You should resist that temptation, as long as your page is still under attack by any other Attackers.
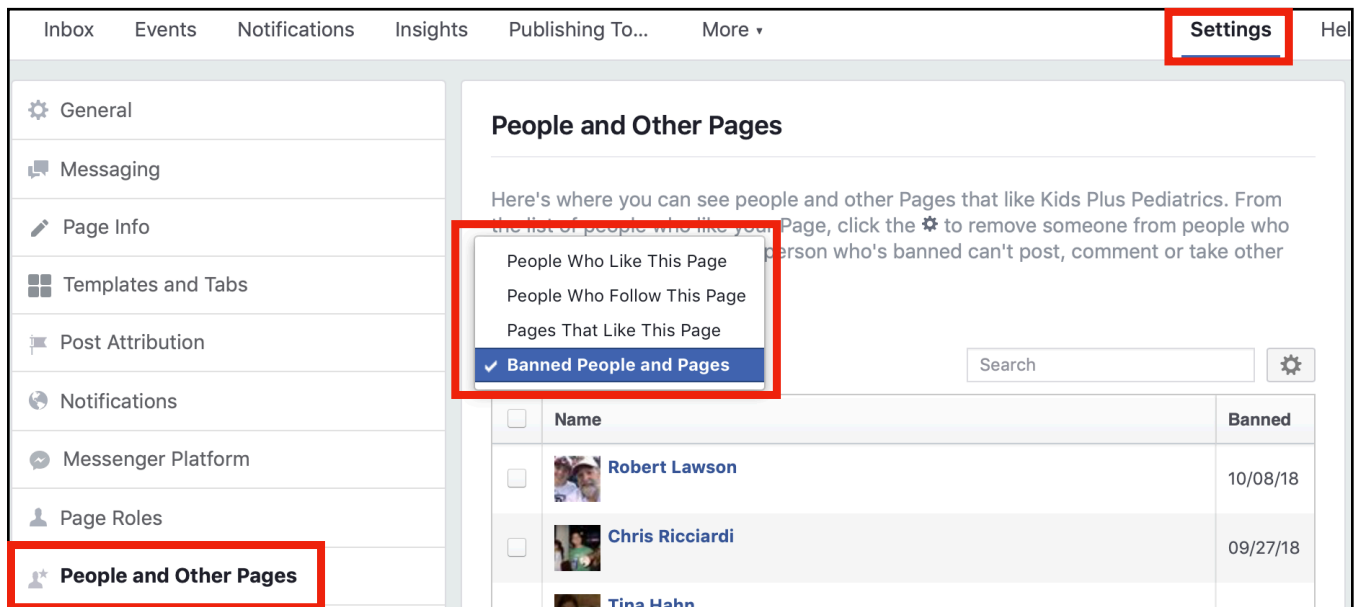
You're still in a firefight, and still in full damage control mode. Those other comments can be deleted when you have downtime, or once you get to CLEAN-UP mode. While you're in DEFEND mode, you need to move on to ban other active attackers. That's always the priority.

If you're working alone, start with active/most recent Attackers and work your way backward in reverse chronological order.

You always want to be working on the leading edge of your comments, because those Attackers are still active and currently posting. You save yourself work every time you ban an Attacker who's still in the process of littering your page with comments.

If you have a second person working with you, divide and conquer: one starts with the oldest comment, the other with the most recent, and work as fast as you can to meet in the middle.

* Note: You can access a list of every person you have ever banned from your page, with links to their profile pages and the dates you banned them, in your Settings Dashboard. Click on People and Other Pages, *then click on the drop-down menu and choose* Banned People and Pages.

## Batch-Ban Multiple Attackers at Once Using Comment Moderation

The Ban method we just demonstrated is effective — but time-consuming, and therefore limited. When you're under attack by dozens or hundreds of Attackers at a time, identifying each one individually, then cycling through four separate clicks just to ban each Attacker, can appreciably slow your defense.

A recent addition to the Facebook interface — Comment Moderation — makes the process considerably more efficient and, especially in the heat of an ongoing attack, allows for a quicker, more robust defense.

Here's how.

1. For a standard post, click on the *ellipsis* on the upper right side of the post header. In the resulting drop-down menu, choose *Moderate comments*.

(For a Facebook video, the ellipsis appears on the far right side of the Reactions Bar.)
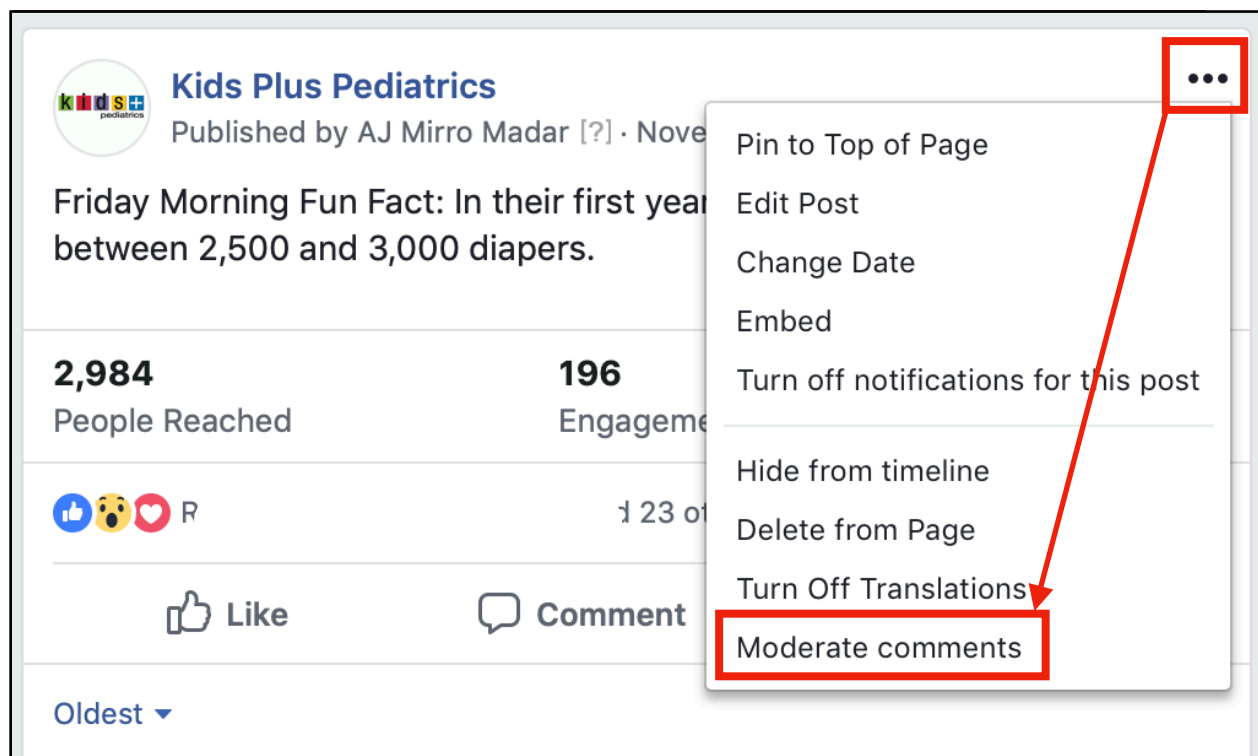
2. Once the *Comment Moderation* box appears, you can scroll through the entire chronology of comments for that post and select all the Attackers you want to ban.

3. After selecting the Attackers you want to ban, click *Delete*.

3. When the *Delete comments* confirmation box appear, check the box in front of *Check this box to also ban the people who wrote these comments*.

4. Click *Delete*.

Comment Moderation ✕

Search these comments 🔍

Delete comments ✕

When you delete these 7 comments, they will no longer be visible to anyone on your Page.

☑ **Check this box to also ban the people who wrote these comments.** They won't be notified that they've been banned and will no longer be able to post, comment or take other actions on the page.

Cancel **Delete**

1y

Super important!! This vaccine will save so many lives. Who wouldn't want a vaccine against cancer?? My son got it and he's fine. There's no good evidence that this vaccine is dangerous.

👍😆 4

1y

Super message! Keep up the good work!

👍 2

1y

I prevent cancer, too! My son is protected with the vaccine. Great video, thank you for helping to prevent cancer.

👍❤😆 4

7 comments selected **Delete** **Hide**

This new method for batch Banning and Deleting dramatically streamlines the process and provides a powerful weapon for defending your Facebook page from multiple, simultaneous Attackers.

Disable Visitor Posts

The name of this option is a bit deceptive. You can't actually disable *all* visitor posts on your Facebook page. (And, even if you could, you likely wouldn't want to, even at the height of an attack; that step would shut out your attackers, but it would also shut out your admirers and defenders.)

There's also no way to disable visitor posts on a particular post, photo, or video. But you can, and should, turn off the ability of visitors to make a general post to your Facebook page.

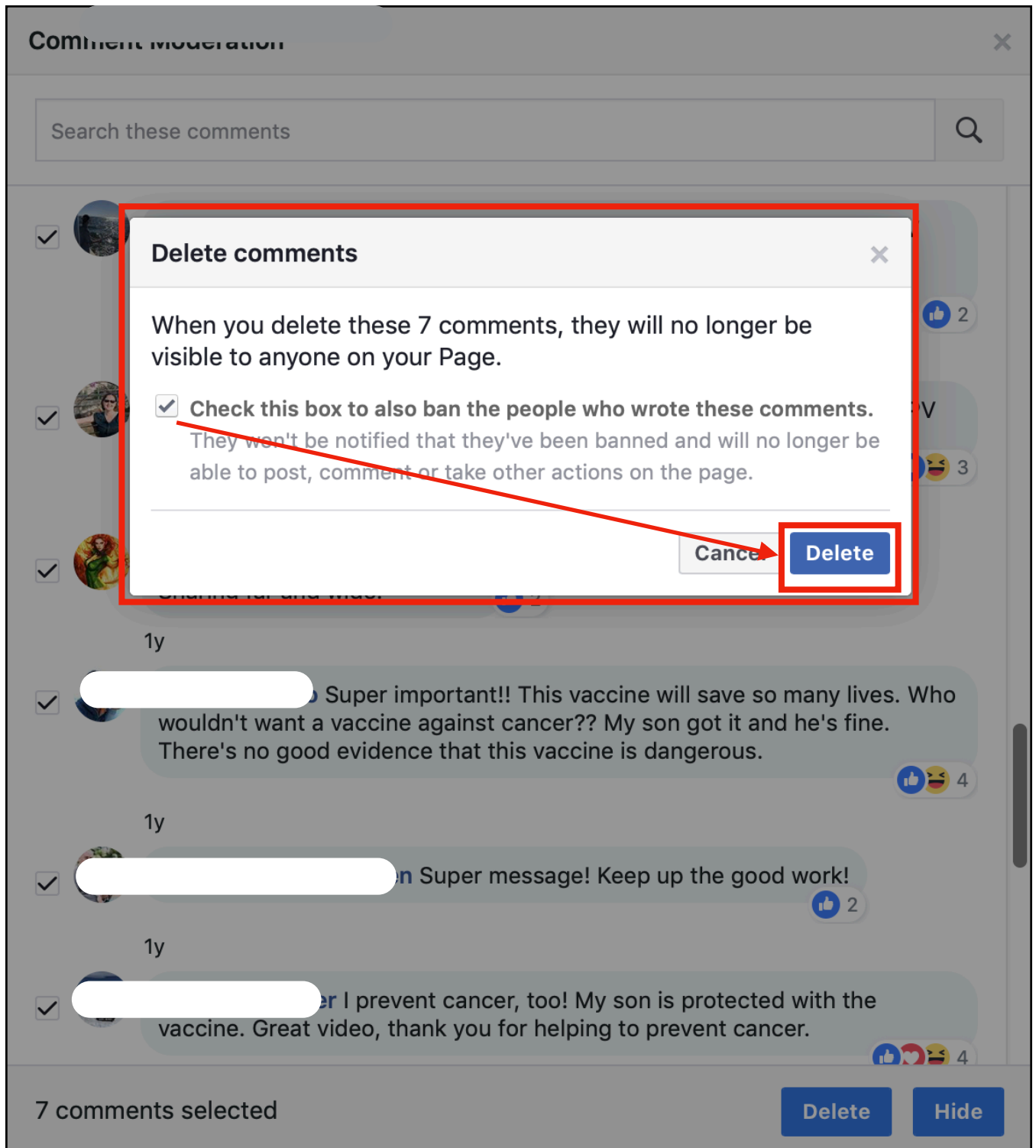In the past, before the latest page redesign, this would have been called "Writing on Your Wall." Now the posts appear on a separate "Visitor Posts" section. Whatever they're called, and wherever they appear, you don't want Anti-Vaxx Attackers to have this option. Because that's just one more front on which you have to fight, and one more type of damage you'll need to CLEAN-UP later.

