

How to Build Your Best Online Reputation

By: Isabella Andersen



Your guide to getting more positive reviews, dealing with bad reviews and fixing your online reputation once and for all.

Table of Contents

....

Introduction

page 3

What's in an Online Review?

page 4

What Types of Businesses Really Need Reviews?

page 6

How Positive Reviews Are Helping Your Business

page 7

How Negative Reviews Are Harming Your Business

page 9

How to Build Your Best Online Reputation

page 10

Introduction

Your business is great. You know that. Your customers know that. But, do your online reviews match your business's real-world reputation?

Maybe you think online reviews and reputation management don't matter for your business. Maybe you get a lot of referrals, but here's the thing:

People are going to look your business up online no matter how they hear about you.

In fact, 97 percent of consumers now read online reviews.¹ Let's face it. That's everyone. Sure, a miniscule 3 percent of people are unphased by the opinions and experiences of others.

Everyone else, though, they're reading your reviews. And, they're judging your business as well as making decisions about whether or not to purchase from you based on your star rating and review content.

It's time to take control of your online reputation for good.

This guide is designed to teach you, step by step, how to build an online reputation that sets you apart from the competition, builds trust, improves sales and drives customer loyalty.

Let's get started managing your business's online reputation.

What's in an Online Review?

A huge part of managing your business's online reputation and making sure it's an accurate reflection of your business in the physical world is to manage your online reviews.

Since we know that everyone reads reviews, we should consider what, exactly, they're looking for in a review of your business.

Well, a recent study found that the most important factors of an online review (in order) are star rating, quantity, recency, amount of detail, sentiment and whether or not you've replied to your reviews.



So, that means your rating, which ranges from 0-5, is the most important part of your business's online reputation, followed by the number of reviews you have, how recent the reviews are, review detail and your response (or lack of response).

Let's break each of these factors down so we can understand what the best reviews look like.

Review Star Rating

For this guide, we'll look at review star rating this way: 0-2 stars = negative, 3 stars = neutral and 4-5 stars = positive.

Because people are more likely to consider using a business that has a positive rating, you should be shooting for that 4-5-star rating, 3.5 at the very lowest.

Review Quantity

There's no specific number of reviews you need across platforms, but one study found

that most people will trust your business after reading somewhere around seven reviews. Number of reviews isn't all there is to this, though. Recency matters too.

Review Recency

Having a lot of reviews is great, but if the reviews are all a year old, people won't think they're relevant. In fact, 77 percent of consumers say that a review is no longer relevant if it's more than three months old.

This means that you'll need to be constantly getting new reviews in order for your star rating to be relevant.

Review Detail

When people read your reviews, they want to see some detail. Another study found that people read reviews to determine which products/services to avoid, but that's just one of the details they're looking for. They'll want to find out as much as they can about your business before committing to a purchase.²



Review Sentiment

Review sentiment (whether it's generally good or bad) is important for 32 percent of customers, so they are reading into more than just your rating. They want to know exactly how the person felt after purchasing from you.

Review Response

While this wasn't always important, whether you've responded to your business's reviews is becoming a crucial factor that either draws in new customers or turns consumers away. They want to know that you are following up and that the customer experience matters to you.

It's so important that 30 percent of consumers say your response is key when they judge your business based on reviews and online reputation.

What Types of Businesses Really Need Reviews?

It's no secret that online reviews can make or break your local business.

Even business owners who think they get most of their customers from referrals need to manage their online reviews. If someone is being referred to your business by a friend or family member, they will still look at your online presence and judge you based on your reviews.

Here are the businesses we recommend review marketing for:

- Businesses with zero reviews
- New businesses or new listings
- Businesses with no recent reviews
- Businesses with lots of negative reviews
- Local and small businesses

By industry, we know that reviews are important for all businesses—from restaurants to home contractors, gyms, medical offices, banks, even grocery stores and much, much more. No one is safe from angry customers online, and even if you think your online reputation doesn't matter, it does.

“

It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently.

— Warren Buffett —

How Positive Reviews Are Helping Your Business

Positive reviews: sure, they look good, but why do people care about them so much? And why do they trust reviews from strangers?

Let's look at the numbers.

Why Do Consumers Trust Reviews?

1. 88 percent of people trust online reviews as much as they trust recommendations from friends and family.³
2. People crave transparency from businesses, and what better way to get a real, honest viewpoint of your business than by reading about past customers' experiences?
3. We rely on the opinions of others because we see them as peers.⁴

What Can a Positive Online Reputation Even Do for Your Business?

- 92 percent of people will use a local business if it has a positive online reputation and at least a 4-star rating
- Increasing your overall Yelp rating by just one star can lead to a 5-9 percent boost in revenue
- Customers will spend 31 percent more on a business with positive reviews⁵

Star Rating Has a Big Impact on Your Click-Through Rates

A study found that when it comes to local (map) search results, star rating is the driving factor in why people choose to click through to a local business's website.

