

iVET360°

# VETERINARY MARKETING BENCHMARK REPORT 21



# We've Flipped This Report **UPSIDE DOWN**

The iVET360 Veterinary Marketing Benchmark Report is one of the most informative and popular assessments of veterinary marketing in the industry. That said, we are always looking for ways to improve the way we tell this story as well as how we make it relevant for your practice. So we've made some big changes to the 2021 update in order to do just that.

***"Our focus was to upgrade our data to make it easier than ever to see how you stack up to your competitors in an ever-changing industry."***

*- Justin Vandenberghe, Managing Director, iVET360*



# Taking A Look At **WHAT'S INSIDE**

Welcome to the 5th annual incarnation of iVET360's exclusive Veterinary Marketing Benchmark Report! We create this report every year as a free service to the veterinary industry, collecting 52,000 digital marketing data points so you can see:

- *How your practice is performing in comparison to others,*
- *An accurate snapshot of what platforms work best in our industry, which don't, and*
- *What to prioritize when you have limited time and resources.*

**LET'S START!**

# THE GREAT PAUSE

No one knows better than you that Hurricane COVID wreaked havoc on the day-to-day lives of veterinary hospitals. Staffing shortages and hiring difficulties, increased demand, and what we'll generously call "client contentiousness" top the list of pandemic-related fallout.

As we once again analyzed the industry's digital landscape for our 2021 Veterinary Marketing Benchmark Report (VMBR), it became clear that the coronavirus also greatly affected how practices approached marketing this year.

*Or should we say, how they didn't approach it.*

In fact, veterinary marketing in 2021 can be summed up in a word: flat. Frankly, independent practices—overwhelmed by the lack of staff and skyrocketing demand mentioned above—decided it was just easier to let their online profiles, social media, and other important aspects of digital marketing slide.

We also found that the absorption of independent practices into veterinary groups and corporations continues to grow. This year, nearly 8% of the hospitals in our regular survey population were sold to corporate groups and had to be replaced, as our survey focuses on independently owned businesses. 2021 is on track to be the busiest year ever for veterinary practice sales in the U.S., with more than 1000 locations sold to corporate entities this year.

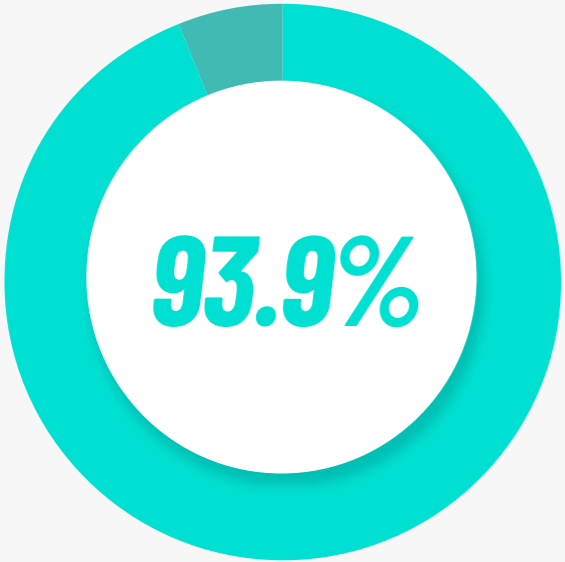
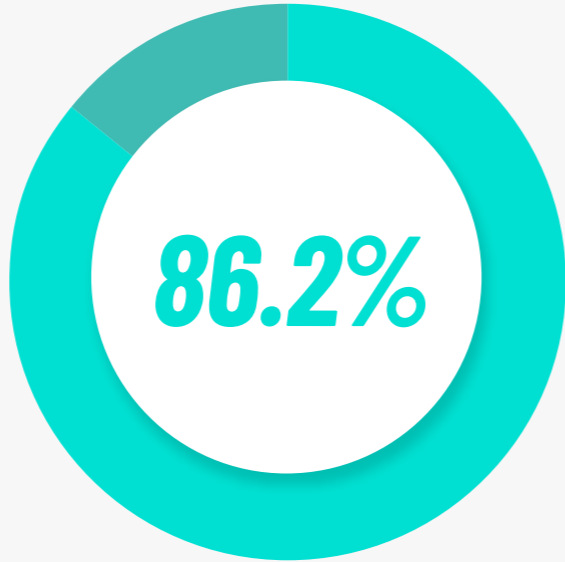
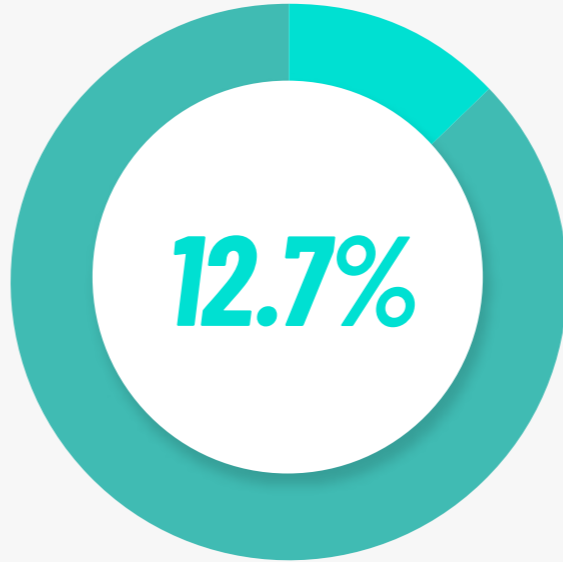
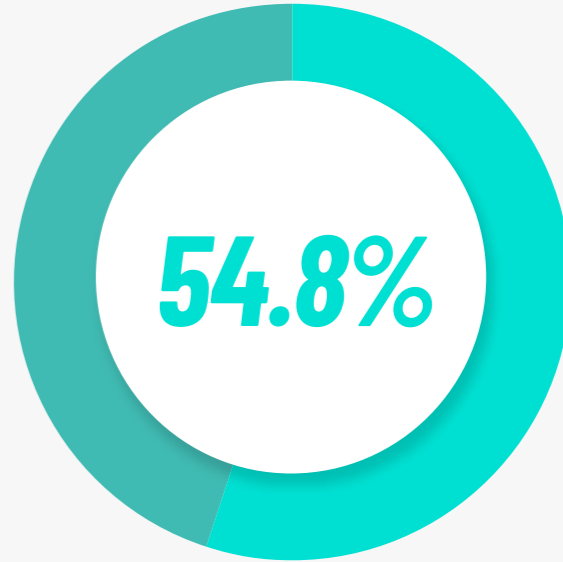
One more note: Just as in years past, we based all checkpoints on yes or no questions and factual data with no judgements. The result is a comprehensive, bias-free look at the best practices of some major marketing players in the industry—all absolutely free, because we believe that helping you ultimately helps more pets. And like you, that's why we do what we do.