Here's how.

1. On your Facebook page, click *Settings*.

2. In the *General* Menu, click *Visitor Posts*.

3. Check the radio button for *Disable posts by other people on the page*.

4. Click *Save Changes*.

Watch Your Facebook Page Notifications

As we noted in the CASE STUDY and in the Ban Attackers section, Anti-Vaxx Attackers will often abandon the post that spurred the attack and leave other posts and comments all across your Facebook page. They won't just target vaccine posts; they'll spread links and comments randomly, indiscriminately, essentially littering your page with bad links and false information.

Part of the goal, of course, is pure propaganda; they want to disseminate their misinformation when and wherever they can. Another part of the goal is pure vandalism; they want to damage to your page and punish you for having the temerity to advocate for vaccines and other evidence-based medicine.

The Anti-Vaxx Attacker strategy here is to attack where you're not expecting. To take the battle to places other than the post that first spurred the attack. It's smart, in its way: trying to go off your radar and leave little land mines where you're not looking.

With a little vigilance, however, you can easily neutralize the strategy.

It will be tempting to stay anchored to the original post, to focus only on ground zero where the attack currently rages. And you certainly should spend the vast majority of your time there. But you'll also want to keep a watchful eye on your Facebook Page Notifications.

Anytime anyone posts anything on your Facebook page, including on posts made weeks or months or even years ago, you get a Notification in your toolbar.
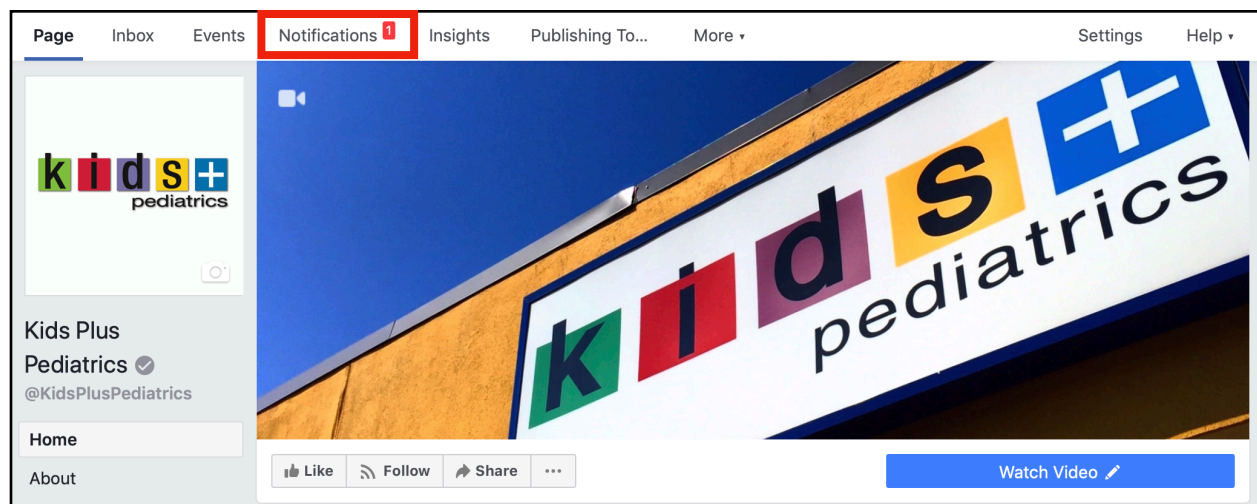
When you click on *Notifications*, you see a full list of all recent activity. Activity you have not yet seen and evaluated is colored in gray; activity you've already seen is colored in white.

All Notifications

Select All | Clear Selection   Mark All as Read

Unseen Page Activity

TODAY

Rachale Velázquez, Gel Cavalier and 7 other people like your link. Help them see future posts by inviting them to like your Page.
11:33 AM

Toni Reese commented on the link you shared.
10:16 AM

AJ Mirro Madar published your scheduled posts for Kids Plus Pediatrics.
8:45 AM

Sarah Horn Shriber and Kathy Myrter Dressler commented on your photo.
8:30 AM

Friendship Community Group - A Pittsburgh Neighborhood shared Kids Plus Pediatrics's post.
8:01 AM

Friendship Community Group - A Pittsburgh Neighborhood, Pittsburgh Nanny Association and 2 others shared Kids Plus Pediatrics's post.
7:55 AM

Jenny Davis and Angel Sulkowski like Kids Plus Pediatrics.
6:11 AM

Michelle Murphy, Sarah Dugan and 19 other people reacted to your link. Help them see future posts by inviting them to like your Page.
12:22 AM

Clicking on the *Gray-Coded Boxes* will take you to the activity, wherever it happens to be on your Facebook page. (If it appears on a photo or video, you'll know which one, because a thumbnail image will appear in the Notification. If it's just a standard post, you won't know until you click on it.)

Periodically check and clear these Notifications, and follow through to evaluate every one. When you find a comment on an old post, follow the process to Ban the Attacker and Delete the Comment.

Call For Reinforcements

As you saw in the Case Study, the arrival of the cavalry — an organic, unorganized collection of reinforcements who came to our aid on the same day — marked the turning point of the attack. It was a pivotal series of hours that allowed us to get caught up in our defense and that effectively dissuaded, or at least greatly diminished, the attackers and their efforts.

We had the benefit of AAP NCE timing, and so the opportunity for hundreds (if not thousands) of people across the pediatric social media landscape to learn about what was happening. Your timing may not be so fortuitous, your network not so extensive.

So we created a network for you. And we have the cavalry always at the ready.

Shots Heard Round the World is our social media rapid-response network, created to aid in the defense of any pediatric practice or provider suffering an Anti-Vaxx attack. Currently 250+ members strong, and with more members enlisting all the time, Shots Heard is your social media 911.

You notify us for help, and we dispatch a battalion of first (and second, and third) responders — providers, health care workers, vaccine researchers, and other pro-science advocates, all ready and eager to come to your aid.

To join, email **join@shotsheard.com**

To call for help or report an attack, email **alert@shotsheard.com**, or send a direct Facebook message to **our Facebook page**.

Tell us what's happening and give us a link to your post and/or page under attack. As soon as we get the message, we'll notify the group and unleash the reinforcements to engage and attack the attackers.

Monitor Yelp Reviews & Immediately Report Any Attacks

This advice is important, but also conditional. And the condition is this: do it only if you are not under constant attack on Facebook, or if you have someone else who can do it while your primary defenses are still focused on Facebook.

The earlier you get to Yelp and flag fraudulent reviews, the more likely they are to place an Active Cleanup Alert — more on this in the CLEAN UP section of the document — on your Yelp business listing. In an ideal world, you want that alert placed on your account as soon as possible, because it limits the damage you suffer there.

That said, make no mistake: Facebook will almost certainly be the front line of the attack, and thus the place where you are likely to incur the most deep and widespread damage. As long as that attack is ongoing, that's where you need to devote the vast majority of your time and resources. In our experience, as well as the ones of the providers and practices we interviewed, the damage done on Yelp listings — while very real and potentially troubling — was but a fraction of the devastation being visited upon Facebook pages.

More to the point: the damage done on Yelp is often driven by the damage being done on Facebook. So **control Facebook first.**

But: if you have an opportunity, either through a lull in the Facebook attack or with a colleague who can defend your Yelp listing while others are defending Facebook, then Yelp should unquestionably be the 2nd line of defense.

Here's how:

1. On your public page, or in your Yelp for Business Owners dashboard, click on the ellipsis in the upper right corner of a review box. Two options will appear: *Share Review* or *Report Review.* Click *Report Review.*
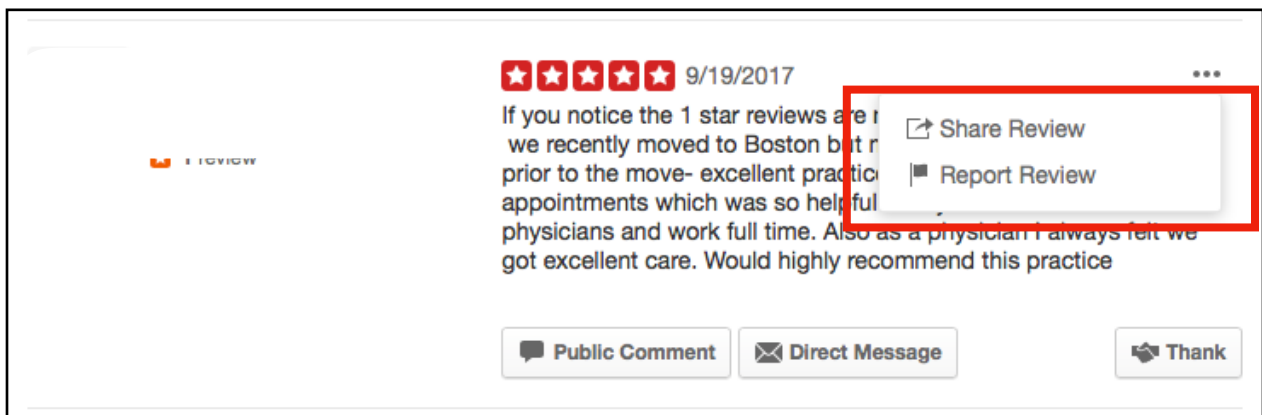
2. A *Report review* pop-up will appear, asking *Why do you want to report this review?* Click *Select an option….* Then select *It doesn't describe a personal consumer experience*.
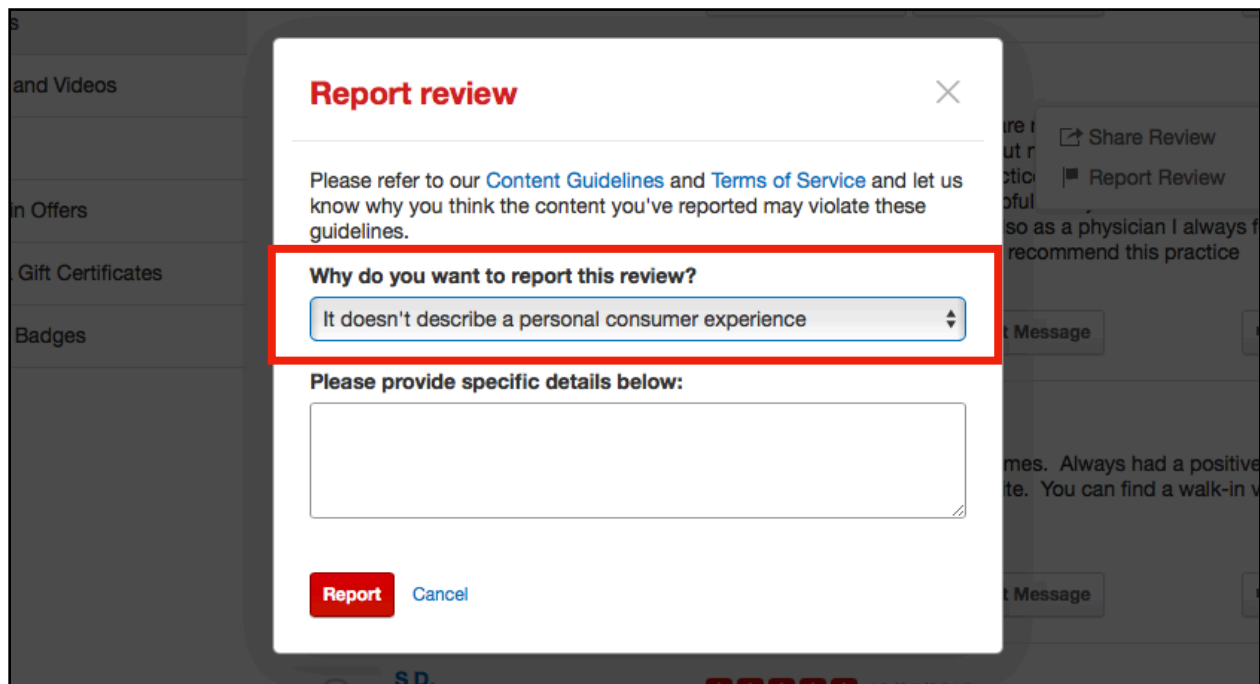
3. A dialog box will appear, prompting you to *Please provide specific details below.* Click into the dialog box and type your response. (Be as detailed and specific as possible.)