Here are the findings:

- 56 percent chose a business because it had positive reviews and a good star rating
- Only 9 percent chose the top result just because it was the top result
- Only 7 percent chose the first business they saw
- Another 7 percent chose a business based on location
- You can get 25 percent more clicks by improving your star rating from 3-5 stars⁶

Percentage of Clicks vs. Star Rating



The above numbers represent how many people chose a business with a specific star rating across 18 sets of randomized search results. As you can see, the higher the star rating, the more clicks your business will get!



How Negative Reviews Are Harming Your Business

Negative reviews certainly come at a cost. They damage your online reputation and lower your star rating. Too many bad reviews will cause customers to choose a competitor with a better online reputation. But, there's good news too!

The Bad News About Bad Reviews:

- Negative reviews cause four out of five customers to reverse their purchase decisions⁷
- One bad Yelp review can cost your business 30 customers⁸
- Bad Google reviews can cause you to lose 70 percent of customers⁹

The Good News About Bad Reviews

As it turns out, negative reviews aren't the end of the world. What really matters is how you handle them:

- A study found that when businesses respond to negative reviews and fix the problem, the customer is 70 percent more likely to return¹⁰
- Another study found that 90 percent of people will give you a second chance if you resolve the problem¹¹



How to Build Your Best Online Reputation

Now it's time to start building your online reputation. We'll use the facts we just learned to establish, build, improve and maintain your business's online reputation and review strategy.

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Building and Managing Your Business's Online Reputation

1. Audit your online reputation.

Start here: Let's start with the most popular places people can review your business:

- Google
- Yelp
- Facebook
- BBB
- Manta

Once you've found your business on these pages, claim the listing if you haven't already and follow the below steps to find your business across other review sites. Once you have a list of sites to work on, ask yourself the questions listed a couple steps down.

Next step: Google your business and see what people are saying about you.

You should probably just start with “[business name] reviews.”

Find all the websites you're listed on and answer the below questions for each. You will also want to check industry-specific sites like TripAdvisor, The Knot, UrbanSpoon, Cars.com, Angie's List, HealthGrades, Zillow, etc.

If you're not sure which industry-specific review platforms are the most important, you can search Google for “[industry] [location] reviews.” Think “plumber Columbus Ohio reviews.”

Prominent websites will show up in the search results.

Almost done: Ask yourself the following questions:



Is your star rating positive?

If you have a 1-2 star rating across directories, there could be a bigger problem. We'll get into exactly why people leave negative reviews in a bit, but for now we need to start burying those negatives with new positive reviews.

Do you have enough reviews, and are they recent?

If not, make a note of the things you need to work on. You'll want to check your Google listing as well as your listing on the most popular review websites and local listing pages.

What's the general sentiment from customers?

If it's negative, can you use this feedback to improve your business? If it's positive, let's keep up that momentum and start getting more positive reviews so that you constantly have new, relevant reviews for potential customers to read.

Complete your audit: Find the top 3-5 sites that need the most work and start there. Keep track of your star rating and the general sentiment of your reviews so that you can track your improvement.

2. Start getting new reviews.

Even if your online reputation is looking great and you've got plenty of reviews, you'll want to continue to get new reviews, since they are only relevant up to three months ago.

And, if you don't have enough reviews, you'll need to focus on this step as well.



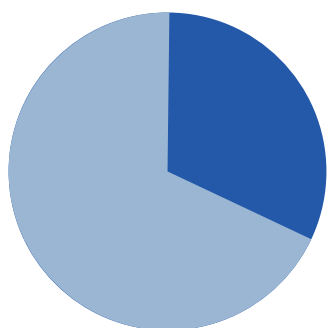
Here's how to get started:

Start here: You've identified the important review platforms where you need more reviews or an improvement in your star rating. (Remember that getting new positive reviews will also help improve your star rating.)

Next step: Write up an email and/or text message template that allows you to ask customers for reviews on the websites you're focusing on for now.

Use what you already have: If you have a list of customer email addresses or phone numbers, use those to start asking for reviews. Depending on the size of your list, you should break this into small segments and ask each segment for reviews weekly or monthly.

Your ongoing reputation management plan: Begin or continue collecting customer email addresses or phone numbers so you can keep asking for and receiving new reviews! This probably sounds like a hassle and like you might annoy your customers, but as it turns out, 70 percent of people would leave a review if you just asked.



70% of people would leave a review if you just ask.

I know this all sounds like a lot, so if you don't have the time to manage your online reviews, [we have a platform called Renown](#) that can do all this for you.

3. Take advantage of the power of review marketing.

Getting new reviews shouldn't be the end. Make the most of your positive reviews by sharing them on your website, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or anywhere potential customers will see your business.

4. Monitor your online reputation.

Now that you're working on your online reputation, you should also monitor what people are saying about you. Here are a few ways to do this:

Set up a Google Alert

Go to <https://www.google.com/alerts> to set up an alert for your business. Just type in your business name (add your location if necessary) and you'll get an email when Google finds a mention of your business on the Internet.

Find Out When Someone Complains About Your Business

Use [this complaint search](#) to find out when someone complains about your business. You should probably check back weekly to make sure there are no new complaints.