## Starting with **WEBSITES**

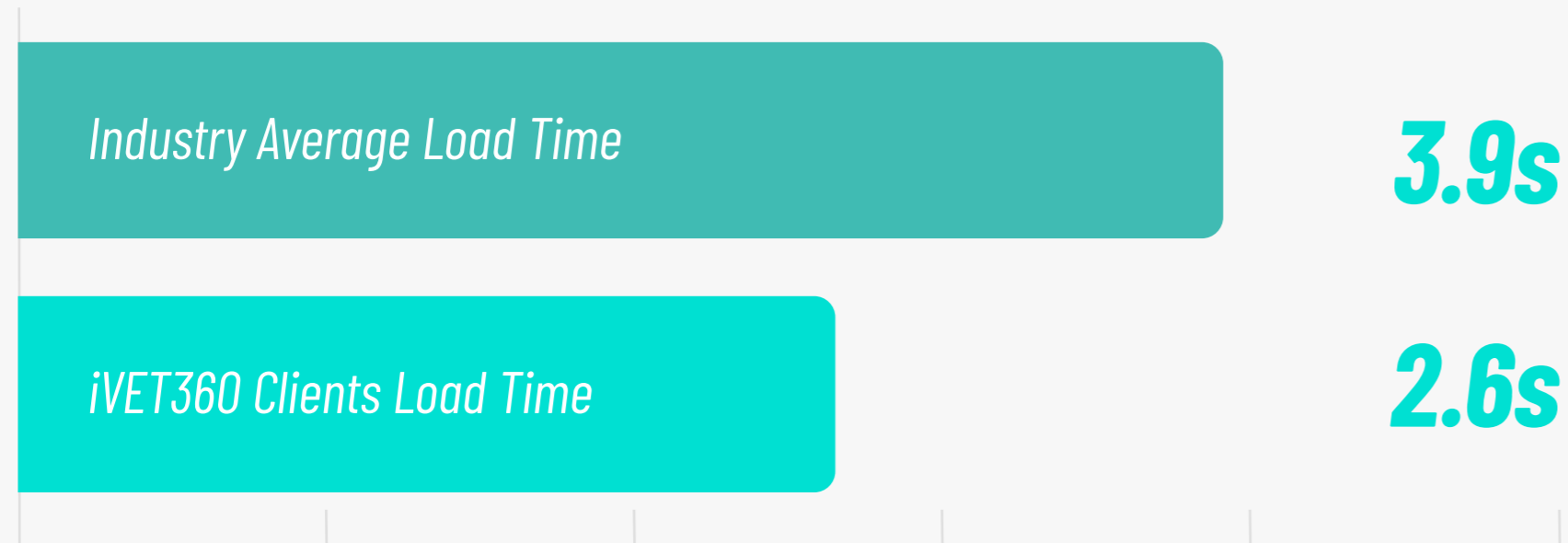
This year fewer veterinary websites met the minimum standards for the metrics outlined in this report. It's especially troubling to see that SEO and the number of responsive practice websites—hallmarks of competent web development—actually declined.

*The only front-end metric that improved is loading speed, which is now lower than it was back in 2019, before slower-loading video imagery for homepages became so popular.*



<b>Responsiveness</b>	<b>SSL Certificate</b>	<b>SEO Optimization</b>	<b>ADA Compliance</b>
 <p><b>93.9%</b></p>	 <p><b>86.2%</b></p>	 <p><b>12.7%</b></p>	 <p><b>54.8%</b></p>
<p>93.9% of hospitals have a mobile-responsive website. Since 2015 Google punishes non-responsive websites, so if your practice is no longer showing up near the top on search engine results, you'll want to start there.</p>	<p>86.2% of hospitals have a secure website. Safe pages begin with "https," while unsafe pages begin with "http." Secure websites are guaranteed safe for people to visit without fear of being attacked by viruses.</p>	<p>Only 12.7% of hospitals have an SEO-optimized website, which is a 30% decrease from last year. As a staple of web presence, it's disheartening to see this continued decline.</p>	<p>54.8% of hospitals have an ADA-compliant website. There's been a 5% increase in ADA compliance from last year, but with lawsuits on the rise, our industry needs to act fast and upgrade their sites.</p>
<b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b> <b>100%</b>	<b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b> <b>100%</b>

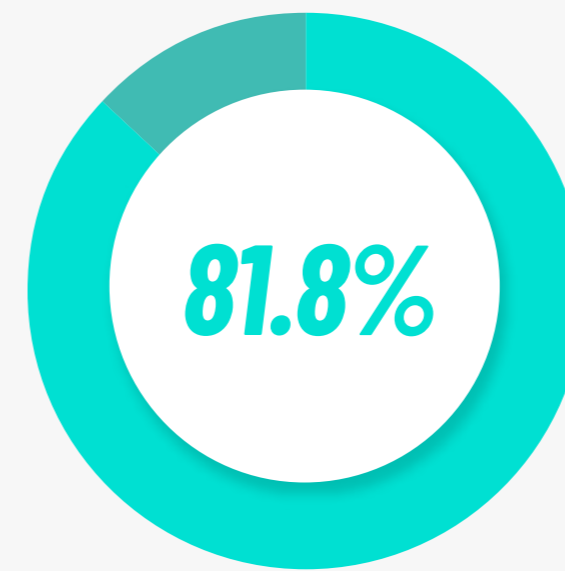
## Website Speed (4G)



The only front-end metric that improved is loading speed, which is now lower than it was back in 2019, before slower-loading video imagery for homepages became so popular.