Begin by explaining the situation: that you are under attack by anti-science, anti-vaccine forces who were angered by a pro-vaccine post you made on your social media channels, and that this fraudulent review, which does not describe a personal experience with you or your practice, is part of the attack. Note any obvious discrepancies — if, say, your practice is in Pittsburgh but your "reviewer" is from California — and quote any details or key passages that can support or illustrate your claim.

If the attack is still ongoing, provide a link to the post or page so Yelp staffers can see it for themselves. If the attack is past but you have screen grabs of it, note that you have them, and that you would be happy to share them as evidence.

For every fraudulent review you report, you will receive an email confirmation:

Thanks for taking the time to report a review on Yelp that might violate our Content Guidelines. We'll evaluate it and get back to you by email in the next few business days, depending on the number of reports ahead of yours. We appreciate your patience in the meantime. For future reference, your case number is [XXXXXX].

Save all your email confirmations and case numbers for reference.

5. Repeat — including the opening explanation of the context/situation, so they can see the pattern and the big picture each time — for every fraudulent review you received.

CLEAN UP | *After the Fray*

This happened to you. (And you survived.) So let's mop up.

First Principles

First things first: you won.

You're exhausted. You're still angry. You're probably rattled and at least a little bitter. Maybe even disillusioned.

You will almost certainly have a bit of social media PTSD for a while. It will be days at least, and more likely weeks, before the site of a Facebook notification doesn't set both your nerves and your teeth on edge. This is normal. And, of course, lamentable.

But make no mistake.

You won.

You prepared, you defended, and you fought back. You stared these vile and increasingly dangerous forces in the eye, you steeled yourself and redoubled your efforts, and you emerged victorious.

So take a victory lap. Take a little break. And then get ready to dive right back into the battle.

Because there's still a lot of work to do. And a whole lot of residue to scrape off the bottom of your social media footprint.

So let's get to it.

Leftover Facebook Page Clean Up

Once the battle has been won and the last of the Attackers have been vanquished, you'll likely still have some debris, and perhaps a few digital corpses, scattered across the battlefield. Though literally every other stage of CLEAN UP is more important, and more pressing, than this one, we'll begin here, because these points make for an easy transition, and because they require the least amount of time and attention.

Delete Remaining Comments From Banned Attackers
In most cases, when you ban Attackers from your Facebook page, you will also delete their comments. But in cases where Attackers posted prolifically before you got around to banning them, there may be a leftover comments denoted by an ellipsis.

If you hover over the ellipsis, you'll see *X hidden*, where *X* denotes the number of comments leftover from a person (or persons) you've banned.
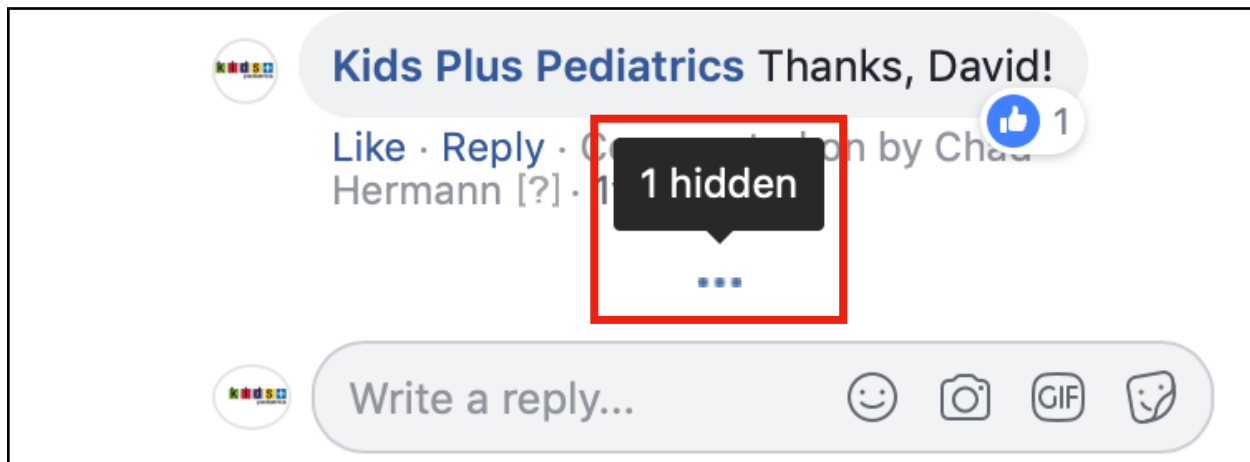
If you click on the ellipsis, you may be able to see the comment again. If you can, delete it as you would any other comment. If you can't see it after you click — and this is a Facebook glitch that happens occasionally; the ghost of a comment remains with the ellipsis, but can never again be conjured for permanent deletion — then just ignore it. The ellipsis will simply remain as a kind of battle scar.

Delete Orphaned Responses
When you ban Attackers and delete their comments, you will also delete all comments that were direct replies beneath the comment. Sometimes, however, defenders will reply to comments with their own, brand new comment. Which means that when you delete the offending comment, the defending comment remains.

If the comments are rather pointed or specific, and especially if they're simply responding to an insult or an argument or a random conspiracy theory, we recommend deleting them just to keep your post, and your page, both tidy and coherent.

But if the comment can stand pretty clearly on its own, and especially if it helps to make a point about your original post and/or offers good, evidence-based medicine, we recommend you leave it. If only because we can never have too much good, accurate health information on Facebook.

Here's an example of one that we allowed to remain, and that still exists beneath our "We Prevent Cancer" video post:

> I have never, never, never seen an adverse reaction, a side effect other than sore arm, or any sort of malignant effect. Hundreds of doses. The internet tells me one in every 238 girls should drop dead. Well that's a higher death rate than measles and these dead ladies are conspicuous by their absence. They should be lying dead in the streets. They should be coming in with pseudo seizures and hand flapping, an I correct? They're not. I had a girl faint once but then I've had kids faint from tdaps and blood draws too. Oh, and grown men.

Wait at Least a Month Before Turning on Reviews & Recommendations
In our case, and in the case of many of the practices and providers we interviewed who suffered a similar attack, more attackers appeared on the post, and on the page, for at several weeks (and sometimes a few months) after the original attacked ended. It was usually just one or two stragglers at a time, but sometimes a group of five or six or more would all appear in the span of a few hours.

When that happens, save for the inevitable flashbacks you'll suffer, the posts are easy enough to handle and to delete. (You've handled far worse by now!)

But the most difficult to handle and time-consuming to clean up is still the damage done by fraudulent Reviews & Recommendations. So we recommend keeping that option turned off for at least a month, to prevent any latecomers from doing any damage that will require a good chunk of your time and energy.

Report Fraudulent Yelp Reviews

We'll start with this: Yelp is the absolute gold standard for how platforms should respond to waves of fraudulent reviews.

We'll explain why in a moment. But first, we'll explain how you should report them.

