

# Responding to Online Reviews: The Do's and Don'ts



By Mandy Pravda, owner of Mane Productions

Your online reputation depends not only on what you say, but also how you respond to what others say about you.

Google and Tripadvisor reviews are an amazing tool for building trust and user generated content.

Almost all consumers read online reviews to determine the quality of a local business while planning their activities and vacations.

The reviews they find—or don't find—can have a direct and immediate impact on your business.

Positive reviews build trust. A one-star increase in your online rating can increase revenue by five to nine per cent. One negative comment can cost you up to 30 customers, depending on how you respond.

Here are tips showing how you can be prepared, be interactive and be 5-Star.

## GETTING GOOD REVIEWS

- Negative reviews are easy to get. Positive reviews require work.
- Personally ask visitors or customers how their experience was as they are leaving, then send an email survey with space for comments.
- Asking in person can get you that positive review and help avoid a negative one.
- Asking for feedback makes customers feel heard. It may keep them from publicly leaving a review where you may or may not have control of the conversation.
- Email marketing is a very powerful tool to gain reviews and encourage repeat customers.
- Every customer should be asked to leave a review with a direct link to your Google review listing.

## WHY REVIEWS MATTER

### The impact:

- 91% of consumers regularly read online reviews
- Positive reviews lead to increased sales
- Build credibility and trust
- On-line insights
- Reveal your best side
- Recruitment—staff and customers

### Who is leaving reviews:

- Industry Reviews
- Customer Reviews
- Forums
- Bloggers
- Current and Ex-employees

### Where reviews come from:

- Everyone has an opinion and today they are sharing them online.

### On which platforms should you be active?

- All of them: Google Business, Tripadvisor, Expedia, Tourism Saskatchewan, Yelp, and affiliates to your business.
- Consider where your customers visit online to find what they need and what you offer.
- Yelp is primarily for restaurants.

### Where are consumers sharing their reviews?

- Everywhere: Google Business, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, Yelp, Tripadvisor, TikTok and more.



## DO'S AND DON'TS

### Don't

- Don't ignore it. Ignoring a negative review is just as bad as giving a foul-mouthed response.
- Don't get defensive. Your business is your baby, an extension of yourself. However, this is business, and the review is one person's perception.
- Don't get pulled into an online slinging match.
- Don't discuss personality traits— especially negative ones. You can say, "You have a fabulous attitude." But saying, "Your attitude isn't great" focuses on personality, not performance.

### Do

- Acknowledge and apologize—respond with empathy and understanding.
- Address the customer by name.
- Personalize your responses.
- Take responsibility—even if it's not your fault.
- Tactfully promote your business' strengths in your reply.
- Be authentic and make real connections, show gratitude.
- Take it outside—or in this case offline.
- Hide bad reviews... by encouraging more reviews!

## MONITORING ONLINE PRESENCE: THE ACTION "DO" LIST

- Reviews: monitor, request, respond, share.
- Build and share surveys: report the results, and follow up on any negative feedback to resolve issues.
- Send a follow up email once they fill out the survey that encourages them to leave you an online review on your Google Account.
- Business listings: audit and correct.
- Social Media: monitor, publish, advertise.
- Operational Insights: diagnose and improve.
- Enterprise reporting: CEO and employee benchmarks—create internal goals for gaining followers, reviews, email signups.

## GET MORE POSITIVE REVIEWS AND MENTIONS

- Share your Google Business review link through: social media, referral marketing, SEO, email marketing, affiliate marketing, mobile advertising, microblog, pay-per-click.
- Advertise at your in-person tills, store fronts, and high traffic areas. Run an in-store "enter to win" contest for leaving a positive review!



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Founded in 2009, Mane Productions is a national award-winning marketing firm and event management company focused on online marketing, tourism business development and community building. Mandy Pravda leads and creates many projects on an international scale for Saskatchewan and beyond.

- Plan a strategy to address negative and positive comments. Always respond: have auto responses ready; be proactive instead of reactive (encourage a private conversation).

## THREE STEPS TO ENCOURAGE CUSTOMER REVIEWS

1. Engage the reviewer
  - Ask for reviews in person
  - Ask for review via email
  - Monthly customer feedback request emails
  - Post on social media, asking for reviews
2. Use reviews as management/improvement tools
  - Good reviews—accolades, goal setting
  - Negative reviews—staff training, policy issues
3. Harvest user-generated content
  - Encourage reviews and publish or highlight them in your marketing material

## FIVE TIPS TO INCREASE YOUR POSITIVE REVIEWS

1. Offer an incentive to all customers who review you
2. Reward employees who gather reviews
3. Let unhappy customers vent before leaving your business
4. Simply talk to your customers
5. Dominate your social media conversations

## CONCLUSION

- Consumers control conversations—business brands are no longer exclusively what they say they are. Today, brands are largely defined by consumers.
- Monitoring your reputation isn't enough—businesses need to know what their customers are saying, how to manage the information and how to build their reputation.
- Social media isn't just about followers and likes—it can be used to generate leads and conduct customer service to gain return on investment. Social media communicates your brand and story. It shows you are active and engaging.
- Reviews are free advertising.
- Reviews improve SEO (Search Engine Optimization).
- Reviews are socially recommended (word of mouth).
- Reviews provide insight to new customers.
- Reviews build relationships and brand.