**Want To Speed Up?** Visit [iVET360.com/marketing/veterinary-websites](https://iVET360.com/marketing/veterinary-websites)

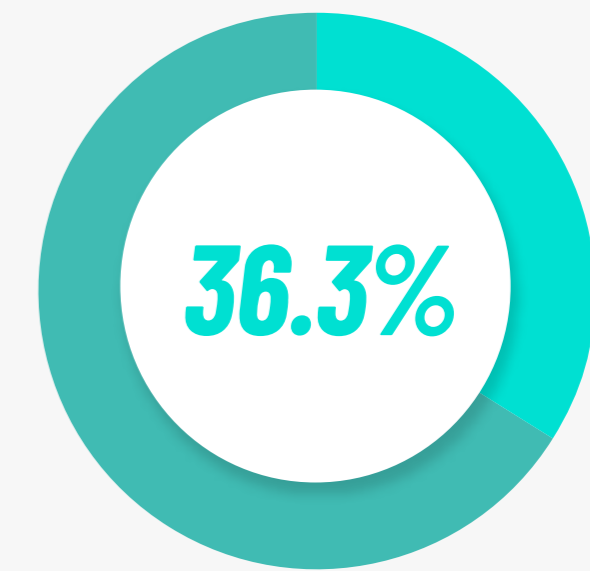
## Google Analytics



81.8% of hospitals have Google Analytics installed. This is simply a must-have for understanding the true value of your site, so the slight decline (-2%) in installations is disappointing.




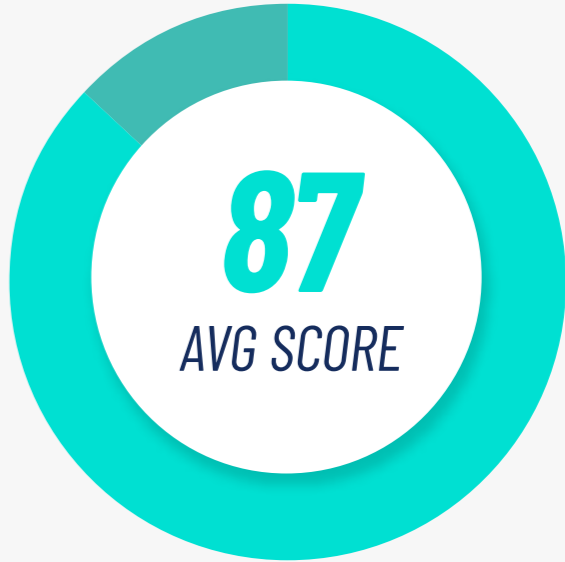
**iVET360 CLIENTS 100%**

## Schema



36.3% of hospitals are utilizing Schema markup. It's the language of search engines and ensures that people are more likely to find exactly what they're searching for on your site.

**iVET360 CLIENTS 100%**

Performance	Accessibility	Best Practices	SEO
 <p><b>43</b> AVG SCORE</p>	 <p><b>83</b> AVG SCORE</p>	 <p><b>79</b> AVG SCORE</p>	 <p><b>87</b> AVG SCORE</p>
<p><i>Performance audits will determine how well your page is optimized for users so they can easily see and interact with the content on your home page. How do current and potential clients perceive your website?</i></p>	<p><i>Accessibility audits highlight opportunities to improve your website homepage's coding, labeling, and appearance so that the content on that page is easy for all users to see or hear, navigate, and utilize.</i></p>	<p><i>Best practices audits will highlight coding errors on your site that affect speed, trigger errors, and affect security. It can also tell you if your page offers a "good user experience".</i></p>	<p><i>SEO audits will show you what to fix so that your homepage gets the highest ranking possible on search engine results. It will tell you if your content is easy to read by search engines, can be indexed, and is mobile-friendly.</i></p>
<p><b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b>      <b>72</b></p>	<p><b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b>      <b>98</b></p>	<p><b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b>      <b>93</b></p>	<p><b>iVET360 CLIENTS</b>      <b>98</b></p>



## The Key **TAKEAWAY**

Once again, we have to ask: if we're not your website or marketing services provider, is the one you have doing everything they could be doing to optimize your site? ***With the continued decline in use of analytics and performance tools***, we think it's likely the answer is no.

76 hospitals in our survey changed marketing providers this last year, so either practices don't know how to check for these key website benchmarks, or their provider isn't giving them the tools to do so. It's worth asking your provider for these optimization reports or at least the ability to access them. iVET360 will also be happy to pull these stats for you for free—just ask.