1. On your public page, or in your Yelp for Business Owners dashboard, click on the ellipsis in the upper right corner of a review box. Two options will appear: *Share Review* or *Report Review.* Click *Report Review.*
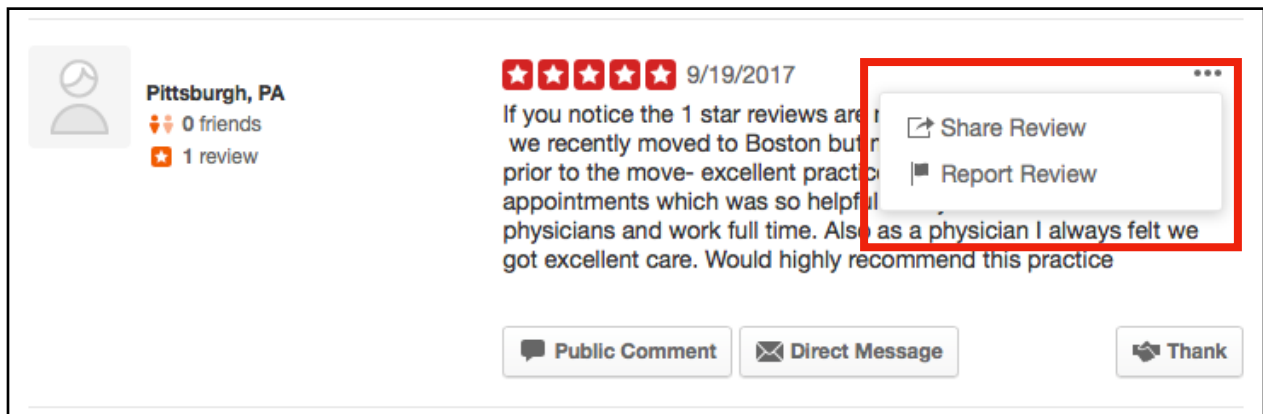
2. A *Report review* pop-up will appear, asking *Why do you want to report this review?* Click *Select an option….* Then select *It doesn't describe a personal consumer experience*.
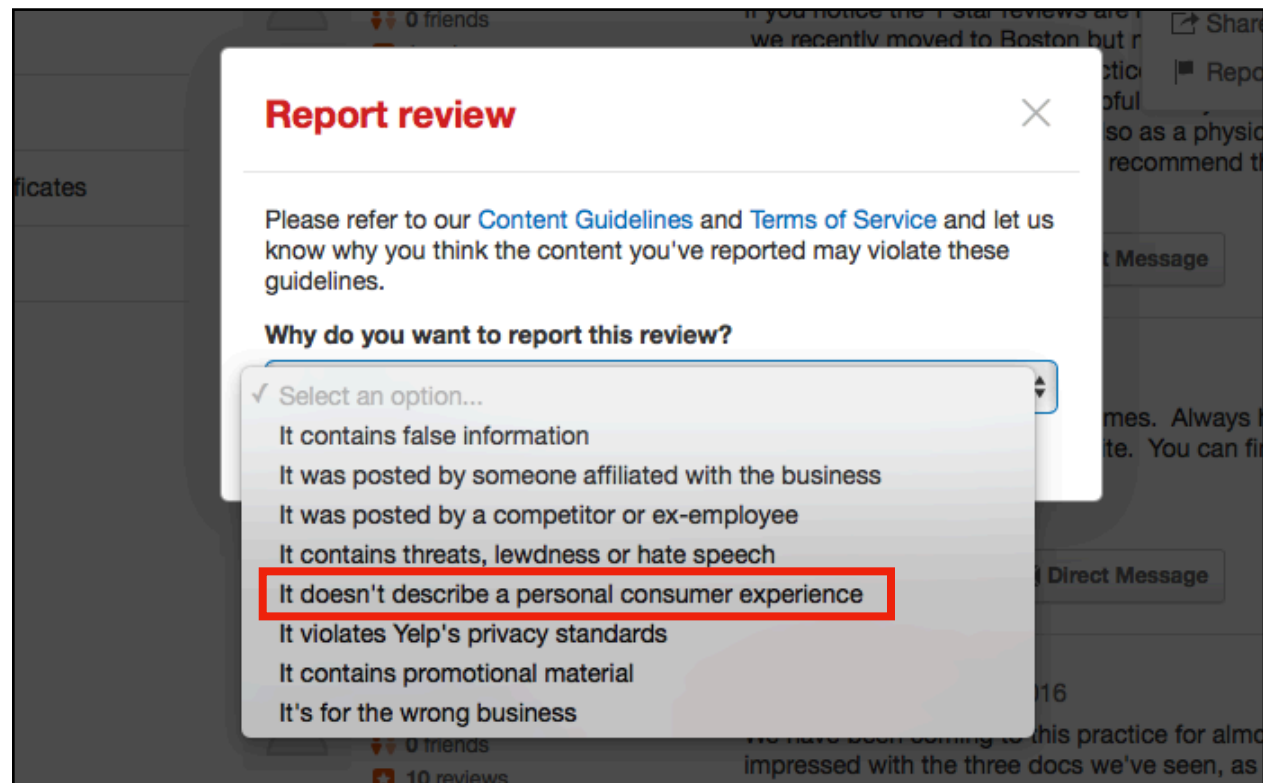
3. A dialog box will appear, prompting you to *Please provide specific details below.* Click into the dialog box and type your response. (Be as detailed and specific as possible.)
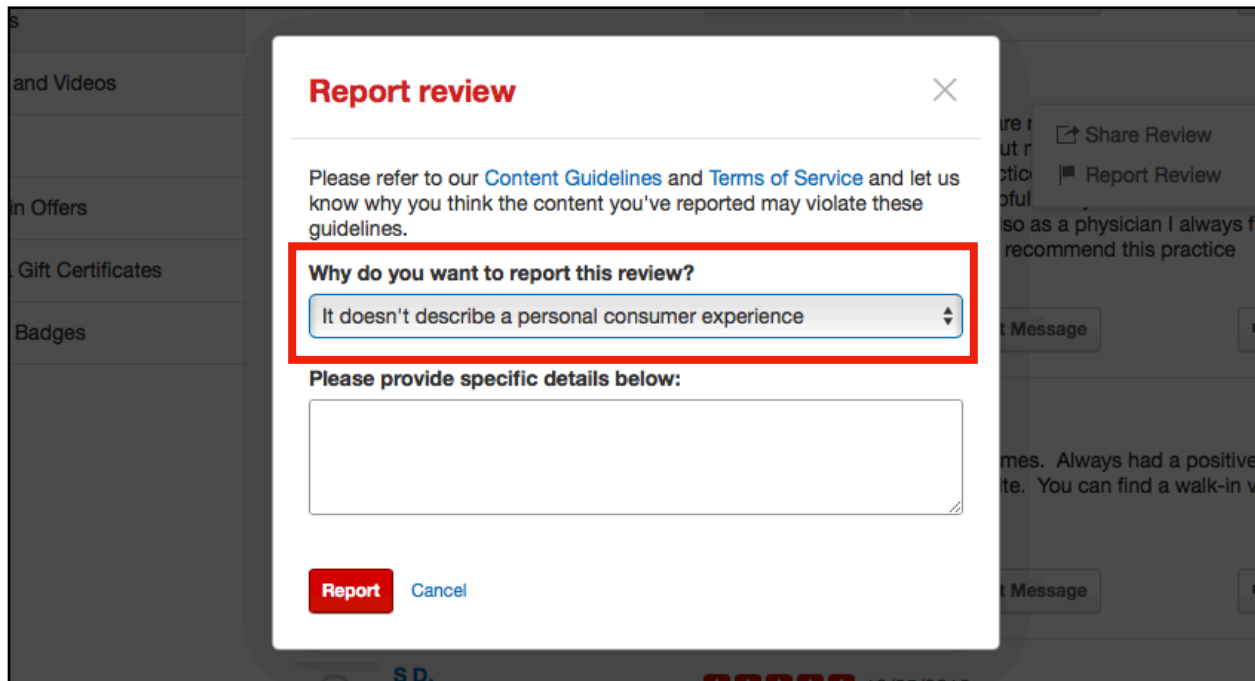
Begin by explaining the situation: that you were under attack by anti-science, anti-vaccine forces angered by a pro-vaccine post you made on your social media channels, and that this fraudulent review, which does not describe a personal experience with you or your practice, is part of the attack. Note any obvious discrepancies — if, say, your practice is in Pittsburgh but your "reviewer" is from California — and quote any details or key passages that illustrate or support your claim.

If the attack is still ongoing, provide a link to the post or page so Yelp staffers can see it for themselves. If the attack is past but you have screen grabs of it, note that you have them, and that you would be happy to share them as evidence.

For every fraudulent review you report, you will receive an email confirmation:

Thanks for taking the time to report a review on Yelp that might violate our Content Guidelines. We'll evaluate it and get back to you by email in the next few business days, depending on the number of reports ahead of yours. We appreciate your patience in the meantime. For future reference, your case number is [XXXXXXX].

Save all your email confirmations and case numbers for reference.

4. Repeat — including the opening explanation of the context/situation, so they can see the pattern and the big picture each time — for every fraudulent review you received.

6. Repeat, as well, for any *positive* reviews you get from people who may come to your aid in the face of negative reviews but who are not your patients.

We flagged our defenders as well, because we believed it was the right thing to do. We also believe that demonstrating honesty and integrity in that way helped our case in our appeal to have the negative reviews cleaned up.

Why Yelp is the Gold Standard
The first and most obvious reason is the robust reporting mechanism. Yelp provides — in stark contrast to Google, as you will see later — a fairly comprehensive set of reasons for flagging the fraudulent review, and they allow you ample space both to explain your situation and to evidence your report. You can, in short, make a full case for your claim.

It's also helpful to have an email confirmation — even an automated one — to know your report has been received, and a case number you can reference in follow-up communication.

But the true power and value of Yelp's response come after you file your reports. The first step is the Active Cleanup Alert:

Active Cleanup Alert

This business recently made waves in the news, which often means that people come to this page to post their views on the news.

While we don't take a stand one way or the other when it comes to these news events, we do work to remove both positive and negative posts that appear to be motivated more by the news coverage itself than the reviewer's personal consumer experience with the business.

As a result, your posts to this page may be removed as part of our cleanup process beginning Wednesday, September 20, 2017, but you should feel free to post your thoughts about the recent media coverage for this business on Yelp Talk at any time.

[Got it, thanks!]

This alert appeared on our Yelp page on September 22nd, just two days after we flagged our first set of fraudulent reviews. It remained on our page for over a month, long after Yelp had removed all 54 of the fraudulent reviews we flagged.

Which is, of course, one of the other reasons Yelp is the Gold Standard: within one week of our first report — which seems to us a reasonable time to review and consider our claims, especially when our page is already marked with a disclaimer warning readers to be wary of recent reviews — Yelp removed every fraudulent review from our page.

That's right. Every single one.

And better still: they continued to monitor our page for weeks after that, sometimes removing fraudulent reviews before we even had a chance to report them. One Attacker, who earns our derision for her attacks but our respect for her persistence, left a second fraudulent review after her first was deleted. Yelp deleted it. She left a third. Yelp deleted it. She left a fourth. Yelp deleted it. Finally, she gave up.

That sort of vigilance and attention to detail blew us away. It suggested — in fact, it fairly shouted — that Yelp is committed to monitoring the accuracy and maintaining the integrity of its platform. And so to supporting providers and practices (and anyone else with a Yelp business listing) from undue, unjust attacks.

Flag & Report Fraudulent Google Reviews

While Yelp provides the dream scenario for reporting and removing fraudulent reviews, Google offers the equivalent of a never-ending nightmare.

After more than 15 months of reporting and messaging and appealing, including providing screen caps and other clear evidence of the fraudulence of the "reviews,", more than a dozen of the 50+ fraudulent reviews — including ones from "reviewers" in England and Australia; that seems a long way to travel for primary care! — were still live on our listings.

Of the 40 or so that had been removed before the divine intervention of a *Guardian* article, none was removed as a result of using Google's standard *Flag as inappropriate* option.

We'll explain later how we finally got Google to take *some* action. But first, for the record — even though we got absolutely no results with it — here's how the official process works.

