



HubSpot G2

The Ultimate Guide to Customer Reviews and Tactics

FROM CRISIS COMMUNICATION TO DELIGHT



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The Ultimate Guide to Customer Reviews and Tactics

FROM CRISIS COMMUNICATION TO DELIGHT

You're in the market for a new marketing automation tool to launch your team's email strategy to the next level. You search for 'best marketing automation tool' on Google and click on the first result. 'This looks great!' you think to yourself as you eagerly charge \$10,000 for a yearly subscription on your company credit card.

When's the last time you made a purchasing decision for your business?

Does this sound like the process you went through?

Of course not.

The Evolution of the B2B Buying Journey

Nearly 95% of shoppers read online reviews before making a purchase

(Spiegel Research Center, 2017)

Online customer reviews are becoming one of the most powerful tools for marketers while promoting their product or service. In fact, 95 percent of consumers read online reviews before making a buying decision in 2017. Meanwhile, 85 percent will trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations. That being said, it's important for businesses to leverage customer feedback, both good and bad, to build their brands and stand out from the crowd.

In order to fully take advantage of the power of reviews to boost your brand, you must be fully invested and engaged in what your customers are saying about your product or service. Did they love your product? Great! Thank them for their loyalty. Were they dissatisfied with your service? Check back in with them and learn where things went wrong.

With the rise of social media marketing and online marketplaces, consumers have become more informed and empowered than ever before. There is a plethora of information available with the click of a button. A quick Google search and the answer you need is likely in the top five results. All of this begs the question—why would we ever spend our money on something about which we're not entirely sure?

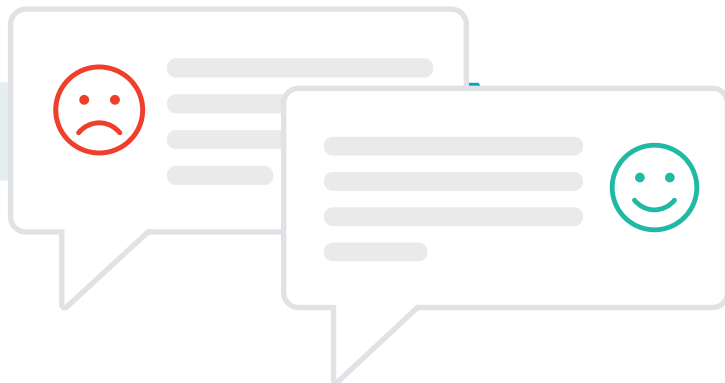
The answer is simple. We shouldn't.

▶ The Importance of Responding to Customer Reviews

Responding to reviews is an important step to take toward fostering trust with your customers. A heartfelt, well-written response coming from a real employee can humanize a brand much more than just a “like” or a “share.”

Additionally, consumers are relying on it.

ReviewTrackers found that 52 percent of customers expect to hear back from brands within seven days of writing an online review—that goes for negatives and positives.



It's easy to scroll past the positives and only do damage control on the negatives. That said, it's also tempting to just thank your positive reviewers in an attempt to brush the negatives under the rug.

However, you'll pretty quickly find that responding to reviews requires balance. You'll want to select both positives and negatives to get the most return. It is undoubtedly a time investment, but if you spend just an hour or two per week, you'll certainly reap the rewards.

There are a few general tips you'll want to keep in mind, regardless of if the review is positive or negative.

The first one is to be prompt. We mentioned that 52 percent of customers expect to hear back within seven days, but the sooner, the better. In fact, seven days is an absolute maximum. Try to aim for one-to-four days, and if you get a bit behind, know you'll at least have that three-day buffer.

Additionally, be mindful of who is responding. Pay close attention to the aspects specifically highlighted in the review. Were they mentioning a speedy implementation time for a given software product? If so, the VP of customer success would be a great choice to thank them! If somebody complains about the slow service at a restaurant, a manager or owner should probably step in to handle the feedback. As a general rule of thumb, a response from an executive or owner will likely mean more to a reviewer than a response from an entry-level employee.

