



A helpful guide:

Responding to online reviews

Practical tools, checklists, and templates to engage with your customers.

Responding:

Online reviews

Consumers search for online reviews for reassurance and greater confidence in their buying decision. Online reviews are extremely influential: 59 percent of consumers trust online reviews as much as recommendations from their friends¹.

Embracing and encouraging customer reviews can seem a little daunting, especially with the prospect of attracting negative reviews. But it doesn't need to be. More consumers take the time to write positive reviews (49%) than negative (34%)¹.

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When managed effectively, negative reviews can actually have a positive impact on your online reputation, and ultimately, your sales.

There are other factors that make review management challenging, including managing reviews from different sources and the consistency and timing of responses.

This guide will help you tackle these challenges and give you practical tools and steps that you can implement to encourage more customers to visit your site and walk through your door.

With this guide, you will discover:

- How to approach a local review management strategy to leverage key benefits.
- Templates to follow that help you and your team craft an effective reply to both positive and negative reviews.
- Checklists to successfully assess, analyze, and react to a potentially damaging review.
- Easy steps to streamline your internal processes.

1. [ReportLinker Insight](#)

Benefits:

Managing online reviews



- 1. Be noticed by potential customers.** Responses to positive reviews show those prospects how important your customers are to you. Replies to negative reviews show potential customers you care about their feedback.
- 2. Improve your SEO.** A third of consumers use search engines when looking for online reviews. Customer engagement from a business owner is considered a high SEO ranking factor.
- 3. Give customers a reason to return.** Insert a marketing message to positive reviews to entice those customers to return. For negative reviews, you can make an offer for customers to contact you for a special to encourage them back to your business.
- 4. Build strong customer relationships.** Responding to your reviews shows you listen to your customers, which is part of successful customer relations.
- 5. Build valuable knowledge.** Managing reviews enables you to see patterns that can alert you to complaints and concerns about your business before they become a bigger issue.
- 6. Protect your brand identity.** Proactively addressing reviews gives you more control of your brand reputation. You can clear up misconceptions about your establishment that are shared online.

Template:

Responding to a positive review

Make the most of positive reviews by personally responding. This will encourage current customers to keep returning and potentially attract new ones. Responding to online reviews doesn't need to be time consuming. You can create a brief, friendly and individual response by following these simple steps:

Comment:

1. Start with the customer's name to engage on a personal level.
2. Express your gratitude.
3. Include your business name and keywords for SEO purposes.
4. Add a little marketing to your response.
5. Give immediate value or insider knowledge.
6. Compliment the customer and ask them to spread the word.
7. End on a positive, friendly note.

Response:

"Hi, Kate."

"Thanks for taking the time to write this great review!"

"This made our day here at Mayfair House Hotel. We take great pride in providing luxury accommodations to our guests."

"Did you know we have recently opened our heavenly RockResorts Spa?"

"Great to hear that you will come back next winter. Don't forget to make the most of our 'Buy 3 Nights, Get a 4th Night Free' offer."

"We are always happy to have guests like you, so feel free to share your experience and this offer with your friends and family."

"We look forward to welcoming you back again soon!"

Template:

Responding to negative reviews

It's essential to respond to negative reviews as quickly as possible. While emotions can be high, it's important to respond professionally and sincerely with the offer of a solution. Never forget how your response may be perceived by passing traffic, namely your potential customers.

Comment:

1. Start with the customer's name to show they are important to you
2. Apologize for their experience.
3. Show empathy.
4. Be honest.
5. Be accountable.
6. Offer a pragmatic solution, putting the next step in the customer's hands.
7. End on a positive, human note.

Response:

"Hi, Kate."

"First of all, my sincerest apologies for your experience."

"This must have been extremely frustrating."

"It sounds like we dropped the ball there."

"I want to make sure that we find a solution that works for you."

"Please send your booking code to us at help@ourbusiness.com and we will organize a refund within the next 1-2 business days."

"Thank you, and be assured we will do everything we can to make sure your next stay at Mayfield House Hotel is a great one."

Checklist:

What to do if things turn ugly

Despite your best efforts, some negative reviewers can't be placated. Further inaction with these reviewers may fuel more negativity. You need to assess the incident in order to ascertain whether it's productive to respond or refrain from making a comment. In many cases, you can escalate the incident appropriately and offer a resolution. However, there are some cases when you need to stay level-headed and refrain from responding.

Confrontation of any kind is not a pleasant experience. Learn from the incident, monitor trends, and address patterns so you can minimize future problems. Share any findings with your team.



Initial assessment

We've put together the following questions and comments to help you reach the right conclusion on a negative review.

Is there any truth in the review or comment?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is it related to a specific issue or a general complaint?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have, or can you find, a helpful answer?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Can you correct or clarify a misconception?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is it generating traction from other consumers who see the post?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Checklist:

What to do if things turn ugly



When to respond

As a general rule, it's advisable to respond to a negative review if you can offer the following:

- ☐ Express empathy
- ☐ Apologize for their frustration
- ☐ Provide a solution or fix
- ☐ Gently clarify a misconception
- ☐ Assure them you care and are escalating their issue
- ☐ Humanize yourself and your company
- ☐ Divert further negative comments by inviting the reviewer to take the topic offline



When to refrain

You need to spot the occasions when replying will cause more problems than benefits:

- ☐ The attacks are simply for the sake of it. You cannot offer clarity, a solution, or an apology. In this case you could always use a simple boilerplate to express your regrets and move on.
- ☐ A thread has already gone off the rails and posting would be counterproductive or impact your brand adversely.
- ☐ You have already offered clarity, a solution, or an apology and the customer is not showing any signs of positive engagement.
- ☐ The review is genuinely threatening or violates the platform terms of service. In this case you may wish to report it or even contact the authorities.
- ☐ You find yourself feeling hot-headed and wanting to be defensive or score points. Remember, the world is watching!

Conclusion:

Top 10 takeaways in responding to online reviews

1. Respond to all feedback, both positive and negative.
2. Craft a personal response (you can use a template).
3. Take the conversation offline if it continues beyond one reply.
4. Gain customer insights through your reviews.
5. Monitor patterns and trends of feedback.
6. Make and enforce a strategy to monitor your reviews.
7. Establish brand guidelines and monitor results.
8. Have an escalation process and educate team members.
9. Respond quickly and regularly to attract the attention of search engines.
10. Respond with unique replies for SEO purposes.