1.   Click on the vertical ellipsis in the upper right corner of the review box. You'll get a single option: *Flag as inappropriate*. Click it.
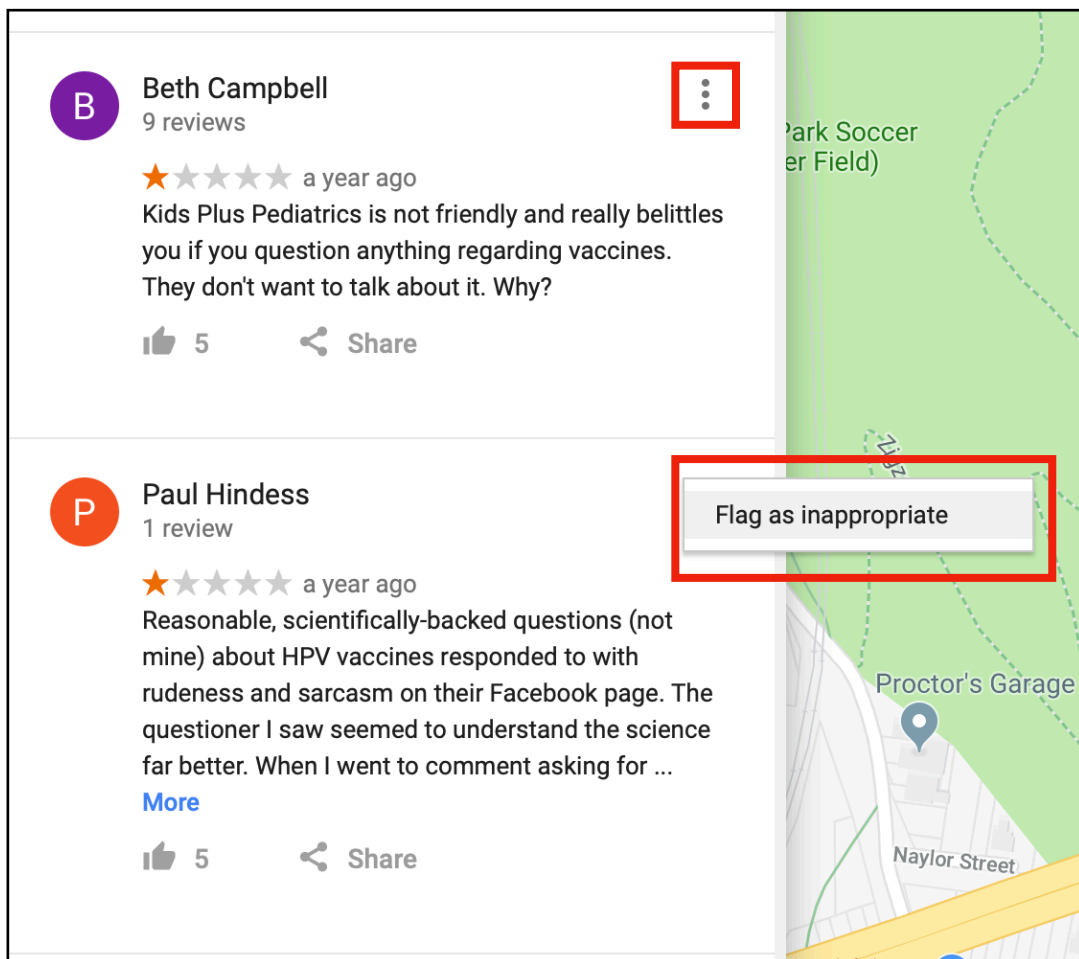
2. You may get a *Report review* disclaimer. (Remember the part about *Google's content policy.* We'll address that, and our frustrating experience with it, in a moment.) Click *Continue*.
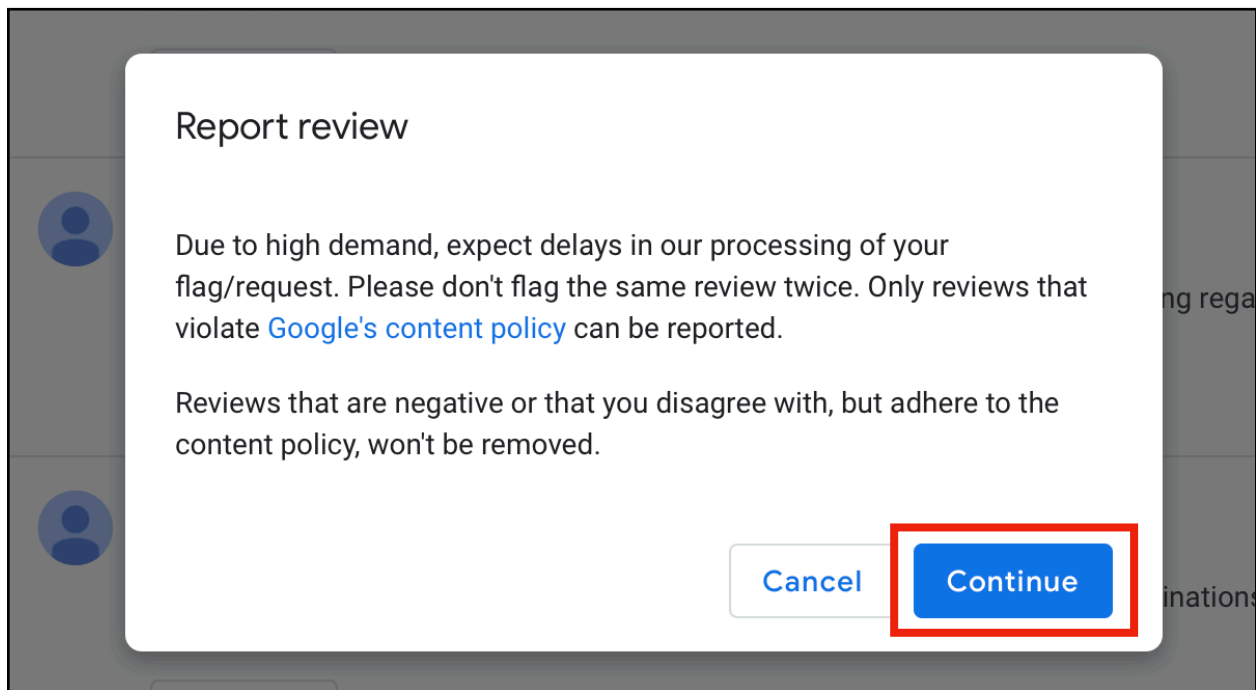
Before we move on to the next step, let's pause for a moment to take a look at Google's Co*mment posting policy*, as it appears below the *Report a policy violation* option:
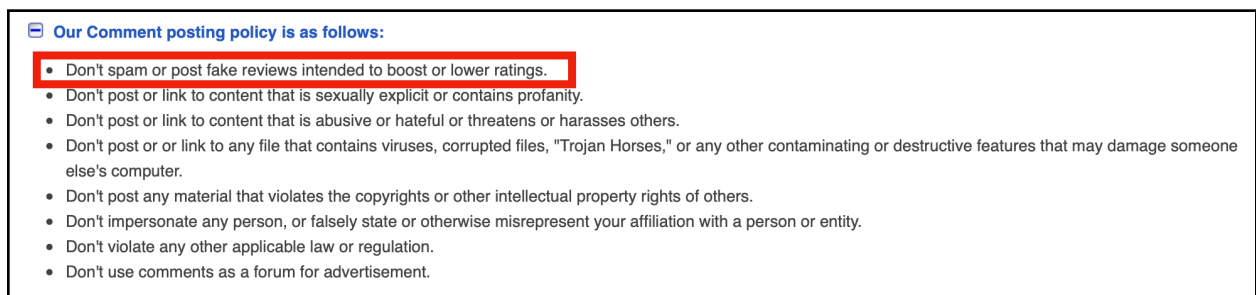
You'll notice, unsurprisingly, that the first policy point for comment posting on reviews is a prohibition on *post[ing] fake reviews intended to… lower ratings*.

This seems obvious — almost to the point of redundancy. The integrity of the entire review structure is, after all, based on the fairness and authenticity of the reviews. So you would naturally expect that, when given the chance to *Report a policy violation*, one of the reporting choices would be *Fake Review*.

You would think that. But you would be wrong.

3. After clicking *Flag as inappropriate* (or *Continue*), you advance to the screen on which you can *Report a policy violation*. Enter your email address, then choose one of four *Violation Types…*

Report a policy violation

Google takes abuse of its services very seriously. In the fields below, please provide us with information about the comment that you believe is in violation of our Terms of Service. We'll investigate and take action as necessary. We'll follow up with you only if we require more information or if we have additional information to share.

> ✓ If you have located one or more reviews that you believe warrant removal from Google's services based on applicable laws, please follow the instructions detailed on this page to submit a legal request.

Email address: *

[your-email@example.com]

Violation Type: *

○ This post contains hateful, violent, or inappropriate content
○ This post contains advertising or spam
○ Off-topic
○ This post contains conflicts of interest

[Submit]

…none of which is *fake review intended to boost or lower ratings*.

That's right. Not one.

And that's maddening enough. But even more maddening is the lack of any option even remotely close to what you're reporting — unless, of course, the fraudulent review also *contains hateful, violent, or inappropriate content*, or *advertising or spam*. And you can guess how often those things happen.

So…

4. Pick one. Any one. Then cross your fingers, and maybe rub a lucky rabbit's foot. Because whatever you choose, it almost certainly won't work.

We know this, because we, as well as some of our patients and colleagues, reported every single fraudulent review we received. Multiple times. And got precisely *zero* removed.

Worse: you get no message, no information, no indication, no explanation of how or why or by whom the decision was made. In fact, you have no way of verifying the report was actually received or considered at all. The review simply stays or goes. (It always stays.) And you have no way to appeal, except to flag it again. And always with the same results.

* Note: Even when you claim and own your own listing, this reporting interface is no more robust than the one that literally anyone can use to report a review. In fact, it's the exact same *one. Which means that, unlike on Yelp, where, if your claim your business listing you have the opportunity to flag a review as fake, and where you have a full dialog box to make your case, on*

Google, you just have the same four options as the general public. (And, again: none of them is the one you need, and the one most obviously in need: fake review.)

All of which raises the question: *how did we finally manage to get those fraudulent reviews removed?*

Twitter Direct Messages to Google My Business
We'll spare you the long version, with all its attendant failures and frustrations, and get right to the desperate (or so we thought) strategy that finally worked:

We sent a Twitter DM (Direct Message) to the @GoogleMyBiz account.

Hi, there. We're a pediatric practice in Pittsburgh, PA. We posted a PSA video on our Facebook page in support of the HPV vaccine. The video was spread through a series of anti-vaccine groups, and many of the anti-science zealots in those groups have descended upon our Google business listings to leave 1-star reviews. Those reviews are based solely on their anti-vaccine stance, and on wanting to damage us because we support vaccines and refuse to allow their misinformation on our Facebook page.

We can flag the reviews as inappropriate -- and we have -- but with no way to explain the situation, we fear that nothing will be done. Is there anyone we can talk to, or any help we can get, in the face of a coordinated campaign to leave fake reviews and damage our reputation?

We even have screen caps of some of these people planning this, and conspiring to do it. And also of them direct messaging us on Facebook to crow about doing it.

Any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks.

