

Google, Yelp, Amazon, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Twitter etc..etc and every other social platform out there.

There is no denying the fact that today's culture thrives practically on [online reviews](#).

The list of sites is endless with a new platform or site coming up every other day.

Nothing is hidden online, the business owner cannot hide anymore, public shaming to gleaming positive reviews are the order of the day, more power to the customer yay!! - they finally get to decide where they will spend their money.



It is not an exaggeration to say that regardless of the type of business, a whopping 97% of the buying decisions are influenced by online reviews.

So, there you have it, Does your ability to generate online reviews have to do with your business success?

Yes, intact reviews can really make or break or your business.

Irrespective of whether you're a business owner, a social media marketer, a freelancing tech guru, or an e-commerce store or any other online business, you can only hope to amplify your [search engine rankings](#), regardless generating online reviews is central to your success.

So, how can you encourage consumers to write positive reviews? What is the process to generate an online review in general? and how to handle a negative customer review?

Manage your online places where you can expect to be reviewed

Customers need to be aware of a place for them to post reviews.

For example, if you want to generate positive reviews on Yelp (the most authoritative review site), you need to make sure that your business has a profile there.

A review site like Yelp requires you to 'claim' your business and then will allow for online reviews to be shown in search engines. Now, when customers search for your business you can be assured that they will also see your Yelp reviews.

Remember, just because you haven't claimed your Yelp listing you cannot get a negative review, many business owners don't know that customers can write a review for a business on Yelp and other sites even if they aren't claimed or managed.

Asking your customers to write reviews for you is absolutely essential.

Market research conducted by BrightLocal suggests that 72% of the people use reviews as part of their decision process, and 30% decide solely based on reviews on websites like Google, Yelp, etc. In a recent event for their partners, Google provided that 88% of patients use a Google search to find a business and about 30% just search directly on a review site.



So, how do you ask your customers to write reviews for your business?

Send an email, it really is that simple. You can easily incorporate the review request in your existing email sequence that you hopefully send out to new customers. This email can be short and sweet.

In fact, Google encourages you to ask your customers for reviews. The only exception being,

you cannot directly pay a customer to write a review for you.

Here is how to handle that issue:

1. Enter them into a drawing and announce the winner, many customers will take advantage of such an offer to save a sizable amount on a new future purchase. You might actually come out with a lot more verified reviews and also increase your sales more than you previously imagined.
2. Ask for a review within 3-5 days after they become a customer. Research has shown that newer customers appreciate such requests and are more apt to review favorably.
3. Make sure you provide a link for the customer to leave a review. For example: Put a link to your Yelp profile in the email and make it easy for them to just have to click on it to write the review. You can do the same for Google and other platforms.
4. Test your emails just like you would A/B test your landing pages. Send out a couple of variations and see which ones perform better and which ones were the best performing emails.
5. Another option is to generate case studies by directly reaching out to customers and offer them to become a case study. In many cases, case studies can be much more powerful than just online reviews. Take a look at the [case studies section on Hubspot](#).

Case studies are very import since they show prospective customers who match your buyer persona that your offering can work for them.

Note that many review sites do not encourage asking customers for reviews so be sure to check the policies accordingly, some sites may even remove your reviews if it comes to light that you are soliciting them actively, hence the best tactic would be to tie the incentive back to a future product purchase or additional products that you offer and offer a sizable discount.

Since you have now tied the incentive to the sale of the product rather than the review you are fine, the review now becomes a by-product of the sale.

The other way is to not mention the incentive at all, just show them where they can leave a review and hammer on the topic of customer satisfaction so that you can make sure their concerns are addressed.



Of course, this should not replace customer service for your product and neither should the customer be deterred from contacting you first, but just leaving a place for them to leave a review is another way of not violating certain policies for platforms that have these restrictions.

Don't worry about losing money on future sales of the product, these reviews are worth their weight in gold and act as social proof that can drive a lot of sales your way.

Sales that you'll just have to close without having to engage in selling.

When people see that a business has a lot of positive reviews, they will feel comfortable engaging with your product or company, they might even consider becoming a customer themselves.

How To Deal With Negative Reviews

There is always a side to asking for something, you might just get it, right? what happens when you do get the review but it is a negative one?

There is an app for that..just kidding...there is a way.

First off, many businesses get afraid of the negative review and just want it to go away, that is the most common reaction. When you start to consider the negative review as an opportunity to improve, it suddenly is no longer negative.