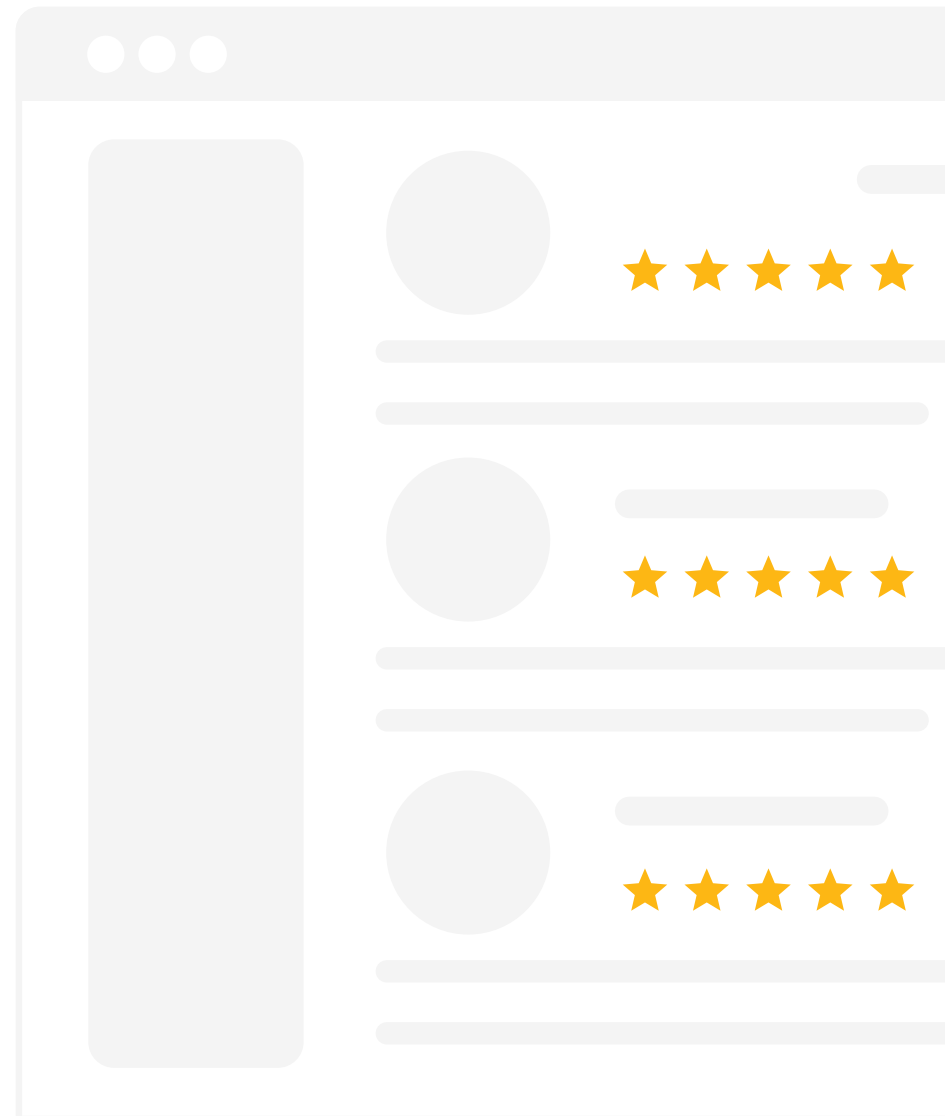
Responding to negative customer reviews

72% of B2B buyers say negative reviews give depth and insight into a product

(G2 Crowd and Heinz Marketing, 2017)

How customers perceive the quality of your product or service—and, more importantly, the quality of your customer relationship—is an important driver of business success.

With that, here are 10 tips on how to respond to negative customer reviews to help you take your business to the next level.



Customer Review ★ TIP #1

Regardless of how bad or untrue a negative review is, never respond in an aggressive or confrontational manner. Your reviews are in the public eye and so are your responses, make sure they are truthful and show that you genuinely care about reaching a resolution. Avoid getting into a debate. Bad reviews with good response on your part can show that you are a great company as you try to fix things if problems arise. A bad review may not be that bad after all.



