

# HANDLING NEGATIVE COMMENTS ON REVIEW WEBSITES

In recent years the amount of online review sites has increased exponentially. Alongside this, the majority of websites that sell products will also have a review section. While this has greatly empowered customers and consumers, the effects on businesses aren't always positive.

While the aim of such review sites or sections is to provide fair and accurate reviews of a product, service or business, due to the nature of some customers having grievances, these reviews will not always be glowing towards your company and in some cases could be fraudulent or inaccurate.

For almost every business in this day and age, their company will face online reviews at some point and so we have put together a brief guide on how best to handle negative comments on review websites, both preemptively and after they have been posted.

## TOP TIPS

### UNDERSTAND REVIEW SITES

To fully grasp the impact of online reviews, business leaders need to understand how review websites work as different platforms will be useful for different reasons at different times.

You'll want to get the most out of such sites to best impact upon your business positively. The best way to do this is to know how they work, what pros and cons each has, and then use that information to your advantage (such as directing customers to post positive reviews on a specific platform - more on this below).

### VISIT YOUR PAGE / PROFILE REGULARLY

Monitoring your online reputation is an important step in ensuring that your business is perceived in a positive way by members of the public (ie: potential customers / clients).

Visiting your pages and profiles regularly on review sites is imperative. The best time to respond to a negative review is within 24 hours and so checking websites every day is recommended. Depending on the sites that you are listed on, some will email you directly when comments are made (though check the settings on your account rather than assuming this will be automatic) whereas others won't. Take charge and check regularly.

### ENCOURAGE POSITIVE REVIEWS

While negative comments can't be avoided entirely, focus is rarely given to positive reviews and comments. Many businesses receive these every day in person, or via email, but these are private, not public.

Where appropriate, encourage customers and clients to review your business online using specific sites that you direct them towards.

With a large quantity of positive reviews, negative reviews won't stand out as much to future customers / clients.

### **TAKE IT OFFLINE**

When a negative review is left regarding your business, it's ideal to take the discussion offline. Ask the reviewer if you can contact them directly, via phone, email or DM. Your discussions don't need to be public. However, the resolutions will (more on this later).

### **BE HONEST**

Never, ever lie when responding to negative reviews. If your business has fallen short in some way, own up to it. Lies will always catch up to you and in business, the damage to your reputation when caught out can be irreversible.

### **DON'T COPY & PASTE**

While some complaints could be similar, it's important to never copy and paste a reply. Each response to a complaint should be unique and customers / clients should know that the reply has been crafted for them specifically.

### **KEEP IT PROFESSIONAL**

Never get personal with your replies and always keep responses professional.

Think about the issue from the customer's perspective and remember that by acting unprofessionally, your business has far more to lose than any customer or client will.

If a negative review is upsetting (it is your business after all!) then take the time to think about a response rather than firing one off in anger.

### **APOLOGISE**

Where your business is at fault, take responsibility and apologise. Honesty is key.

### **FIX THE ISSUE**

Where the issue or complaint is something that can be resolved, then doing so should be a no-brainer. In many cases, people understand that mistakes happen - but there's rarely an excuse for not fixing an issue when it's possible to do so.

## COMPENSATE

Where appropriate, compensating a customer or client can help in resolving an issue. In some cases, there will be a direct connection to a [consumer's rights](#) and so therefore a legal obligation.

## GO ABOVE AND BEYOND

While there's no obligation to go above and beyond, doing that little bit extra to placate an unhappy customer or client will always be viewed positively.

## BE GRATEFUL

Feedback should be an opportunity for you to learn and develop as a business. Thank customers for their feedback and reviews, even when negative. If it helps you become a better business, then it should be viewed as something to be grateful for.

## MAKE IT CLEAR ONCE THE ISSUE IS RESOLVED

Negative reviews are likely going to be public and often the resolutions are discussed privately. As such, commenting or responding online once an issue has been resolved is a good way for existing, future or potential customers to see how your business handles negative feedback in a positive way - hopefully providing higher levels of trust in your company.

## FOLLOW UP

Check in with customers / clients to ensure that whichever resolution was agreed upon has worked out for them. On occasion, you might also be in a position to request that they remove a negative review if you have handled their issue well. This may not always be appropriate or even be something they are willing to do, but regardless - checking in with them afterwards is good customer service and should be done so.

## USEFUL LINKS

- Consumer Rights: <https://www.gov.uk/consumer-protection-rights>

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