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Your  
Review  
Solution

# The Ultimate Guide to Online Reviews

How you can leverage customer feedback  
and improve your online reputation

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# Introduction

Review websites and social media have changed the way people make decisions. Most people trust peer recommendations more than advertisements, that is why it has become very important to take care of a company's online reputation and reviews which are left by the customers.

You would not ignore a live-feedback (positive or negative) from you customer right after she/he bought your service, would you? So, if your customer leaves such a feedback online, you should respond to it too. Like that, you show that you respect your customer's opinion, take the feedback seriously and are ready to take action in order to make her/his experience even better.

In this Ultimate Guide, we will talk about how to respond to online reviews effectively and give you templates of responses to guest reviews so that you can use them in your daily work.

# Why are Online Reviews Important?



**87%**  
of people

**read reviews for local businesses**



**only 48%**  
of people

**would consider visiting a business  
if it has less than 4 stars**



**96%**  
of people\*  
that read online reviews

**read businesses' responses to  
reviews**

Sources [brightlocal.com](http://brightlocal.com)

The majority of people inform themselves online. In order to make it easier for the new customers to find you, you should be present on the relevant review platforms. You can be sure that people are already talking about you online, so respond to them! This is the content you can generate and influence yourself and it can be a powerful marketing tool!

# How to respond to negative reviews

Over 80% of all online reviews are positive with 4 and 5 stars (Gastro WebReview 2020). Don't worry about receiving negative feedback now and then. Guests are looking for authenticity and trust businesses with a rating of between 4.2 and 4.5 stars the most.

However, if you did get a negative review from one of your guests, dealing with the situation smartly will increase the chance that your online reputation is not damaged. Here are four easy steps on how to respond to a negative review:

1

## **Be polite and friendly**

Thank customer for writing a review and apologize for not meeting the customer's expectations. Remember that with your response you'd like to win the customer back and show other readers how well you take care of your guests.

2

## **Explain the situation**

Don't be emotional, present the situation objectively. No product or service can please everyone, that's natural. Try to highlight the positive aspects. If the situation was out of order, explain that it was an exception and assure the reader of your usually high standards.

3

## **Engage in dialog**

Ask the customer to give a more detailed feedback. Take the communication offline, if necessary, by providing a contact email or phone number.

4

## **Propose a solution**

Find a way to make it up to your disappointed guests, but don't use bribery to make them take down the review or change the rating. Promise to provide a better experience next time and make improvements if necessary.

5

### **Don't mention your business name**

This will ensure that the negative reviews don't pop-up too prominently next to your business name in the search results.

6

### **Respond promptly**

Most customers expect a response to their review within one week. Responding to reviews has become even more relevant since Google sends a notification to users when business owners respond. In fact, receiving a proper response to their review can encourage your guests to change their opinion about your business and update the star rating.

7

### **Get more positive reviews**

With more positive reviews from your guests, negative feedback will be pushed further down and soon be forgotten.

# Templates



Use the templates below to respond to negative customer reviews. Don't forget to add your personal touch and be specific when answering a complaint.

Dear (Customer's name),

Thank you for writing a review. Our customers are our most valuable asset and we take your feedback seriously. We are very sorry, we didn't meet your expectations. We have taken your opinion on board and measures will be taken to ensure that our standards are consistently met for all our customers.

At your leisure, please contact us at (email/phone number), we would be glad to investigate the matter further. It would be our pleasure to welcome you as our guest again.

Best regards, Hotel/Restaurant management.

Hi (Customer's name),

Thank you for sharing your feedback with us. Our goal is to provide the best experience for our customers. Most of our clients are very happy with (food, service). I apologize our (food, service) didn't quite match your taste.

Nevertheless, we appreciate that you took the time to let us know about the problem. It helps us understand areas of improvement. Could you please contact us directly at (email/phone number)? We'll find a way to make it up to you.

Best regards, Hotel/Restaurant management.

Hey (Customer's name),

Thank you for your review, customer's feedback is very important for us.

We are very sorry, you were disappointed by our (dish, service, etc.). Usually, we pride ourselves in (serving the freshest produce or ensuring first-class quality). The situation seems to have got out of control that day (explain the situation). We sincerely apologize and would like to assure you that such mistakes won't happen again.