Damien Buxton,

Director at [Midas Creative](#)

Customer Review ★ TIP #2

Typically, only people who care provide feedback of any kind. Addressing negative feedback can often be the best way to turn a complaining customer into a loyal customer.

People leaving negative reviews want to be heard and want their issue resolved. As a brand, we may never learn about certain issues unless a customer tells us.

This week, a customer posted a Facebook comment that one of our webinar forms was not working properly. While we were working to fix this issue, we shared this learning with our Customer Care team in case they received additional queries on the same topic. It turns out, Customer Care had already received a handful of calls on this. We investigated further and found the problem was a bug that only Android mobile device users would experience under a rare circumstance. Yet, with hundreds of thousands of users, several customers could have been impacted. This negative feedback enabled us to find the issue and fix it. We thanked the customer publicly on Facebook, and they were appreciative. Because of this dialogue, our product is now better, and we have a customer (and many followers) who knows we take their feedback seriously.



Brett Rudy,

Senior Director of Marketing, [Constant Therapy](#)

Customer Review ★ TIP #3

RESPOND! Don't ignore the comment, don't delete the comment, and don't hide the comment; respond to the comment!

Ignoring the comment will only make your company look worse to the negative reviewer as well as anybody who might stumble upon your page in the future. Deleting or hiding the comment is another big no-no. When a negative comment is written, a lot of times the negative reviewer can and will screenshot it, just in case the company decides to delete it. If it's deleted, get ready for the screenshot of the negative review to be posted along with the comment that "They deleted my negative review!" Talk about bad press.



Lauren Crain,

Digital Marketer, [Health Labs](#)

Customer Review ★ TIP #4

You should always respond to negative reviews, but be sure to tread lightly. There are three steps to getting it right. First, listen. Yes, it might be painful, but don't disregard the feedback. Second, apologize. This simple gesture can go further than you might think. Most customers understand that everyone has a bad day.

Third, show how you'll solve the problem. If you respond with an attempt to make things right, other customers are likely to keep an open mind about the situation. Moreover, research shows that up to 70% of complaining customers will use your business again if you resolve their concerns.



Brad Plothow,

VP of Brand and Communications, [Womply](#)

Customer Review ★ TIP #5

Truly listen to what they're saying. - Look beyond the angry words and/or sentiment and find out what the core problem is.

Offer to make things right. - Whether it's a gift card to recover cost of a poorly delivered meal or a free stay at a bed & breakfast - you'll spend a lot less money trying to earn that customer/client back than you would trying to acquire a new customer. So if it costs you a little more than you'd want to spend and you think this is a customer/client you can win back, that's OK. It's also OK to realize that you might not be the right fit for them, and you can still apologize, offer to refund the bill and move on. Even the best companies can't win them all over. Be authentic & polite. No reason to get in a shouting match or a finger pointing session in your review threads.

A lot of our clients will publicly apologize to the review, offer to make it right and then have the customer/client email them for more information. This immediately takes the conversation out of the public eye. But anyone who were to see the review would notice that the company took the time to respond and make things right.



John Young,

Shout It Out Design, LLC

Customer Review ★ TIP #6

Think of your response not as a conversation but as marketing for every other customer that is going to read it. You should not get into the details but instead should concentrate on making your company look as professional as possible.

We use a system called TAT. Thank the customer for letting you know there was a problem. Apologize for what happened and offer them a solution.. Finally, thank them again for giving you the opportunity to resolve their issue.

We can often get a consumer to remove a negative review altogether after several weeks have passed and they cooled off. We contact them directly and let them know it has been bothering us that we let them down and we offer them a free redo service. We have been successful more than 50% of the time with this technique.



Derek Christian, Handyman Connection

Customer Review ★ TIP #7

Say thanks. No matter the review, the reason you have reviews in the first place is to get direct feedback from the people who matter most—your customer! Even a bad review should be appreciated because it should be a springboard for growth within your company. Good feedback is great, but negative feedback is crucial.

Ask. Since whoever it was already left their (opinionated) review, there's a good chance they have an idea of how you can, and should, be better. Why not just ask them? (Maybe do this via a private message, in case you don't decide to go ahead with their suggestion, you don't want everyone seeing that you ignored a customer).