Two days after we sent this message, we finally got our first response of any kind from Google.
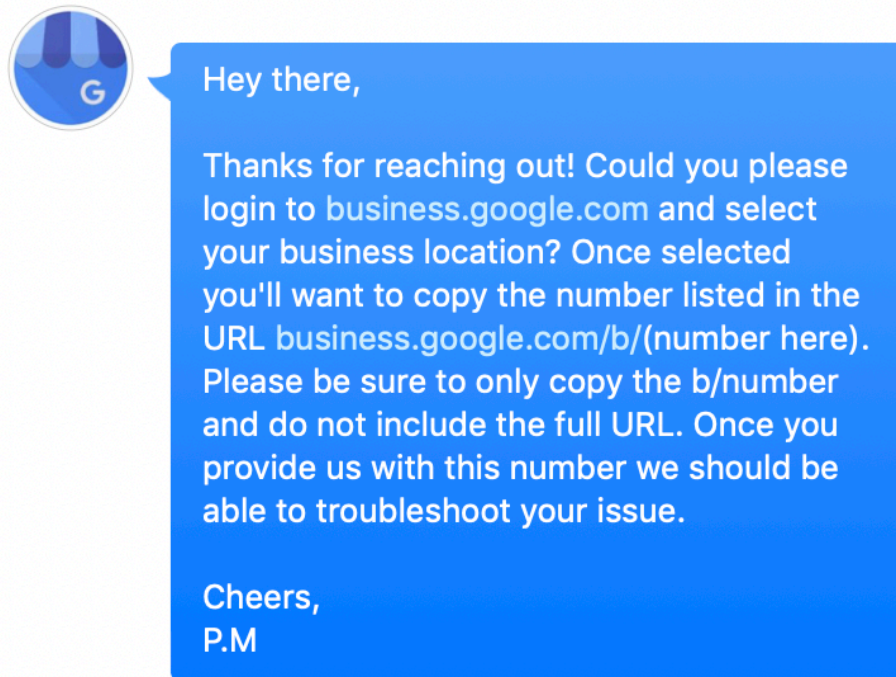
We did what they asked. Four days later, we still had heard nothing. So we messaged them again.
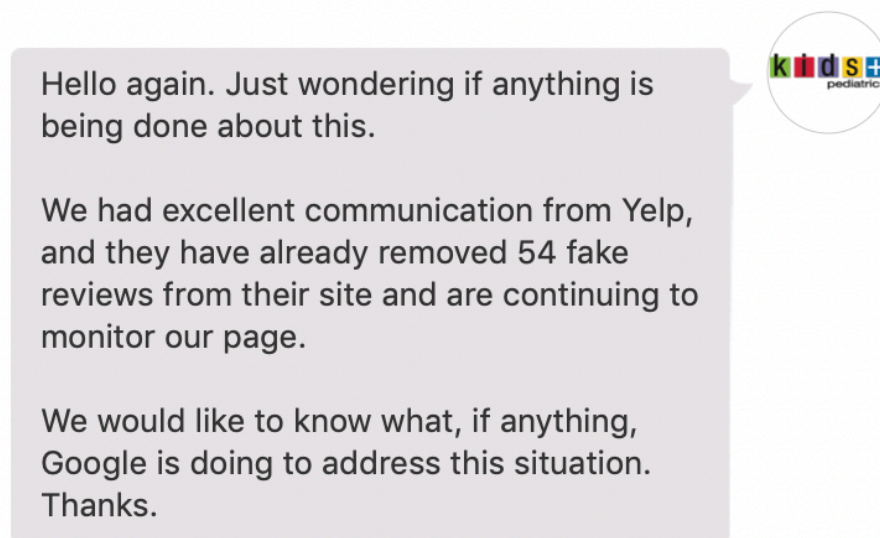
Eight hours later, they replied, asking us to *provide [them] with the names of the reviewers for each of these locations*.

And so we did. We provided, through a series of Twitter DMs, the name (and non-Pittsburgh location) of every fraudulent reviewer we could verify. We also included a screen cap of one of

the fraudulent reviewers taunting us, in a direct Facebook message, over all the fake reviews the members of her anti-vaccine group were leaving on our Google listings. A few hours later, we got this response:

Hey there,

Thanks for reaching out. Our specialists will only remove a review if it is violating our policies, found here: goo.gl/4BbDkJ

If you believe that the review is violating any of these policies, then we do ask that you first flag the review, and allow at least three days for the case to be reviewed. Learn more here: goo.gl/UXujXm

If it has already been three days since you've flagged the review, please provide us with the Maps URL for the business listing, along with the review details. We'd be more than happy to further investigate the issue for you.

Cheers,
F

At this point, you'll notice that the process has begun to take on a distinctly circular and maddeningly Kafkaesque tone. To this day, we can't decide if these hoops and loops and cont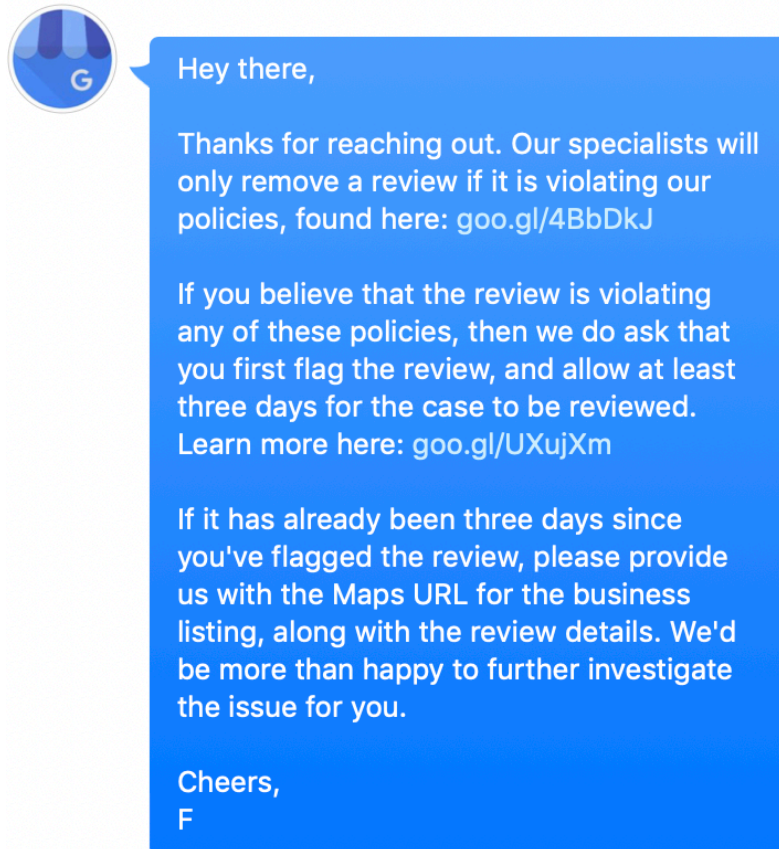extual gaps were indifference, incompetence, or, worst of all, an attempt to wage some sort of bureaucratic war of attrition in the hope that we would eventually surrender and just virtually walk away.

Whatever the case, we didn't surrender. We just kept on firing.

We explained again how the reviews clearly violated Google policy. We explained that we, and many other people, had already flagged the reviews to no avail. We provided the Maps URLs for all three offices, and provided more details and screen caps and explanations. Six days later, we got a response.

We thanked them. One day later, we got another response.

Hey there,

Thanks for your patience! We've escalated your issue to our specialist team. Please allow us 24-48 hours and we will get back to you with an update. If you don't hear back from us within 48 hours, please send us a message.

Cheers,
P.M

We thanked them. One day later, we got another response.

Hey there,

Our specialist team has gotten back to us and they have removed most of the one star reviews since they violate our policies. Please allow 24-48 hours for the change to reflect on Maps.

For the reviews the team did not remove, as a verified Google business owner, you can publicly respond to reviews posted on the local business listing. This is the best way to address potentially negative reviews.

To learn more about this, check out this help center article: goo.gl/Pn7PnB

Cheers,
P.M

After four weeks and a lot of persistence, we'd finally made some progress. Google had removed about half of the fraudulent reviews. We were delighted. But we were also frustrated, because close to 30 plainly fraudulent reviews — including some from attackers we'd screen-capped bragging about harming us with a fraudulent review! — remained. With no explanation of why they remained, and no recourse for appeal but to continue sending Twitter DMs.

So we continued sending Twitter DMs. From this point on, we sent individual DMs about every remaining fraudulent review, explaining in detail why each one was fraudulent, and supporting with examples or screen caps whenever possible.
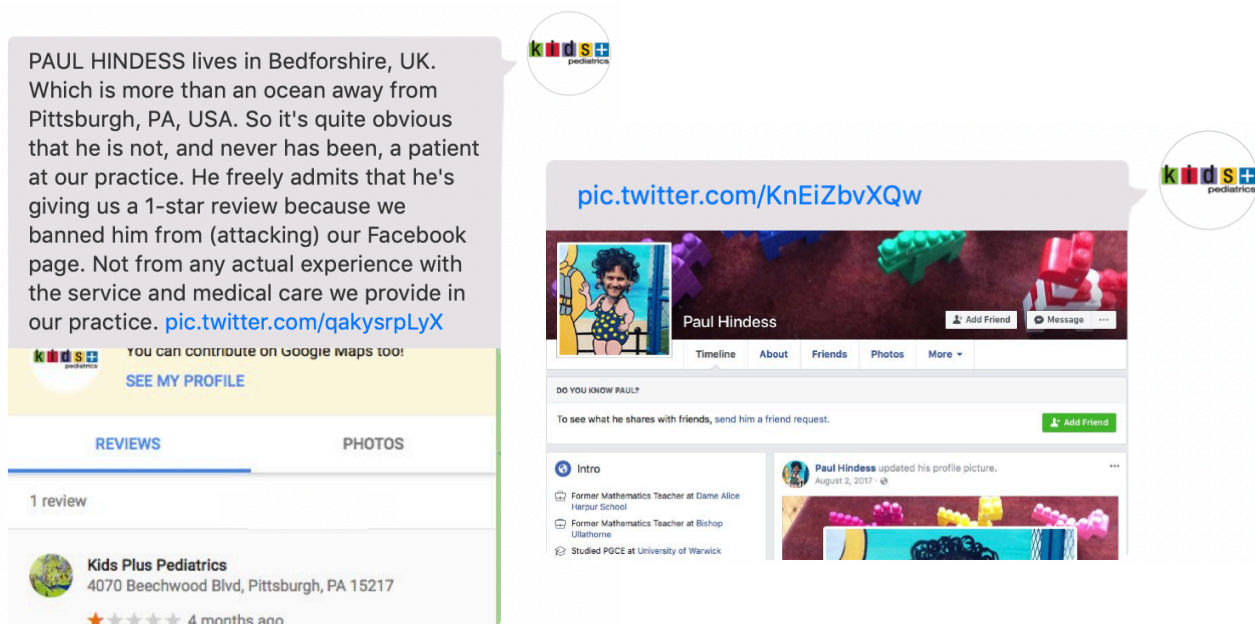
Two months later — that's right: *two months* later — another batch of reviews were removed. Many still remained. So, aggravated but undeterred, we repeated the process.

After five days, we received a response about *forward[ing] this information over to our specialists for further review.* Forty-two days later — that's right: *forty-two days* later — seven more reviews were removed.

Why some were removed after a second, or third, or fourth attempt remains a mystery. Because no insight, nor guidance, nor explanation are ever given. You just send your messages, and you take your chances. Then rinse and repeat — and rinse and repeat, and rinse and repeat — as needed.

After six months of messaging, rinsing, and repeating, we'd convinced Google to remove all but a dozen of the fraudulent reviews. At that point, Google just stopped responding to our messages. Complete radio silence. Utter, studied indifference to us, to our plight, and to the plight of other providers and practices like us.

Those fraudulent reviews remained on our listings for another 350 days — until March 1st, 2019, when magically disappeared. Perhaps because, one day before, *The Guardian* featured our story in a piece in on social anti-vaxx attacks. Part of that story focused on Google's indifference to our plight, including screen grabs from our Google listings highlighting the fraudulence of the reviews. The timing of their removal seems to us more than just a wild coincidence.

Until the *Guardian* article appeared we did the only thing we could do to address the remaining reviews: wrote a brief, pointed response to each one that remains.

Amanda Riley
3 reviews

★★★★★ a year ago

Doesn't want to discuss parental concerns about vaccines and belittles anyone that has a question or problem with them. Hard to believe these people are 'health providers' when they're acting like they are Gods. Don't trust anyone that treats people with so much contempt with your children.

👍 1

Response from the owner
This fraudulent "review," from someone in Australia who has never set foot in our offices, was part of a global anti-vaccine attack against our practice. It's a clear violation of Google's content policies and has been reported multiple times. For reasons they have never explained, Google refuses to remove it.