The best thing to do with negative reviews is: Expect to receive them.

Let's face it, if you have been in the business for a while and have dealt with customers, sure there will be a couple of disgruntled ones, it's not having a few scattered and disgruntled customers, it's having a lot of them.

Plus, today's consumers are savvy, many know and understand that if a business has a solid positive overall reputation a few negative reviews are expected. What matters is, how do you handle negative reviews.

When you do see a negative review, it requires a few important decisions and steps to take

So, what are these steps and decisions?

First, you need to carefully read the review and understand what is being said in the review.

Objectivity is the key here - put aside feelings and see if there is anything within the online

review that could actually be truthful.

This is not an easy thing to do, but you must do it if long term success is your goal as a business owner.

Negative reviews are helpful in highlighting a key issue within the nature of the business, product or service.

The key is to not fail to acknowledge what is being mentioned in the negative review, failure to do that can result in other people feeling the same issue and you could end up with a lot more negative reviews.

So be careful with how the negative review gets handled.

Once you acknowledge their comments, provide them assurance of looking into the matter and follow through.

Make sure that you do not get into an argument with the customer, once something is online, it is there for all to see and can rarely be removed.

Over 60% of people who have unpleasant feelings will end up writing a bad review and when other customers see this review they will view your business negatively, thus, aim for a professional and objective response.

Make sure that you leave your comment on the same review that the customer reviewed your business on. Thank them for bringing the issue to your attention and follow through.

Once you have done the necessary research, respond back objectively to what is being said without being pointy at the customer even if they were in the wrong.

Offer to meet them in person or engage in an email conversation with them or follow up with

a phone call to explain the situation.

Once you have done the follow up with the customer and closed the status, don't ask the customer to remove the review.

Instead, go back and add a detailed comment on what you did to resolve the issue and the customer's feedback on the same.

Voila, you have turned a negative review into a gleaming positive recommendation of appreciation.

You have not only shown that your business is timely and responsive but have proven to everyone else that you care, you care about your customers, about your product. It goes a long way to cement this up as great customer service.

You have just built a load of trust in everyone's mind who comes across this example.

Promptness is the key here, if you can display prompt responses, feedback and provide accurate information, your business does not lose any standing, you tend to gain even from negative reviews.

Another thing to consider is that people might not leave reviews on your social platforms but might leave it on platforms or other blogs that you are not even aware of. So how do you handle that?

[Google Alerts](#) is one great way to catch phrases of mentions about your product or brand, there are also a lot of social listening tools like social mention etc that can catch mentions

about your brand, company or product and alert you when something matching comes up or is mentioned somewhere.

Make sure to follow the same framework above when handling these issues. Some sites might not allow you to respond to negative reviews without creating an account on them, for the sake of your reputation, it is advisable to comply and respond adequately and follow through.

Make your best efforts to address the customer issue and try to help the customer along, do whatever you can and display the same in your response.

If the customer does not respond, you've created a positive review for yourself. Keep a professional and friendly tone, and relax.

Remember, reviews both negative and positive are extremely powerful, responding to negative reviews is good, responding to positive reviews can lead to greater benefits.

If you are a small business or even a medium or large business, people associate a face and personality type with you, by doing more than just saying thanks for the positive review, write something meaningful. If you have a CRM, look for your last few interactions with the business and say something meaningful to them that talks to their situation and thank them for reviewing your business.

Saying thanks and providing this kind of acknowledgment goes a long way in cementing loyalty with your customers, if you can do this not only on the review platforms but also on the social media platforms, your business will have 5 stars written all over it.

There are various tools that can help you with this, for example- Hootsuite allows you to connect your social platforms together in one cohesive spot and manage your customer interactions from there, you can connect your social platforms there and manage your interactions from within Hootsuite.

What matters the most is that you pay attention to what is being said of you and where make sure you can respond and handle the situations adequately and quickly. Soon you will be on your way to review stardom.

If you take action now, it will take you a couple of months before things start to turn around, work on it little by little, and soon you will have a complete system at your fingertips.

A system that works for you day and night with very little work and day to day management you can be assured that your business will be gleaming and top of mind for all your customers and prospective ones.

[Let us know](#) what you have tried in the past? How has it helped? What problems did you encounter and if you are dealing with any issues, how you plan to handle them? We would love to hear from you below.