Be real. Part of the ability to communicate directly with your customer is that they get to see that you're a real person, not just a product. Leave out all the industry jargon and talk to them like you would a real person - with empathy and solutions!



Nate Masterson, *Maple Holistics*

Customer Review ★ TIP #8

When a disaster occurs, like a terrible review or social media shaming that goes viral, your management and employees are on the front lines of customer anger and fury. The first thing you want to do is prepare for a bad review or being shamed on social media is to prepare a crisis management plan. You want to be prepared, in advance, so your response will be planned and not executed on the fly.

One of the best ways business owners can protect themselves from negative reviews and social media shaming is offer an immediate public apology. There can be no delay. Right or wrong; the customer always 'thinks' they are right. **Apologize.**

Try contacting those making the negative claim, or comment, personally, as soon as you can, not just on social media, but by phone, or email. It's hard to make a real fix on social media. It's just not realistic to think you can make a real fix on social media. Reaching out by phone or e-mail is still the best way to truly fix a bad situation.

More business is lost due to poor service and poor treatment than poor product. How your business reacts in a crisis management situation can result in lost business and continuous viral shaming on social media. And the best way to prepare for a negative review or major crisis is to train your employees, in advance, how to handle the situation. It's crucial that small business owners and managers make sure their employees are trained in advance, for how to respond when a crisis strikes. Otherwise, it's highly likely a crisis can turn into an even larger disaster.

Responding poorly to negative comments or reacting negatively to social media shaming will backfire. Businesses spend their valued marketing dollars trying to convince us to buy their products, but if customer contact is not handled just right you will not only lose a customer forever.



Nancy Friedman,

Crisis Management Expert, [Nancy Friedman](#)

Customer Review ★ TIP #9

The best way to respond to a negative review, whether delivered on a review site or in a tweet or comment, is for a brand to quickly apologize for the experience and to provide their support email address, telling the reviewer that they'll do whatever they can to resolve the situation.

I often see businesses on Yelp shaming customers for their negative reviews or even revealing private information about the situation to provide context. Neither of these strategies are effective.

Comment readers may avoid a brand because of the drama they witnessed in the review section or they might not like the brand's nasty approach to conflict. At all costs, brands should try to hold the high ground by promising to resolve negative experiences and attempting to turn around poor reviews.



Nicolas Straut, SEO Associate, [Fundera](#)

Customer Review ★ TIP #10

Respond promptly. The time you have to respond depends on the platform. For example, if the negative review was posted on Twitter, you should respond within minutes - for Google, your response should be posted within days. Posting a timely reply shows your customers (and others that read your response) that you respect them and are committed to making things right.

Solve the customer's problem. Don't just respond to their review. Follow up with that customer and work out a solution. Then post a follow up response briefly explaining the steps you are taking to correct the issue. Thank the customer for sharing their feedback. They are taking the time and effort to provide valuable information about a poor experience with your brand that you might not find out about otherwise. As the business owner, you would want to know this in order to make sure this situation does not happen to other customers.

Do not mention your company by name in your response. You want to avoid saying anything in your response that helps the negative review show up in online search results.



Malcolm Stone

Founder/Principal, [ReviewIgnite](#)

When to not respond to online reviews

Occasionally, you'll see a negative review, do some investigating, and realize that what's written isn't true. Sometimes, a reviewer will complain about something that was just out of your control.

What should you do in these situations?

The best response is none at all. If you are certain that a review is fake or unwarranted, ignore it and spend your time on the reviews that deserve a response. If a reviewer is especially heated or specifically calling out an employee, you may want to stand your ground and respond. If you do decide to go that route, be sure to remain professional. When it comes down to it, this is your reputation at risk, not theirs. A quick response explaining your side of the story is all this situation needs. Responding to reviews is essential, but like everything, there are certain ways to go about it. These best practices should ensure you're getting the most out of your time.



Find out more
about reviews at

G2 Crowd

Find out more about keeping
a human relationship with
your customers, understanding
their needs, and improving
their experience

HubSpot's Service Hub