

Study of 9,792 Negative Dental Reviews Finds 86.8 Percent Describe a Business Process Failure, Not Clinical Care

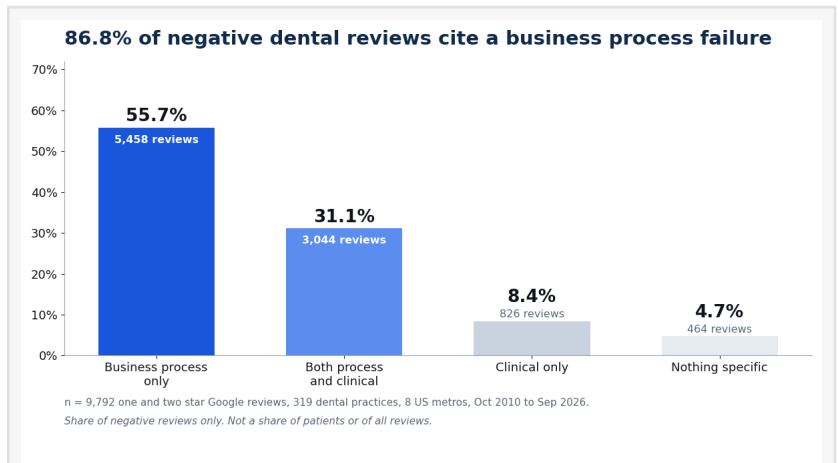
86.8 percent of 9,792 negative dental reviews cite a business process failure, not clinical care. Front desk conduct is the largest mode at 41.0 percent.

TAMPA, FL, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A study of 9,792 negative dental reviews released by Sales Roadmap found that 86.8 percent describe a business process failure rather than a clinical one. The finding reframes what a negative review measures for practice owners.

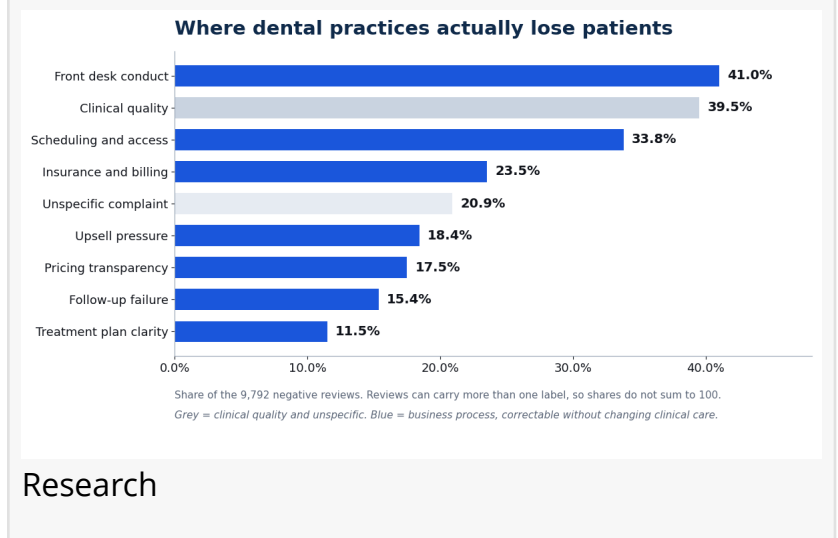
The corpus covers one-star and two-star Google reviews carrying at least five words of text, across 319 dental practices in Phoenix, Dallas, Atlanta, Charlotte, Columbus, Denver, Tampa, and Kansas City. Review dates run from October 2010 to September 2026.

Each review was labeled against a taxonomy of seven business process failure modes and one clinical mode. A single review can carry more than one label. Of 21,966 labels produced, 96.4 percent passed a check requiring the quoted span to appear verbatim in the source text. Labels failing that check were discarded.

The distribution across the 9,792 reviews was business process only 55.7 percent, both business process and clinical 31.1 percent, clinical quality with no business process failure 8.4 percent, and nothing specific 4.7 percent.



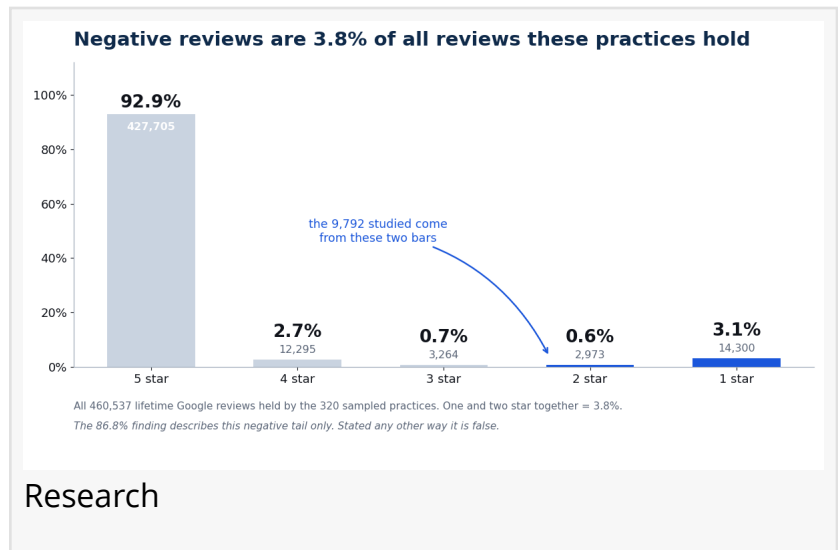
Research



Research

Front desk conduct appeared in 41.0 percent of negative reviews, the largest single mode. Clinical quality appeared in 39.5 percent, scheduling and access in 33.8 percent, and insurance and billing in 23.5 percent.

Money is the largest cluster once related categories are combined. Pricing transparency, insurance and billing, and upsell pressure together appear in 45.9 percent of negative reviews.



Kamyar Shah, the [fractional COO](#) who conducted the analysis, said the pattern is an operations finding rather than a clinical one.

"The patient was not upset about the dentistry," Shah said. "The patient was upset about the quote, the phone call, the bill, or the front desk. Those are operational steps that can be named, assigned, and measured."

Practices in the corpus replied to 53.7 percent of their negative reviews. Shah said the reply rate indicates awareness without an upstream process change.

"Replying to a review about a surprise bill does not prevent the next surprise bill," Shah said. "The failure modes described here are decided before the patient writes anything."

The study explicitly states its base rate. The 86.8 percent figure refers only to negative reviews and does not describe patients or all reviews. The 320 practices sampled hold 460,537 lifetime reviews between them, of which 92.9 percent are five-star and one-star and two-star reviews together account for 3.8 percent of the total.

Method and limitations are published in full alongside the findings. A second, independently trained model relabeled a random sample of 200 reviews and agreed with the first on the business process versus clinical split in 94.5 percent of cases, against an 80 percent threshold set before the study ran. Google reviews are a self-selected sample, the labeling is model-assisted rather than human-coded, and eight metropolitan markets are not the whole United States.

No reviewer name and no practice name appear in the published study. Reviewer identity was never collected.

The full study is available at <https://salesroadmaps.com/dental-negative-reviews-study/>

ABOUT Kamyar Shah is a Fractional COO, Fractional CMO, and Executive Coach, and the founder of World Consulting Group, with over 25 years of experience helping organizations achieve operational excellence and sustainable growth. He has led 650+ consulting engagements producing more than \$300M in measurable results. More at <https://kamyarshah.com> and <https://www.kamyarshah.name>

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