We hope to be able to earn your trust back and welcome you back soon!

Best regards, Hotel/Restaurant management.

Hello (Customer's name),

Thank you for taking time to write a review. In our Hotel/Restaurant we have a very high standard of (food, service, etc.), we train our staff to provide the best customer service. It is disappointing to hear that you have had a bad experience. We have put in a lot of effort to create the menu and provide professional service.

Please let us know how we can contact you, we would like to hear the specifics of what made your stay with us unpleasant. We will do our best to solve the issue and we hope to host you again soon!

Best regards, Hotel/Restaurant management.

# How to respond to positive reviews

It's great, you got a positive review. Many would ask, why answer it at all? Well, it is a great chance to thank your customers and promote your business. Use it as a marketing tool and turn the search engine results to your favor. Here is our recommendation on how to respond to a positive review:

1

## **Thank your customer**

Show appreciation for visiting your business and taking the time to write a review.

2

## **Invite to come again**

Tell about your new offer, recommend a meal or just invite to come again and bring a friend.

3

## **Throw in a little marketing**

You have a chance to promote yourself and address future customers who are reading a review. Besides, it is for free! So, don't miss the opportunity.

4

## **Mention your company's name**

The review will appear in search engine results. Let the positive review be associated with your business. Use other keywords important for your business too!

5

## **Don't overstuff keywords in your review**

Such practice can only damage your online reputation. Remember that your response is read by people.

6

## **Share reviews with a wider audience**

Get additional marketing power from the online reviews: embed them on your homepage or post them on your social media profiles.



# Templates



Here are some ideas on how to respond to positive customer reviews. Don't forget to mention a few details (history) about the subject of the review and invite your customers to come again!

*Dear (Customer's name),*

*Thank you for your outstanding review. We are very glad to hear that you liked our new dish, we prepare it according to a traditional recipe with the best ingredients available to us. (add more details).*

*We will be happy to welcome you back soon. By the way, we have a great lunch offer every weekday from 12<sup>00</sup> to 14<sup>00</sup>.*

*Best regards, Name, title, your Business name.*

*Hi (Customer's name),*

*It is very nice to receive such a positive review from you. Our team works really hard to maintain high standards of food and service. We'll surely pass your compliments to the chef.*

*Please note that we have a special offer for upcoming (Valentine's Day, Christmas, etc.). Don't forget to book a table! Looking forward to welcoming you back soon.*

*Best regards, Name, title, your Business name.*

*Hey (Customer's name),*

*Thank you for your review. Receiving a positive feedback from our customers serves as great motivation for our team to constantly improve.*

*By the way, we are opening a new sister restaurant/hotel at (address/website). We are sure you will like it as well.*

*Best regards, Name, title, your Business name.*

*Hello (Customer's name),*

*Thanks a lot for choosing (Business name) and taking the time to leave a positive review. We are glad that you enjoyed our world-class/best in the city (dish or service).*

*Did you know that we have a promo offer next week? Be quick to reserve a table/room.*

*Best regards, Name, title, your Business name.*

# How to respond to neutral reviews

3-star or “neutral” reviews are a bit tricky to handle. One more star and the rating would have been positive. On the other hand, one star less and the rating could damage the reputation of your company.

The guests who didn't find everything only good or bad, tend to give more details about their experience and justify their decision for why they added or took away one or more stars. In these justification comments, you can find the most objective sense and valuable insights for your business. So how do you react to these 3-star reviews?

1

## **Thank your customer**

It's always a good start. Let your guests know that you appreciate their feedback and take it seriously as it helps you constantly improve.

2

## **Highlight the positive aspects**

3-star reviews always consist of two parts: positive and negative. Thank the reviewer for highlighting some advantages of your business.

3

## **Respond to the criticism of your guests**

Don't ignore the negative part of a “neutral” review. Obviously, something didn't meet your guests' expectations. Provide an explanation for it or apologize.

4

## **Engage in a dialog**

As with negative reviews, it may be the best to sort out the situation directly. A little tip: If our guest has chosen an online medium to let you know about the problem, don't write a telephone number in your response, but provide your email address.

