CallSource®

Reputation Management Guide | Home Services

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Introduction

To earn a positive reputation, home services businesses must prove themselves worthy to their customers and potential customers. A company with a bad reputation will not earn as much business as one with a positive reputation.

By providing superior service and valuable products, you build your positive reputation. How do potential customers discover how great your business is? Customer service no longer starts or stops with your business or your technician. Potential clients want to understand other current clients' experience.

In today's digital age, a positive brand reputation works cohesively with positive online reviews. If you don't have reviews, your search engine ranking can suffer,

and potential clients are less likely to choose your business.

Online reviews have become increasingly important in the consumers' buying journey. This goes hand-in-hand with the relevancy and interest in content-driven marketing. Companies must provide value to potential customers even before they acquire them as a customer.

Consumers are further down the purchasing funnel than ever before due to online research and wanting to be as informed as possible before even contacting the company. They are deciding whether it is worth their time to speak to a salesperson and find out more information **after** they read what their peers think.

Some of the statistics about online reviews[1] may surprise you:

84% of people trust online reviews as much as a personal recommendation.

54% of people will visit the website after reading positive reviews.

74% of consumers say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more.

58% of consumers say that the star rating of a business is most important.

63% of consumers use a search engine to find online reviews.

The takeaway from these stats is obvious: online reviews are helpful for businesses looking to expand their clientele and get people to choose their business over a competitor's.

Why online reviews are important

Before the days of the internet and online marketing, small businesses relied on word-of-mouth and traditional marketing for new customers. While referrals are still a great (and free) way to win business, online reviews provide feedback about your business to everyone on the internet who is in the market for your service.

The Age of the Internet

People no longer need to ask those closest to them for advice on businesses when choosing a plumber, car dealership, or doctor. Consumers go online to read reviews and recommendations at their fingertips.

? **Did you know:**
84% of consumers trust online reviews just as much as personal recommendations and 85% of them read up to 10 reviews for a local business to trust the review and feel satisfied with their buying decision.[1]

This is why managing your online reputation is vital: it isn't enough to only be known in your local circle anymore if you want your business to sustain current growth. Having an online presence, and managing it, has increasingly become a significant responsibility for businesses.

Don't Make Your Friend Your Foe

Research by Woodbury University about consumer studies found that while online reviews have the most

impact on business selection, reviews were not yet top of mind for business owners and executives.[2] The takeaway? Businesses need to shift how they manage online reviews.

When 87% of people need to see a rating of 3-5 stars for a business before they will use them[1] how can you ensure that your business has a high enough star rating if your online reputation isn't a priority?

Studies show that the average star rating is the *most important* factor that consumers look at when judging a business. It has also been shown that going from a 3-star rating to a 5-star rating gets a business 25% more clicks from Google Local Pack.[1] This is a simple way to get more visitors (and good leads) to your website alone.

> Going from a 3-star rating to a 5-star rating gets a business 25% more clicks from Google Local Pack

It is time to turn to online reviews, the new word-of-mouth, and get good at managing them. While many consumers will continue to recommend your business if they have a positive experience, it is becoming more and more likely that they will also read or post something online about their experience.
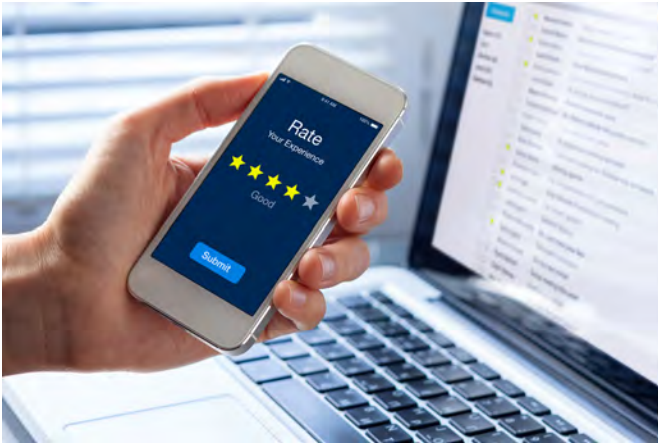
Ask for Reviews

Simply reaching an acceptable star rating is not enough. You want to make sure that you are continually churning online reviews.

You understand that online reviews are important — but how do you acquire them?
Well, you should ask, of course.

70% of consumers will leave a review for a business when asked.[1]

You task your employees with setting an appointment to end in a sale eventually, so why wouldn't you give yourself the goal to ask customers for a review?