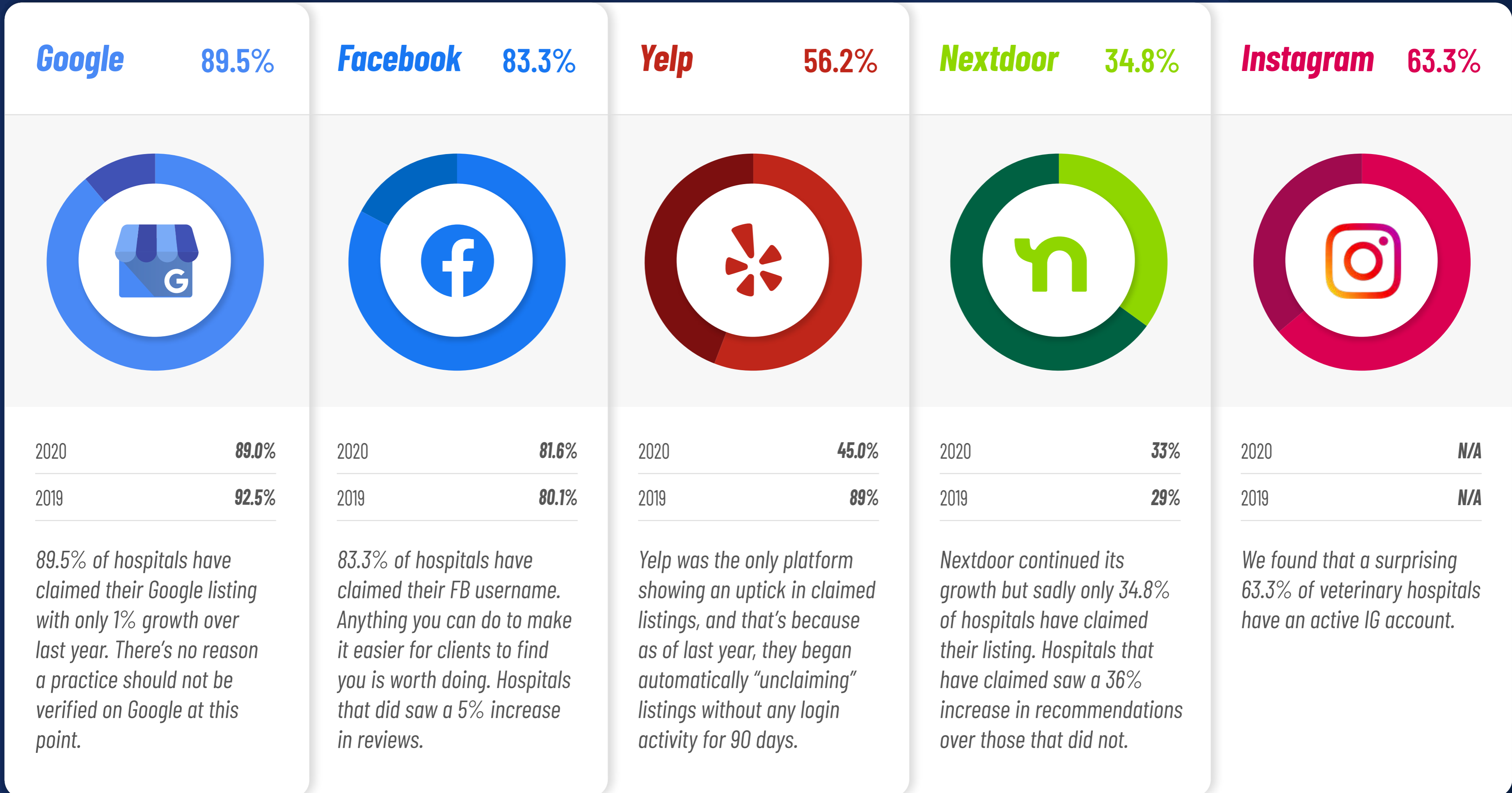
## Social Media **ACCOUNTS**

Claiming your account, local listing or page is free, easy, and hugely important to your online visibility. And yet this year's survey showed that there's been little growth in this area.

This is a real mistake, because not claiming your practice's account or listings on Google, Yelp, and Facebook will **negatively affect your search engine rankings**. It's also impossible to update your practice info—such as hours, COVID policies, promotions—unless your account is claimed.



# CLAIMING YOUR BUSINESS



## The Key **TAKEAWAY**

You'll notice that Instagram makes its debut in the VMBR this year, because apparently it's become the social media of choice for vet practices. Our iVET360 Human Resources pros speculate that's because IG is fun—but for vet hospitals, *it's the least effective digital marketing platform*. Given that Practice Managers are telling us they're consistently short-staffed and have no time for marketing, we're kinda wondering if all that cumulative time on IG might be better spent elsewhere.

*Yelp was the only platform showing an uptick in claimed listings*, and that's because as of last year, they began automatically "unclaiming" listings without any login activity for 90 days.

What's startling is how *few practices have claimed their listing on Nextdoor*—65.2% of vets have no idea that on average, 104 local-to-them people are on this site talking about their practice.

## Social Media REVIEWS

Reviews, ratings and recommendations matter: they're an at-a-glance indicator of how your practice is perceived and they serve to attract potential new clients. Most importantly, the more you have, the better your search engine placement.

Google is the most accurate assessment of your practice due to the larger number and variety of users, while Yelp and Facebook are significant contributors to where you show up in search results. But don't count out Nextdoor, where growth has slowed a bit, but is still outpacing others as it becomes the new hyperlocal "word of mouth".



# REVIEWS, RATINGS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

## Google

The industry saw a 29% increase in the number of reviews over last year, part of a promising 85% over the past two years.

AVERAGE RATING:



2020	4.6
2019	N/A

AVERAGE REVIEWS:



2020	165
2019	115

## Facebook

Facebook saw a surprising 64% growth in reviews over 2020. However, it still ranks third on our list of total review numbers.

AVERAGE RATING:



2020	4.4
2019	N/A

AVERAGE REVIEWS:



2020	40
2019	69

## Yelp

Yelp remains steady for the fifth year in a row, with the same growth average of 4 reviews.

AVERAGE RATING:



2020	4
2019	N/A

AVERAGE REVIEWS:

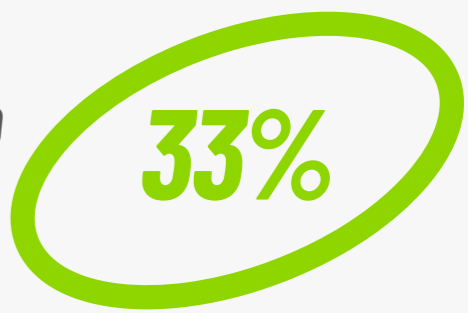


2020	34
2019	30

## Nextdoor

Nextdoor's rapid growth has calmed with only a 13% growth over last year, but the average is still nearly 3x that of Yelp's.

NEIGHBORHOOD FAVORITES:



2020	63.8%
2019	N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS:



2020	92
2019	82

## The Key **TAKEAWAY**

In 2021, social media platforms had solid growth in usage across the board, which shows that clients aren't slowing down their activity, even if the hospital has stopped paying attention.

*Facebook has become the place where people go to vent, and less a place where clients engage with practices.* In between congressional hearings, Facebook enjoys tweaking their algorithm, so you'll now find that whenever your practice is tagged anywhere on the site, it will show up as a review.