There was, of course, some satisfaction in publishing an on-the-record response. (We'll show you how to do this in a moment.) And even more satisfaction in seeing it screen-grabbed in the *Guardian* article.

But it also helped our cause in the interim, if only by providing some context and clarity for each individual review. But the damage of these remaining fraudulent reviews is still done, precisely where they do the most harm: in the aggregate star rating. When 19% of your reviews are fraudulent 1-star reviews, your ratings, and thus your reputation, are guaranteed to suffer.

We include this saga here not just to highlight how unhelpful, inconsistent, unresponsive, and capricious the folks at Google can be — though we think that is important to know and to understand — but also to illustrate a pattern, a process, and a persistence that (mostly) worked for us, allowing us (finally) to clean up the majority of the damage done to our Google reviews. We can't say for sure if it will work for you — as you can see, the results are arbitrary, the responses uneven at best — but we can say for certain that, short of a feature article by an international media outlet, it's the best process we, or anyone (including a handful of Google employees) to whom we have spoken, know.

In short, to steal a line from a recent Oscar-winning movie: *It's the best bad idea we have*.

**Your Best Course of Action for Cleaning Up Your Google Reviews**
So, to recap:

• Flag every fraudulent review as inappropriate.

- Send a Twitter Direct Message to @GoogleMyBiz, explaining your situation and asking for help. (Ours seemed to work, so feel free to appropriate and adapt it to your needs.)

- Jump through all the inevitable hoops they place in your way.

- Remain consistent, persistent, and professional, but press the issue. As many times as necessary.

- Include as much information and explanation as necessary, with supporting images and screen caps whenever possible.

- When and where necessary, post a brief, pointed reply to each fraudulent review that remains.

Here's how:

1. In your Google My Business dashboard, choose *Reviews*. Find the review to which you want to respond, and click *Reply* beneath it.
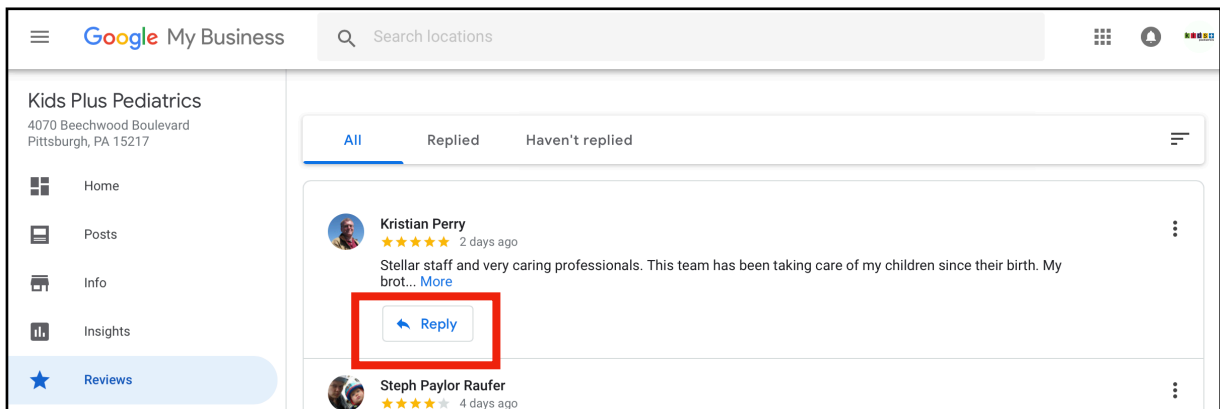
Type your response beneath the *Your reply* prompt. When you're finished, click *Post reply*.
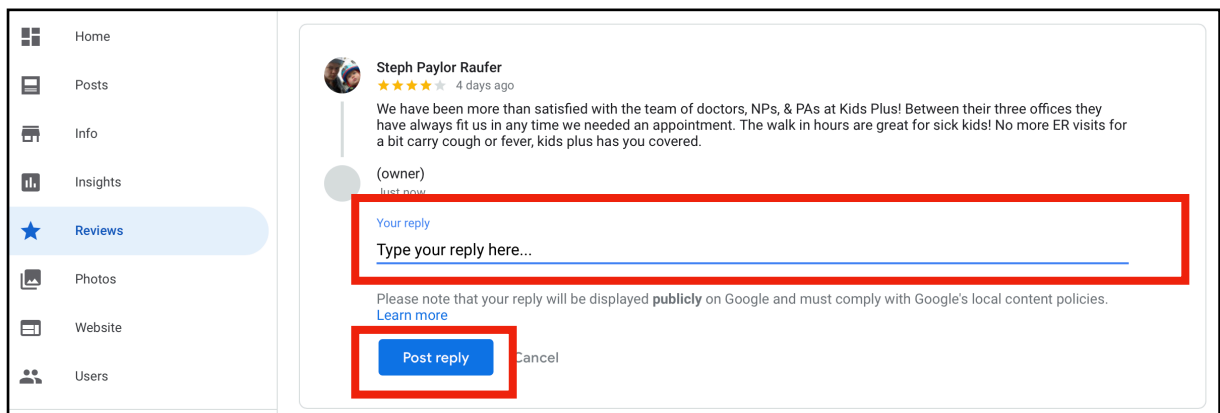
Reporting Fraudulent Facebook Reviews

If Yelp earns an A+ and Google earns an F for their fraudulent-review-reporting processes, Facebook earns a D+. You don't have many options, they're far from robust, and you have no ability to comment or provide context. But at least you have several relevant categories to report.

Here's how.

1. Click the *[Exclamation Point in a Dialogue Bubble] Icon*.
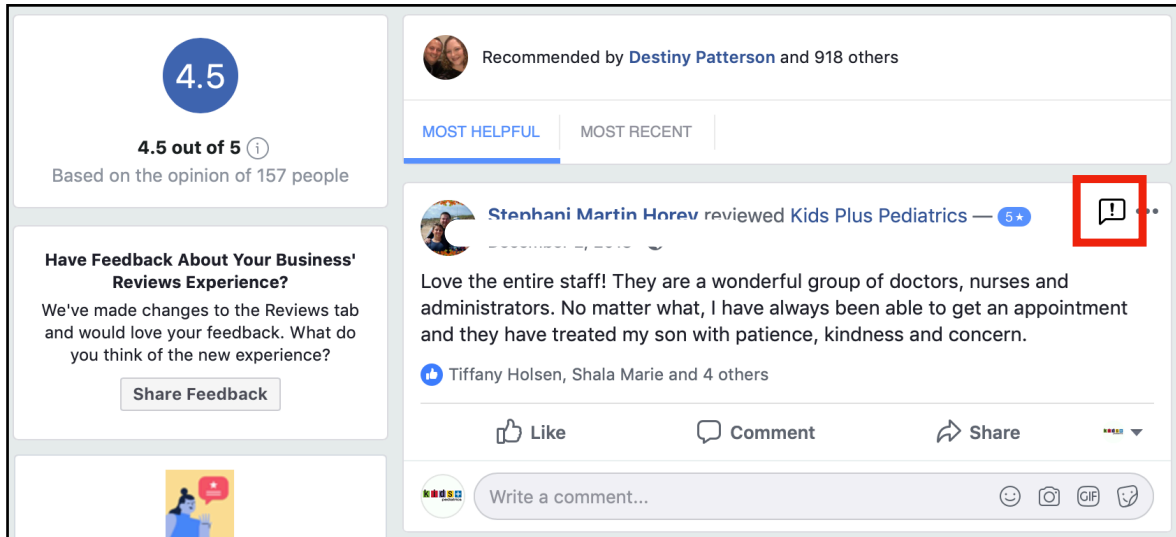
2. Three of these options — *Review Not Relevant*, *Unfair Review*, and *Harassment* — could work, depending on the content of the review. We recommend choosing *Unfair Review*.
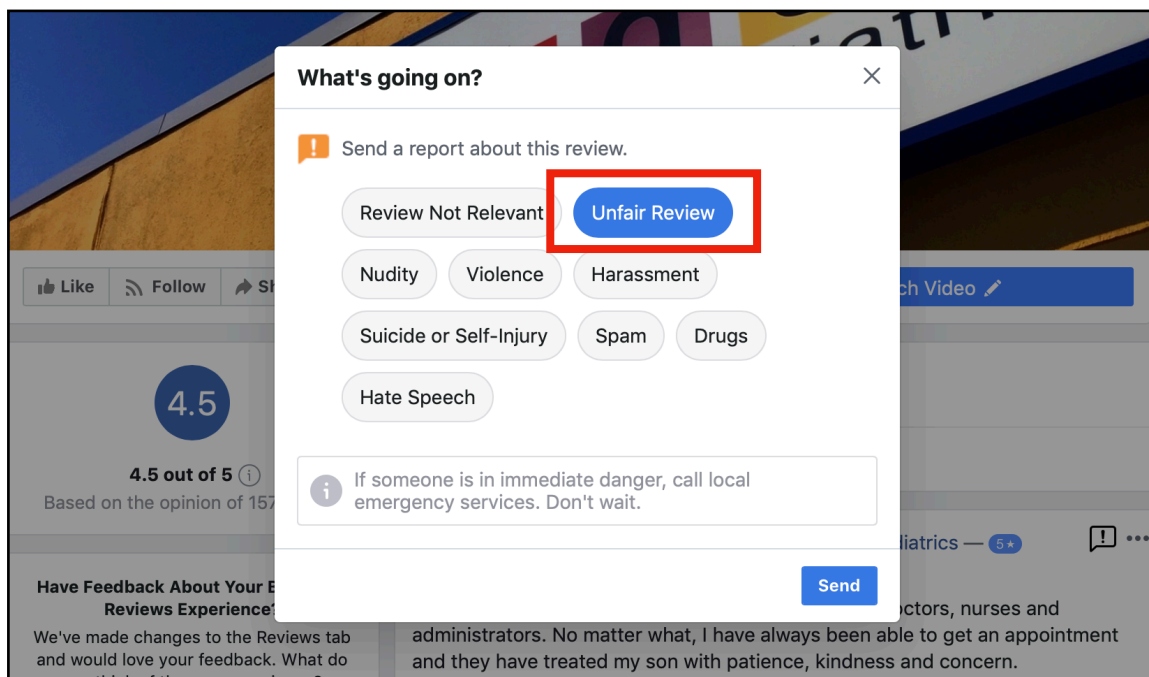
Though it may be tempting to select *Harassment* — and you certainly wouldn't be wrong; that's what you're suffering — Facebook seems more likely to apply that designation to threats and patterns of behavior between individuals. We'd recommend against this choice, unless the tone or language of the review is especially harsh and/or threatening.

Review Not Relevant is certainly correct as well, but "relevance" is a slippery term, and not as strong or as accurate as "unfairness."

The fundamental *unfair*ness of someone reviewing a practice or provider when he/she is not actually a patient seems to us the most logical and elemental (and defensible) grounds on which to protest a fraudulent review. It would be most helpful if, like Yelp, Facebook gave you a dialog box in which to write a brief explanation of the unfairness. But at least, unlike Google, Facebook allows you to flag a fraudulent review on the basis of its fraudulence.

∗ Note: If the review is simply numerical — say, a 1-Star designation without accompanying text — you have no ability to flag or challenge it. You can only report reviews that include written commentary.

After Facebook has reviewed your report — typically days, sometimes weeks later — you'll receive a direct message indicating, but not explaining, its decision.