The recency, or newness, of reviews, is important to consumers. 41% of consumers pay attention to how recently a review was posted to determine if it is relevant: "73% of consumers think that reviews older than three months aren't relevant."[1]

Although running review campaigns to gather more reviews is a good idea, you don't want to expand energy on gathering a bunch of reviews and then slow down on that initiative — you should always be focused on acquiring new and useful reviews from

clients. Google also frowns on massive/bulk review requests.

A recent study determined that "59% of consumers[1] look at 2-3 review sites before they make a decision about a business." Make sure you are not only focusing on gathering reviews from your clients often, but also collecting reviews on any and all review sites where your potential consumers will be looking.

In an age of ever-increasing technology with review sites, platforms, and apps, online reviews are becoming just as important as word of mouth referrals. However, not all businesses are quite on board yet with their significance. When studies find that 74% of people trust local businesses more after reading positive reviews about them,[1] it is evident that reviews are important.

If you know it is important to ask for the appointment, why aren't you asking for your customers' feedback after making the sale and completing the service?

Reviews help you gain new business; it is easy to conclude that you need to regularly and continuously receive reviews from your customers. One way to ensure that you are receiving reviews is to simply ask.

Although asking for a review is an additional step for management, the salesperson, or whoever is taking care of the customer at the appointment, it is worth the effort to steadily maintain and grow your online reputation.
Here are some quick tips:

Ask

Provide a business card, magnet, or sticker including The Ask

Send a follow-up email after the appointment

Include a review link widget on your website

While it is considered unethical to incentivize customers to leave reviews, simply asking will more often than not do the trick. It is unlikely that 100% of your reviews will end up being strictly positive, but no matter the outcome, reviews are more and more becoming a useful and essential tool for business to have. Address and learn from the negative, and reap the benefits from the positive.

The impact of negative online reviews

Online reviews get you noticed, show that you're in the game to play, and help you acquire new customers. It's been shown that 67% of consumers are influenced by online reviews.[3] That's over half of all consumers and your prospective new customers.

Negative reviews can lead to bad reputation, losing customers, and even losing potential customers. This will make new customer acquisition more costly as well as possibly losing business sales and profit.

Research discovered that businesses risk losing as many as 22% of customers when just one negative article is found by users considering buying their product.[3] Just because you *can* lose customers from negative reviews doesn't mean that it's a definite. There are still ways to reverse a negative image and strengthen your business' reputation.

You can ensure that negative reviews don't drag your business down if you are proactive and follow these tips.

Pay attention to your online review presence

If you are not already asking for reviews from customers, then reviews may not be at the forefront of your mind and business plan. It is time to change that mentality. Just because you may not look up reviews or pay attention to them doesn't mean that the majority of your consumer base doesn't. **97% of consumers read online reviews** for local businesses — so you need to be focusing on them.[1]

Read and respond to negative reviews

If you are not paying attention to your online review presence, it is easy to miss any negative reviews that can affect your reputation; ignoring a negative review can even more detrimental to your business than the review itself.

Include customer testimonials and case studies on your website to showcase your great customer service and how you really help people

Don't let your reviews precede you

Besides proactively reading and responding to your negative reviews, make sure that you keep an otherwise good online reputation out there everywhere — not just on review sites. Include customer testimonials and case studies on your website to showcase your great customer service and how you really help people — it should help show a different side of your company than what one negative reviewer had to say.

More good will outweigh the bad

Negative reviews could take tolls on your business. By taking control of your online presence and being proactive with your customers and reviewers, you can ensure that negative reviews don't have a harmful impact on your business.

Why it's important to respond to negative reviews

The authenticity of reviews is the most important factor for consumers. They want to be able to trust the reviews they read. Consumers do not expect a business to have a perfect online review history.[1] It is not only important to list your business on competent and reliable review sites, but to respond to reviews to demonstrate that your company is reliable and authentic.

Sincerity is not the only reason to respond to reviews — research shows that 56% of consumers will avoid a business that has negative online reviews, but 78% of consumers believe a business cares more about them when they see management respond to reviews.[4]

There is conflict between research and opinion when it comes to responding to online reviews. Some say to respond to every few reviews, some say to respond to all, but other research has shown that responding to positive reviews may hinder your reputation rather than help if not done correctly.