Relative newbie *Nextdoor is showing exponential growth compared to Yelp*, with an average of 140 million monthly users (Yelp has been stagnant at about 150 million monthly users). Their version of reviews, called "recommendations", are up, but as most vet practice pages go unclaimed on this site, most vets have no idea.

## Social Media

# ADVERTISING

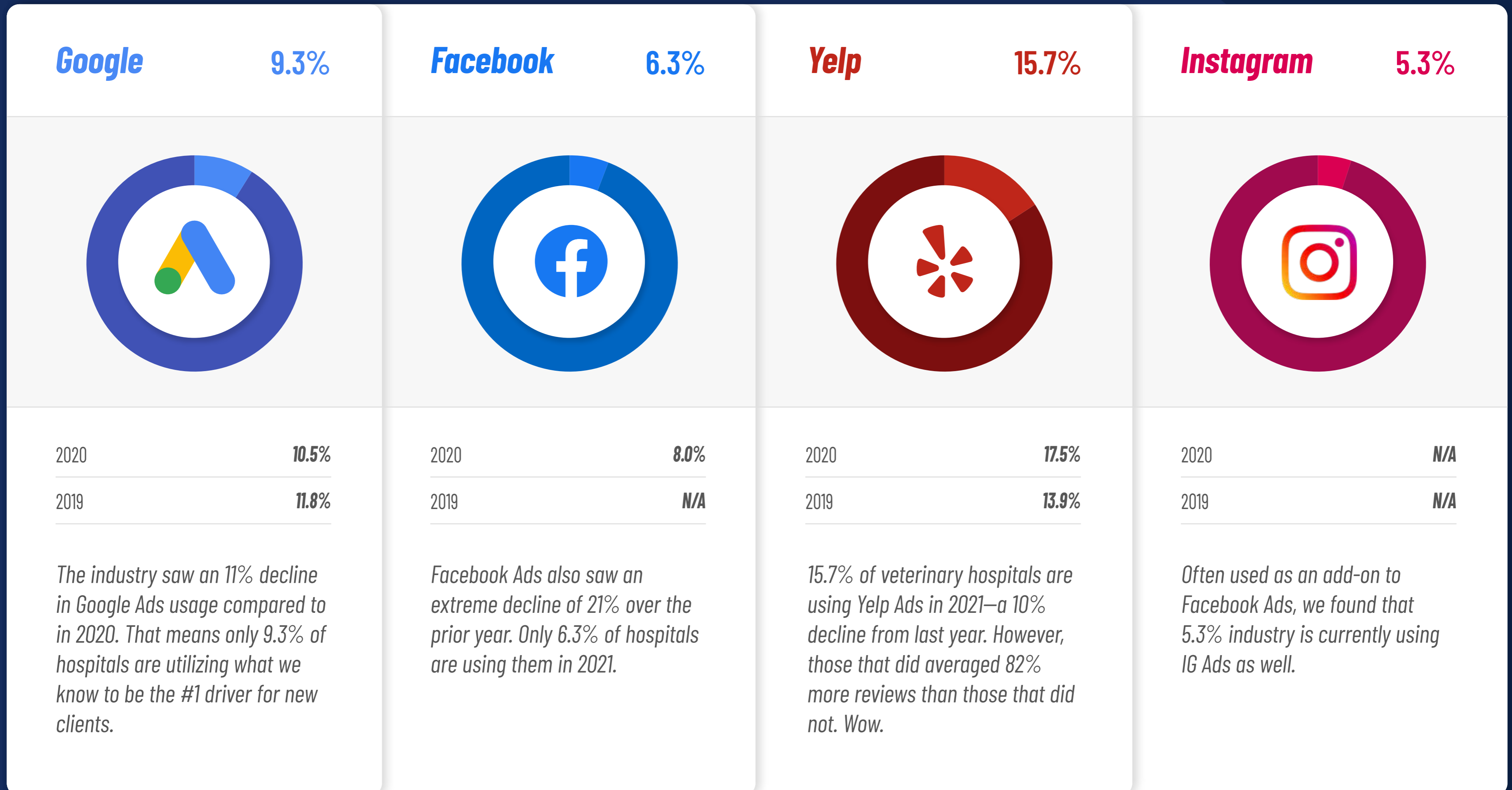
Nowhere is the evidence of skyrocketing demand for services more evident than in the decrease in advertising across all platforms by independently-owned veterinary practices. With many hospitals unable to take on new clients, advertising was seen as not only unnecessary but even somewhat detrimental.

*As Julia Roberts quipped in Pretty Woman:  
"Big mistake. HUGE."*





# ADVERTISING PLATFORMS



## The Key **TAKEAWAY**

Social media advertising remains a very effective way to target market your practice, and because so few hospitals are advertising, it's a prime time for your practice to get back in the game. There's little competition for attention and it will position you for when things get back to something more like normal.

At the very least, your practice should be making a minimal investment in Google Ads because fast-growing corporate practices are not letting up on the advertising gas. In almost all cases, the hospitals that were snapped up by veterinary groups were the ones that continued their marketing efforts, even if that just meant branding and no aggressive calls to action.

## Social Media TOOLS

Claiming your listing and paying attention to reviews and ratings on social media is a great start. However, all of the major social media platforms provide other features and tools—most of them absolutely free—that can enhance your online presence and increase engagement.

Things like posts, products, check-ins, stories, and branding are all ways to differentiate your practice and showcase what you have to offer. When you use Q&A and messenger features it gives you an opportunity to easily communicate directly with your clients and potential clients.



## Marketing on Google

This is a world dominated by cell phones, and the easier you make it for people to interact with your practice this way, the better. The renamed Google Business Profile (GBP) offers many free tools to make this possible, and if you're not taking advantage of them, it's probably going to hurt your practice down the line when things slow down.

Appointments serve as an easy link people can use to call your hospital immediately, while Posts make sure they have the most current information about your policies and promotions. Accurate GBP Descriptions make your practice more visible to search engines, while Q&A, Posts, and the new Products features give you an opportunity to showcase specifics about your practice, making it less likely people keep searching.