Monitor Your Social Mentions

Pay attention to your social media profiles and reply to customer messages and comments quickly. You can also keep track of social mentions of your business using a tool like socialmention to find when and where your business was mentioned across social media.

5. Reply to your reviews.

Customers expect a response from your business within a week, so you need to reply to your business's reviews. Make sure to reply to all your negative and neutral reviews as well as some of the positives.

Here's how to get started:

How to Respond to Positive Reviews

Start by thanking the customer. Tell them you're glad they had a great experience with your business.

Don't make it all about you, but do use this as a chance to promote new specials or let them know if you have new products or services. "Did you know we just revamped our customer loyalty program? Come in and get your new loyalty card soon!"

Use keywords. This will make it more likely for the review to show up in search results. Insert relevant keywords and your business's name. "Thanks for choosing Steve's French Bistro! We're glad to hear you enjoyed our croissants and rustic French décor."

Don't go crazy with your keywords, though. Mentioning your business name and industry once should be plenty, and stuffing too many keywords into your response will make it look like spam.

Get some extra marketing power out of this review by sharing it on



your website and social media. (P.S. Renown, our review marketing platform can do this for you!)

How to Respond to Neutral Reviews

Start by thanking the customer for their review. Thanking someone for feedback, even neutral or negative feedback, is always a good place to start. Let them know you appreciate their comments and you use them as a chance to improve your business.

Repeat the positive aspects of the review. “Thanks so much for your feedback! We’re glad to hear you enjoyed your breakfast sandwich.”

Apologize for or explain any negatives. “Our prices are a little higher because we pay our servers a living wage so that they don’t have to depend on tips!”

Invite them back. “We hope to see you again.” Or take it offline. “If you’d like to discuss how we could’ve made your experience better, please call or email us. We look forward to hearing from you!”



How to Respond to Negative Reviews

Before you start replying to bad reviews of your business, you need to know why people leave negative reviews in the first place.

Let’s look at the facts.

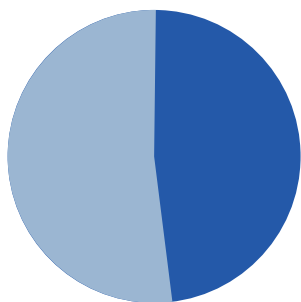
A study found that these are the reasons that unhappy customers leave negative reviews:¹²

- They want you to say sorry
- They want to save other consumers from bad experiences
- They want you to be more honest (remember what we said about them craving transparency)
- They want financial reimbursement
- They want revenge and they know it will harm your online reputation

Now it’s time to reply to negative reviews. Follow these steps:

Calm down first. Never reply when you’re still angry, because you may say something you

don't really mean if you're emotional when you reply. Walk away from the computer for a few minutes. Don't wait too long, though; 52 percent of consumers expect a response within seven days.¹³



52% of consumers expect a response within seven days.¹³

Remember why you're replying. You want to win back the customer and show other consumers you care enough to make things right.

Apologize, even if it isn't your fault. "I'm sorry you had a less than stellar experience." Or, "Whoops, we're sorry! Looks like you caught us on a bad day."

Remind the reviewer (and anyone else who's reading) that this experience is unusual. "We usually get food out to our tables within 30 minutes!" Or, "Our sales assistants usually receive compliments on their excellent customer service skills."

Repeat the positives. Again, if there are any positive comments in the review, repeat those so that you can reinforce the idea that your business is usually on top of things.



Take it offline or offer to make it right. Ask the reviewer to email, call or visit your business so you can fix the problem. Offer a coupon or discount for their next purchase. Don't try to bribe them for a better review but do genuinely try to make things right.

Finally, you'll want to bury this negative review by getting new positive reviews.

Remember that you can't please everyone. Some unhappy customers just won't return to your business, but that's okay. Focus on building better relationships with happy customers.

Sources

.....

One

<https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey/#Q13>

Two

<https://www.revlocal.com/blog/review-and-reputation-management/how-do-positive--negative-reviews-help--hurt-your-sales>

Three

<https://searchengineland.com/88-consumers-trust-online-reviews-much-personal-recommendations-195803>

Four

<https://moneyish.com/ish/this-is-exactly-how-many-reviews-it-takes-to-get-someone-to-buy-something/>

Five

<https://www.revlocal.com/blog/reviews/how-much-are-online-reviews-actually-worth->

Six

<https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/review-search-click-through-study/>

Seven

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/281600>

Eight

<https://moz.com/blog/new-data-reveals-67-of-consumers-are-influenced-by-online-reviews>

Nine

<https://moz.com/blog/new-data-reveals-67-of-consumers-are-influenced-by-online-reviews>

Ten

<https://www.helpscout.net/75-customer-service-facts-quotes-statistics/>

Eleven

<https://corra.com/roasted-reputations/>

Twelve

<https://www.revlocal.com/blog/review-and-reputation-management/why-do-unhappy-customers-leave-negative-reviews>

Thirteen

<https://www.socialmediatoday.com/marketing/52-customers-expect-your-brand-respond-their-reviews>

For more digital marketing tips and trends
visit our always up-to-date blog.

<https://www.revlocal.com/blog>

Contact us!

800-456-7470