Getting online reviews is vital, but the process does not stop there.
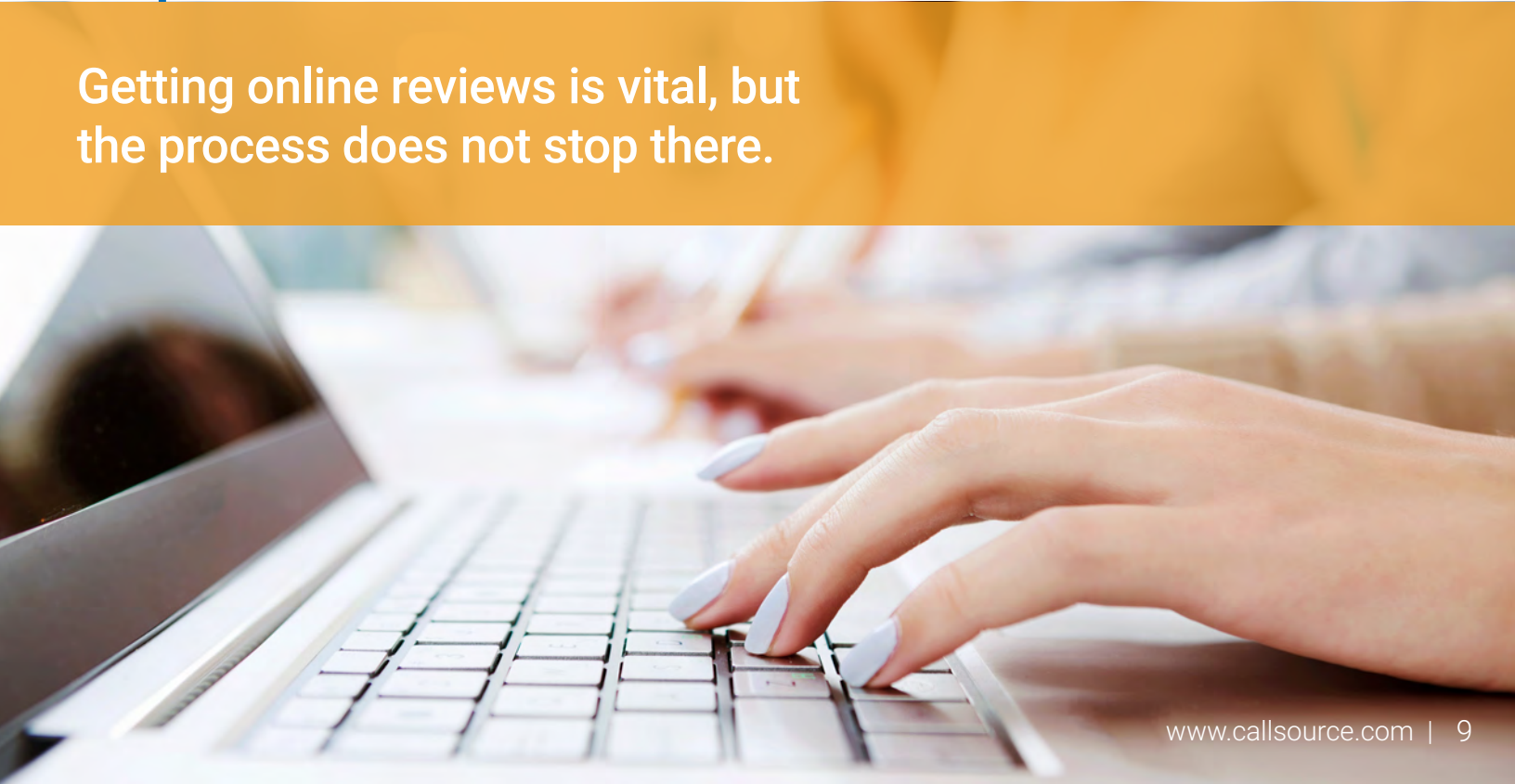
Companies should respond to all negative online reviews to make a positive effect on consumers.

In a study by Yang Wang and Alexander Chaudhry, it was found that companies should respond to all negative online reviews to make a positive effect on consumers. They also found that companies should be a bit warier and more careful when responding to positive reviews since these types of responses can make viewers feel more negatively towards the company.[5]

"The overarching story informed by this research is that by acknowledging and rectifying service failures in a prompt and just manner, complaint management increases satisfaction, leading to trust and retention, and ultimately makes it cheaper to acquire and retain customers than relying solely on offensive marketing strategies such as advertising." (Wang & Chaudhry 2017)

As Shama Kabani, author of The Zen of Social Media Marketing and CEO of The Marketing Zen Group, states: "Even if you do get negative feedback, you can turn it into a positive by engaging in a constructive way and showing that you're a genuine business."[6]

When responding to negative online reviews, more work must be put into the response than with a positive review response to achieve increased satisfaction. According to Wang and Chaudhry's research study, when managers respond to a negative online review, it is construed as adding value since they are acknowledging where they may have gone wrong, keeping accountable and then talking about any actions they are taking to rectify the issue.