## Feature Usage

ARE USING GBP POSTS **21.5%**

2020 | 2019 **32.8% | 21.0%**

ARE USING GBP OFFERS **1.7%**

2020 | 2019 **5.2% | 3.4%**

HAVE A GBP DESCRIPTION **51.3%**

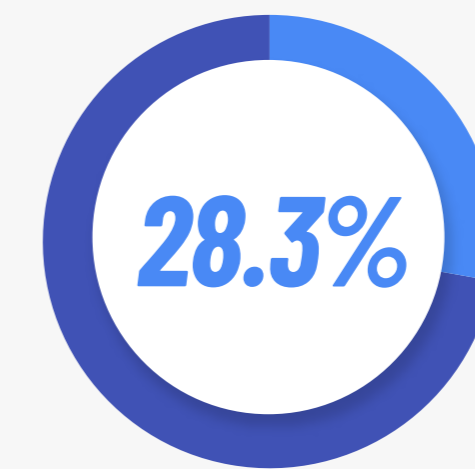
2020 | 2019 **44.5% | 35.6%**

ARE USING GBP PRODUCTS **4.7%**

2020 | 2019 **NEW FEATURE**

## Questions & Answers

HOSPITALS THAT ARE USING GOOGLE BUSINESS PROFILE QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



2020 **23.9%**

2019 **17.1%**

AVERAGE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS



2020 **5**

2019 **3**

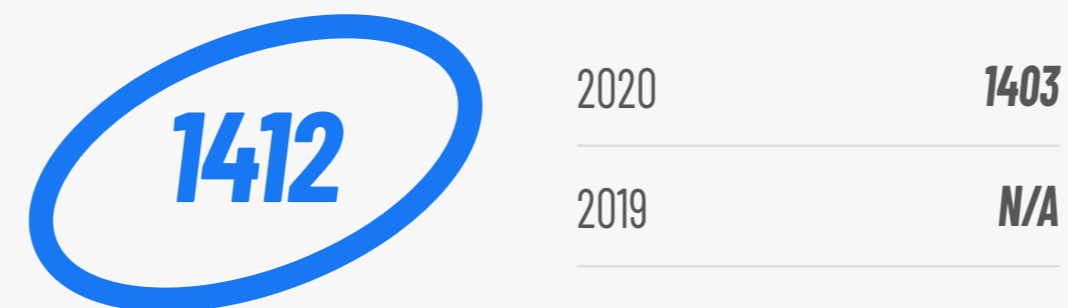
## Marketing on Facebook

On both Facebook and its popular sister Instagram, “likes” and “followers” grew by 1%, but Facebook reviews were up by a whopping 64%. However, usage of Facebook by practices dropped. That’s problematic given that yes, a large number of your clients are still there.

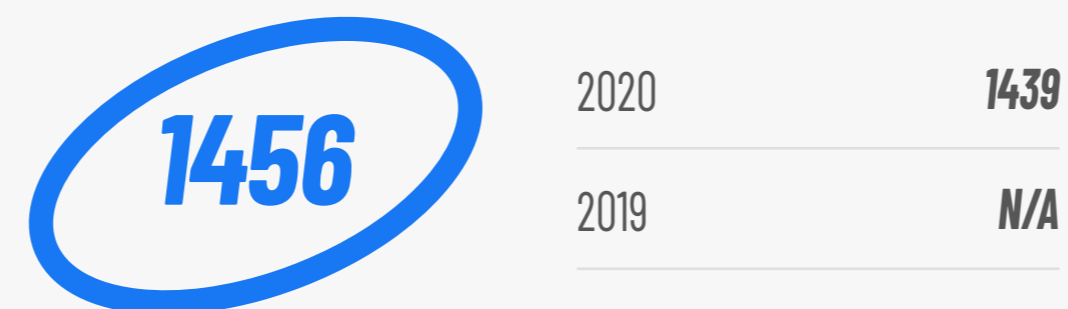
Facebook’s other free tools and features—branding, check-ins, Messenger, Services—were also largely ignored by veterinary practices this year. As the internet continues to expand, it follows that it will be harder to increase your practice’s visibility unless you are actively using these features to set yourself apart and highlight what you have to offer.

## Data Snapshot

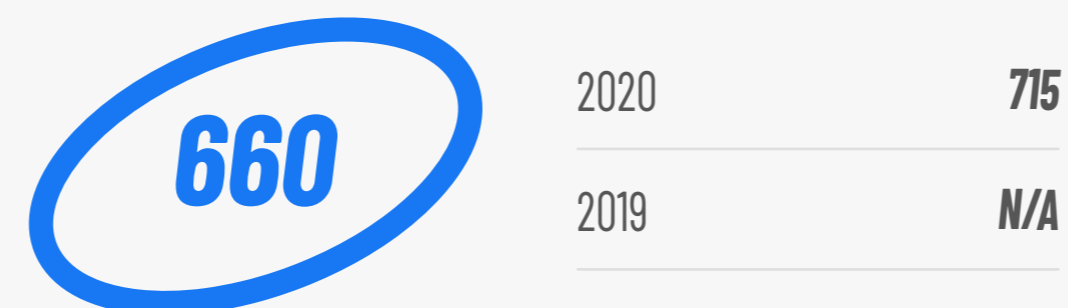
### AVERAGE NUMBER OF LIKES:



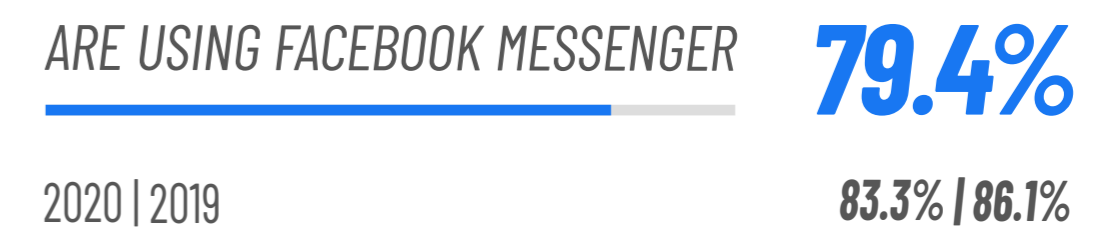
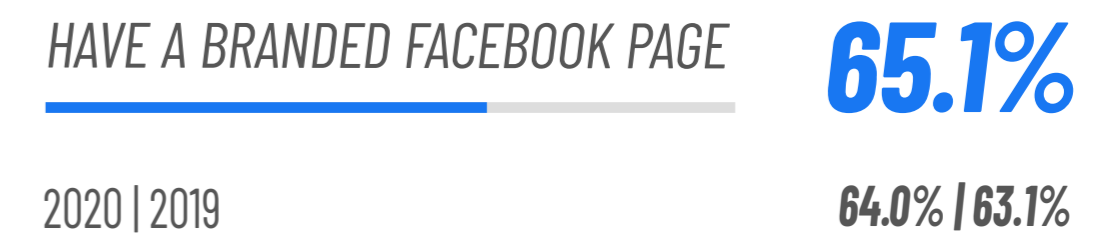
### AVERAGE NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS:



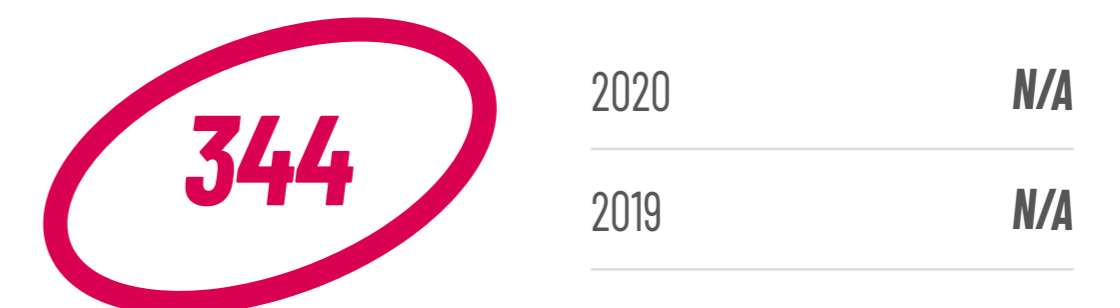
### AVERAGE NUMBER OF CHECK-INS:



## Feature Usage



### AVERAGE NUMBER OF INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS:



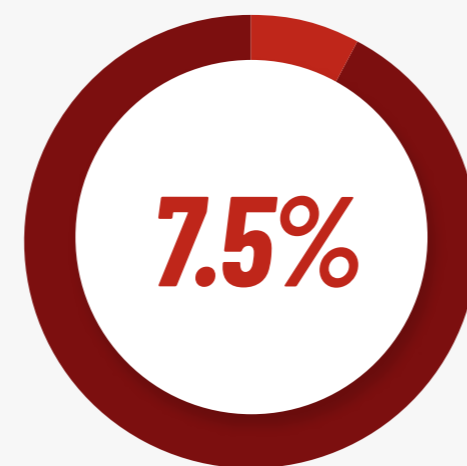
## Marketing on Yelp

We get it: save for a bunch of folks in California, Yelp isn't your favorite social media platform. Frankly, it's not ours, either—and as you'll see in the stats it's being used less and less by hospitals. But the fact is that reviews on the site is still important to Google. So for now, Yelp needs to be at least a small part of your practice's marketing efforts.

So how do you get those reviews? Check-Ins and Check-In Offers are the one Yelp tool that really pays off in terms of getting more people to review your practice, and therefore feed the Google beast. The proof is in the data: the average number of reviews for practices with Yelp Check-In Offers is way up.