If Facebook removes the review, great. If not, you have no ability to appeal; the process is neither transparent nor instructive, the judge/judges is/are anonymous, and the decision is final.

You can, of course, always flag and report the review again, but we've not heard of a single case in which that proved effective.

For many years, Facebook had a reputation for turning a blind eye to all reports of fraudulent reviews. Conventional wisdom held that they were almost impossible to remove. But in the past year or two, concurrent with the platform's *Come-to-Jesus* moments on its potential impact on political elections, we've heard a handful of reports from providers and practices across the country that they have been successful in getting fraudulent reviews.

Conventional wisdom, at least as of early 2019, now holds that — unlike Google's — Facebook's standard reporting process is fairly effective. But, as the saying goes: *your results may vary.*

CONCLUSION | *The War Rages On*

You prepared. You defended. You cleaned up.

You won.

Now what?

You double down. You keep on keeping on. You continue to be a
fierce advocate for the health and wellness of children and families by speaking directly to parents and caregivers in your offices and exam rooms. And, perhaps most importantly, you continue advocating for the value of vaccines and the power of evidence-based medicine online.

You post, tweet, snap, 'gram, shoot, and share.

Lather. Rinse. Repeat.

You do it with the passion and power of people who know they have right and truth and science on their side. And you do it with the comfort and confidence of people who have, in your own small corner of cyberspace, faced and fought and conquered the forces that would shut you up and then shut you down, and that you have all the tools and strategies and experiences you need to do it again if necessary.

Let's not kid ourselves: it will be necessary. If not on your social media pages, then on someone else's.

We simply can not be less willing to fight for the facts than the anti-vaccines forces are to fight — and lie and shame and threaten and intimidate — for their false claims.

Lives are quite literally at stake.

It's up to you, and to all of us, to protect them.

APPENDIX A

Step-By-Step Outline to Prepare

In the Office

1. Alert Anyone Who Manages or Monitors Your Social Media
2. Urge Everyone to Sound Alarms, But Stand Down
3. Alert Anyone Who Answers Phones

Facebook

1. Pick Your Posting Time Wisely
2. Practice Constant Vigilance
3. Disable Reviews & Recommendations
4. Disable Visitor Posts
5. Enable Email Notifications for Posts, Reviews, & Recommendations

Yelp

1. Claim Your Business
2. Enable Email Notifications for All Reviews

Google

1. Claim Your Business Listing(s)
2. Enable Email Notifications for Customer Reviews & Questions and Answers

Ready Your Reinforcements

1. Join Shots Heard Round the World

APPENDIX B

Step-By-Step Outline to Defend

Facebook

1. Wait for It
2. Do Not Engage
3. Disable Facebook Reviews & Recommendations (if You Haven't Already)
4. Ban Attackers Without Hesitation, and Without Remorse
5. Batch-Ban Multiple Attackers at Once Using Comment Moderation
6. Disable Visitor Posts (if You Haven't Already)
7. Watch Facebook Notifications (on Facebook, in your Facebook Pages App, and via Email)
8. Call for Reinforcements

Yelp

1. Monitor Reviews & Immediately Report Any Attacks
2. Save Email Confirmations for Reference

APPENDIX C

Step-By-Step Outline to Clean Up

Facebook

1. Leftover Page Clean-Up
2. Report Fraudulent Reviews & Recommendations

Yelp

1. Report All Remaining Fraudulent Yelp Reviews
2. Continue to Monitor Yelp for Removal of Current & New Fraudulent Reviews

Google

1. Flag & Report Fraudulent Reviews
2. Send Twitter Direct Message to @GoogleMyBiz; Briefly Explain the Attack & Ask for Help
3. Repeat #2 as Necessary (Because it May be *Really* Necessary)
4. Continue to Monitor Google Listings for New Fraudulent Removal

APPENDIX D

## *Using the Facebook Pages Manager App*

We wrote and illustrated both the DEFEND and the CLEAN UP instructions for this toolkit on the assumption that you will access Facebook with a desktop and/or a laptop for those segments.

And, in fact, for both the ease and speed of use, we highly recommend you do so.

But in a pinch, and especially for those times at the height of the attack when you may have to go mobile but still want to battle back — our Communication Director banned Attackers and deleted comments from restaurants, grocery stores, parking lots, and even his son's high school cross country meets — you can also use the Facebook Pages Manager app.

The app is available for both Mac iOS and Android devices.
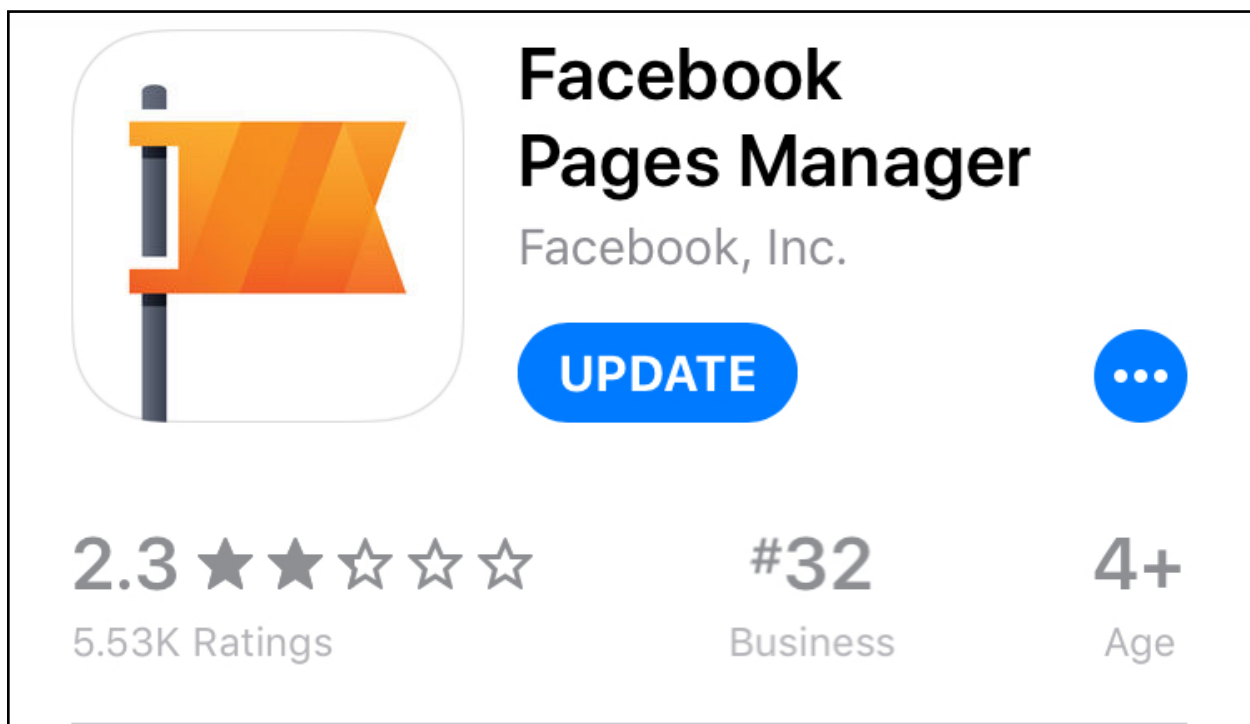
The process of banning and deleting is roughly the same as on the desktop/laptop version, save for the lack of a batch-ban option. (Since this is a new addition to the desktop interface, we're hoping Facebook will roll out the same functionality to the app in a future update.)

To handle an individual attacker, simply Press and Hold on the comment, and a menu with multiple options will appear beneath the comment:
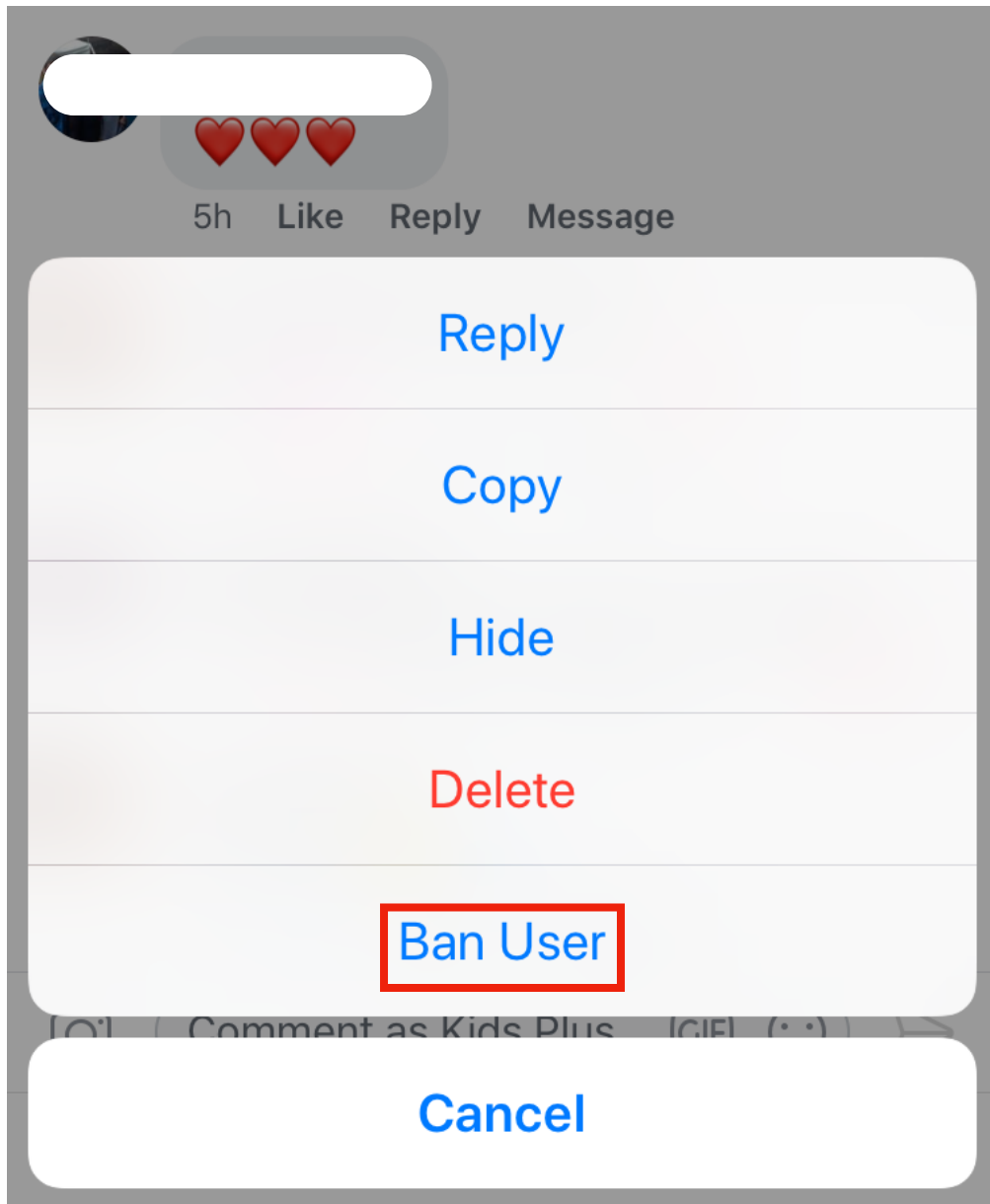
Once it appears, just follow the same BAN-DELETE-HIDE order of operations as time and opportunity allow.