Wang and Chaudhry's study concludes that managers should engage in review responses "for the purpose of complaint management…[they] should be timely so that they are visible to subsequent reviews."

By regularly looking over your online reviews, you will be able to respond to negative reviews promptly and hopefully alleviate a bad situation while potentially turning an unhappy customer into a fan. You will also gain their respect for taking their opinion seriously.

And your consumers are more forgiving than you'd think — only 8% of them would expect a business to have a five-star rating before they consider using them. While negative reviews are not desired, they're inevitable. As long as they're handled properly, you don't have to let them take over your online presence.

"Even if you do get negative feedback, you can turn it into a positive by engaging in a constructive way and showing that you're a genuine business."

How to effectively respond to negative reviews

Receiving negative reviews is not ideal, but fortunately, they won't altogether ruin your reputation if you know how to handle them properly.

When data shows that 4 in 5 consumers reverse their purchase decisions based on negative reviews,[7] it is handling these reviews properly that will ultimately help build your online reputation even higher. Follow these steps to turn those unhappy reviewers back into potential customers.

1

Know Where to Look

Yelp, Angie's List, Google, Facebook…there are many different review platforms for people to leave reviews on. Make sure you know where to find your reviews — you don't want a bad one out there lingering with no response for all to see.

Instead of manually searching every possible review site, there are many products out there that will do this for you. This is why having a performance management tool is beneficial. See all your reviews from all sites in one place and even respond from an all-in-one review platform, too.

2

Respond Quickly

No, you don't have to refresh your feed of your online review platforms constantly to respond to these reviews ASAP, but you should be regularly checking in on them. This way, if a negative review comes up, you can respond in a timely manner (set a goal of 2 days maximum) while it is still fresh in the customer's mind. You might need to ask your internal staff about the situation before you respond to make sure you have all the facts.

It isn't enough to simply be apologetic or empathetic; you need to be actionable.

3 Draft Your Response

Although you want to make sure you can respond to the review in a time-efficient manner, do not publish whatever comes to mind first! Passionate, ill-informed, or poorly written excuses can make a bad review a lot worse. Research the situation, write up something to address all of the customer's concerns, and proofread!! (We recommend using the program Grammarly before posting your review.)

It isn't enough to simply be apologetic or empathetic; you need to be actionable. Tell the reviewer what actions you are taking to correct the experience. Like anything you'd put on your website or pay to put on an advertisement, this response will stay on the internet and will be read by customers and prospective customers. You want to get it right the first time.

4 Give Your Direct Contact Information if Necessary

If there is an issue brought up in the review that is particularly concerning, show that you care. People like people, so when you are putting a real face and voice to your business and showing you truly care about their concerns, they will appreciate it. The whole conversation doesn't need to be online, but it shows you are willing to put forth the effort to make it right.

Why online reviews are important for SEO

Another huge benefit that online reviews can have for your business is an increase in your search engine optimization efforts.

Having more reviews and more stars in the Google Local Pack (and across other online review sites) doesn't only help your business become more trustworthy and enticing — it also helps with SEO.

Although the world of SEO is ever-changing, there are still habits to be made and key areas that will always be important (at least we think so). Let's face it; being proactive in at least one of these areas is never going to have a negative impact on your online presence.

A BrightLocal survey notes that "two recent studies by Moz and The Local SEO Guide show the variety of ranking factors that influence local search rankings. Both of these studies show that online reviews influence where a business appears in Google's Local 3-Pack results and in localized organic search results." They have also said that the Star Rankings in the Google Local Pack "generate higher CTR than organic search results."[1]

Yes, it's true. Having your customers do the work for you by writing reviews for your business will have a positive impact on your SEO — especially when it is estimated that online reviews account for nearly 10% of Google's total SEO ranking factors.

How? Well, online reviews give your company relevant and recent content on the web. When customers are writing about your products, they are adding to your long tail keywords and helping your company show up in search results when other consumers are looking for products and services that you have.

But what are all of the ways? Let's get into it.

Online reviews give your company relevant and recent content on the web.