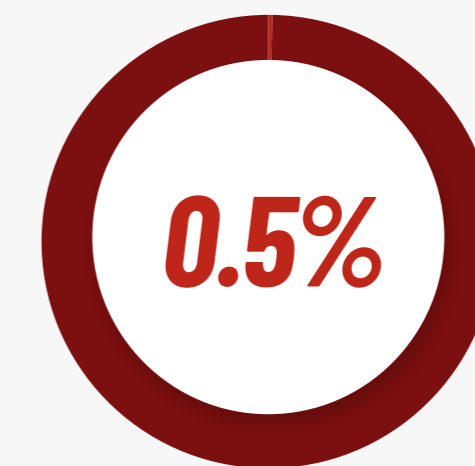
## Feature Usage

### HAVE A YELP CHECK IN OFFER



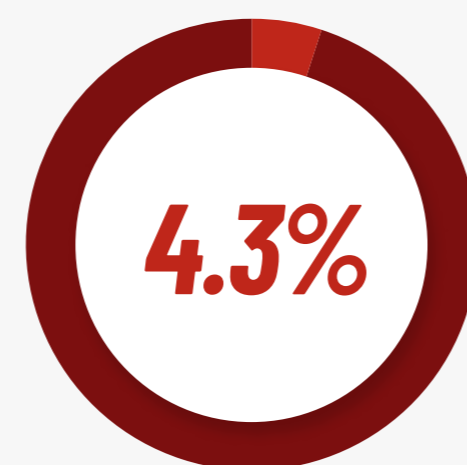
2020	8.9%
2019	9.3%

### ARE OFFERING A YELP DEAL



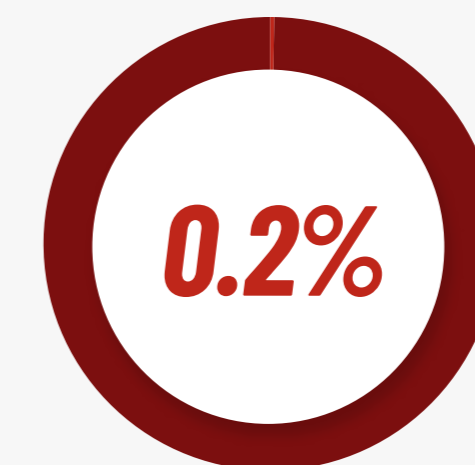
2020	0.7%
2019	1.0%

### ARE USING YELP ASK THE COMMUNITY



2020	3.5%
2019	3.9%

### ARE USING YELP CONNECT (POSTS)



2020	0.2%
2019	N/A

## Marketing on Nextdoor

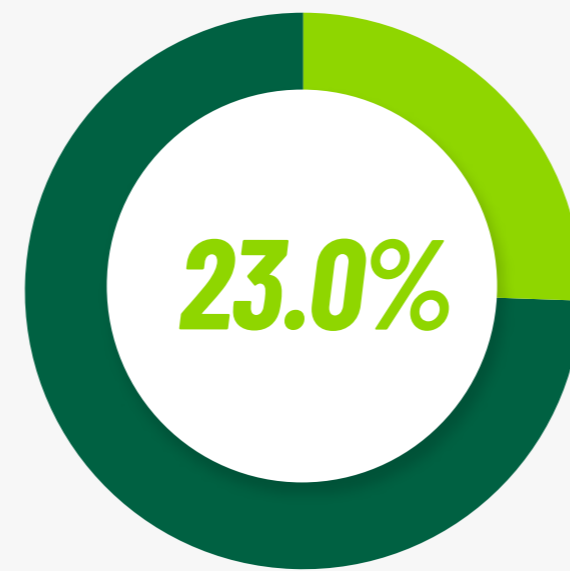
Named one of the TIME100 Most Influential Companies in 2021, Nextdoor's growth is three times that of Yelp. Users also tend to be much more engaged on Nextdoor than on Yelp.

Nextdoor made some changes this year that are going to favor businesses who are active on the site. You can no longer be a "Neighborhood Favorite" if your page is unclaimed. With 65% of veterinary practice listings going unclaimed, we've seen a significant drop in the practices in our survey being designated as Neighborhood Favorites.

Like Google, Facebook and Yelp in the past, Nextdoor has also begun to auto-populate more details about your business within its platform—this means details not necessarily approved by you are being showcased to the thousands of local users.

## Feature Usage

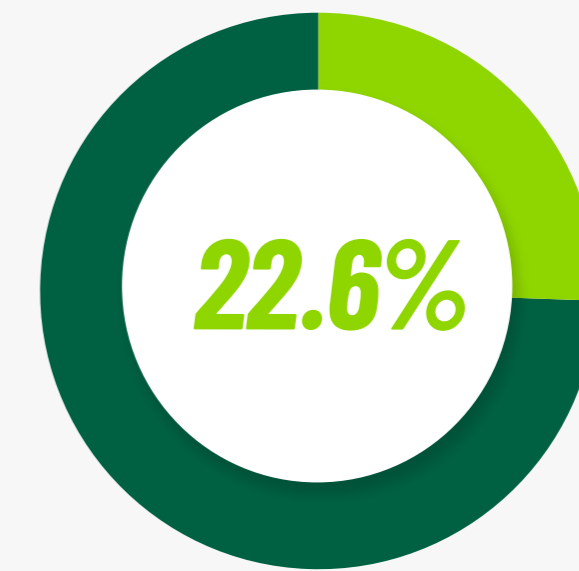
*NEW FEATURE!*



**of Hospitals Have a Branded Page**

*Nextdoor now allows businesses to fully brand their page to help them stand out in the crowd. You can now add a logo, header image and photos in the style of Facebook.*

*NEW FEATURE!*



**of Hospitals Are Using Nextdoor Stories**

*Businesses can also add their "story" to their listings to help solidify branding on this platform. Think of this as your mission or "About Us" page.*

# The Key TAKEAWAY

Practices seemed to completely walk away from GBP Posts and Offers this year, for the reasons we outlined earlier. But just like with social media ads, the field isn't crowded with veterinary marketing, giving you a real opportunity to stand out and create awareness about what your hospital has to offer. So...maybe it's worth showing that Instagram-loving vet assistant how to use some of these tools that might actually move the needle for your practice?

When it comes to Yelp, you gotta do at least the minimum because this platform is so tied to Google search engine results. ***Make sure your page is claimed, consider a Check-in Offer to stimulate more reviews, then move on.***

Lack of marketing activity shows up in every aspect of our survey, with the exception of increased posting on Instagram, which really doesn't help your practice as much as ***making use of the business-promoting tools on Facebook.*** While getting new clients may not be your focus right now, practices need to play a long game when it comes to marketing and utilize these features consistently.

Despite exponential growth in the number of active users, hyperlocal focus, and the addition of helpful branding tools, ***veterinary practices still aren't maximizing their presence Nextdoor.*** Like other social media platforms, their tools and features now favor businesses who interact with the site, even minimally.



# We Nag Because **WE CARE**

We get it: veterinary hospitals are overwhelmed—so it's really no surprise to us to see that marketing has been on the back burner for most practices this last year. We were just hoping that burner was still turned on.

Stagnant marketing is going to have unintended consequences for practices who have stopped making much of an effort. Right now, the demand seems never ending—but trust us, at some point the pendulum will swing back in the other direction. The practices that have used this time to make the most of their foundational marketing will be in the best position to attract new clients, keep their established ones compliant, and compete with growing corporatization.

So given that right now you may be stretched to the limit just keeping up with the day-to-day, what's the bare minimum? How about we start with this: ***Get off Instagram and go claim your Nextdoor listing!***

# If Nothing Else **DO THIS**

Seriously, first and foremost, check with your website or marketing provider and **ensure that your practice website is mobile responsive, SEO optimized, and secure.** Second, see that ALL of your local listings social media accounts and pages (Google, Facebook, Yelp, and Nextdoor) **are claimed**, and check that the information on those listings is accurate and current.

***Finally, go spend a little money on Google Ads.***

And as always, we're here to help. We offer a free benchmark breakdown for your practice and if you'd like one, contact us with your hospital name, website, and email address. We'll see that you get a complimentary all-inclusive digital report for your hospital within 48 hours.

 **503-765-6360** OR EMAIL US AT [INFO@IVET360.COM](mailto:INFO@IVET360.COM)