5

### **Respond individually**

Customers appreciate an individual approach, don't use any standard "copy-paste" answers.

6

### **Invite to come again**

Don't forget to invite your guests to visit you again. Promise to provide them with a better experience next time.

# Templates



Here are some ideas on how to respond to “neutral” customer reviews. As such reviews tend to be quite concrete, make sure to respond to the points of criticism mentioned by your guest.

In addition, it's advisable to carefully check whether there are many reviews about the same topic. If it happens, you should pay more attention to that.

Analyzing reviews manually can take a lot of time, our software offers a filter function for exactly this reason.

*Dear (Customer's name),*

*Thank you for your review. It's good to hear you liked the food and wine pairing in our restaurant.*

*However, we are sorry to hear that the service wasn't perfect when you visited us. Your feedback helps us understand areas of improvement, and we thank you for this as well.*

*We hope to be able to welcome you back again and provide you with a better experience.*

*Best regards, Name, title, your Business name.*

*Dear (Customer's name),*

*Thank you for visiting us and leaving feedback online.*

*We are glad to know that you enjoyed dining with us overall. Our goal is perfection and if you think that something has to be improved, we'll be glad to receive more detailed feedback at (email address).*

*In any case, we hope to be able to welcome you back and fully convince you with our services.*

*Best regards, Name, title, your Business name.*

# How to deal with fake reviews

Fake customer reviews are a common problem. Leaving a review of a business is very easy. On review sites such as Tripadvisor reviewers do not have to prove that they have actually been to a particular restaurant or hotel.

In order to fight against fraudulent reviews, review sites introduced a review policy and delete the reviews that do not comply with posting guidelines. Tripadvisor, for example, penalizes properties which have been found fraudulent. The following steps will help you spot fake reviews:

1

## **Pay attention to the language of the review**

False reviews tend to be excessively positive or negative without giving any details about the product or service.

2

## **Check the reviewer**

It is worth checking the reviewer's profile and the review history. If a person has recently opened a profile with no information about her- or himself and posted only one review, it might indicate that the review is fake.

3

## **Check the timing and the number of reviews**

Often multiple fake reviews are posted in a short period of time for a business, especially when it has just opened.

4

## **Report a fake review**

If a review violates the review policy of Google, Tripadvisor, or Yelp, you can flag it. The review will be assessed and removed from your business listing. More details you can find [here](#).

5

## **Respond**

Whether the review will be deleted or does not lie in your hands, however, you can and should respond to it.

# Templates



As often you cannot be 100% sure that the review is fake, you should be careful when responding to a possible fake review. We suggest responding in a tactful and friendly manner. Thank the reviewer for the feedback but point out that the review is not very trustworthy. If possible, provide some evidence that the review is not based on a real customer experience.

We recommend asking them to get in touch with you to provide more details. In any case, do not use your property's name in the response. Here is an example of how you respond to a fake customer review:

*Dear (Customer's name),*

*Thank you for taking the time to post a review, your very first one on Tripadvisor. Customer's feedback is important for us and we take it very seriously.*

*We put a lot of effort into providing our guests with an outstanding experience. A lot of positive reviews here tell us that we are mostly able to achieve our goal and satisfy our customers.*

*We are sorry we didn't meet your expectations. We would appreciate receiving a more detailed feedback to understand what we can improve in the future.*

*In any case, we would be glad to welcome you back and fully convince you at the second attempt.*

*Best regards, Hotel/Restaurant management.*

# Need some help with your reviews?

Feel free to use the templates and tips in this guide in your daily work. However, if you find tracking and responding to reviews overwhelming and do not have the resources to take care of them, re:spondelligent can help you out. We offer a solution for online review management.

With us you can focus on your core tasks and scale your business, benefitting from the following services:

- ✓ **All online reviews and ratings collected at one place;**
- ✓ **One dashboard to manage online reviews;**
- ✓ **Pre-written professional individual responses;**
- ✓ **All responses are marketing and SEO optimized;**
- ✓ **Advanced analytics, tracking performance of multiple locations and sources;**
- ✓ **Sentiment Analysis based on AI technology;**
- ✓ **Email notifications to inform you about new reviews and responses.**