> **You should be aware of what keywords to be targeting in not only your paid search, but your organic search as well.**

Long Tail Keywords

Keywords are important determining factors for how consumers find your content on the web. What are they searching to reach your business? What needs or wants do they have that you provide the solution for? You should be aware of what keywords to be targeting in not only your paid search, but your organic search as well.

Besides using your own created content to drive consumers to find your business, online reviews can also help you in this component of SEO.

What exactly are long tail keywords? They are typically three-to four-word searches or phrases that visitors are typing in their search bar to look for what it is they want or need to purchase. Long tail keywords focus on consumers that are later in the buying journey (typically BOFU, or bottom of funnel leads) and know specifically what they are looking for.

Since reviewers have already purchased from or had an experience with your company, it is likely that they will be mentioning some of your long tail keywords in their review — which will help when other consumers are searching for solutions or products for those same phrases. Not only will it bring them to your company, but also show that you are a reputable and reliable source for their needs.

Relevant & Recent Content

Online reviews also contribute relevant content on the web about your business and continuously give the internet recent content about your company as well.

Perhaps you are constantly creating new blog articles, lead magnets, or web pages with good keywords and relevant content, but reviews will do this for you in addition to your own work — and without any effort! When someone else is writing content for you and about you, it will improve your rankings as well as improve your online review rating. What's better than that?

Increase in Traffic

Consumer searches for something they need

Consumer clicks on review website to find the best company to provide what they are looking for

Consumer finds your company as highest-ranked with the most recent reviews

Consumer goes to your website

It's pretty simple, right? Why wouldn't you work on increasing your online review presence when it'll drive more potential customers to your website?

Besides getting more leads coming to your site — websites with higher traffic receive better relevancy scores for their SEO. If people are searching and clicking through to your site more often, then Google sees that as "good" and will increase your ranking.

About 67% of consumers read 6 reviews or less before they form an opinion about a given business.[9]

Visibility on Review Sites

Achieve more online reviews, appear on more on review sites.

The more reviews you have, the more you will show up not only in regular searches, but in peoples' searches on particular review websites as well. And when roughly 85% of consumers reported reading online reviews and about 67% of them read 6 reviews or less before they form an opinion about a given business, you want your business showing up as an option.[9]

Use online reviews to help your business offline

Online reviews do not only have to stay confined to the internet — they can be brought to life by aiding in your internal and operational day-to-day to better your business. Be proud of your reviews — show them off! You can aggregate reviews on your website, use them in promotional ads, make signs in your store, or combine them to publish a testimonial paper.

Gathering feedback from your audience through online reviews helps you gain insight from their experience.

Use customer feedback to improve

Feedback from online reviews helps your business, product(s), and/or customer experience improve due to the reactions and suggestions received.

How?

Reviews don't only exist as customer opinions for others to learn about your business — they also serve as feedback from customers. Of course, you want to do more of what they say you are doing well, and take note of areas for improvement.

Your reviews inevitably won't all be entirely positive, so make sure to notice the less-than-favorable or suggested enhancements from customer experiences.

As long as you have someone assigned to regularly checking your new online reviews or — even better — an aggregate online review system, you can stay on top of what consumers are saying about your business. Keep track of improvement suggestions to implement in your products or internal processes – especially those that are mentioned more than once.

Competitive Benchmarking

By viewing online reviews of your competition, you will learn what you can do that your competitors can't or what you do better than they do and vice-versa.

Determine if any improvements or processes can be improved by what your peers are doing. Do customers seem to comment on one aspect of their business that they really like that you can implement on your end? Maybe you should start doing something similar! Do they seem to lack in customer service but you know that is the bread-and-butter of what makes people choose you over them? Continue to work on staying great in that area of your business.

Receive Even More Positive Reviews

Once you start using your online reviews to make improvements, you should gain more positive online reviews simply from making your business better and listening to customer feedback.

Update customers who left reviews suggesting (or complaining) about a particular aspect of your business when you implement changes so they, and the rest of your audience, see that you are listening and improving thanks to your customers.

This not only shows that you actually take time to read reviews but listen to them and take action as well. And you are now a more trustworthy, personable, and great business for doing so.

How using an aggregate online review platform can help

If all of this information and handling your online review presence seems overwhelming, an aggregate review platform may be the answer for your business.

What does an aggregate review platform do?

CallSource's online review platform, CS Reviews, can help in a few ways:

Generate

- Simple interface to request reviews from your clients
- Better control by filtering unhappy comments
- Makes it easy to share good reviews and celebrate your successes

Listen

- All of your reviews are in one centralized dashboard, so you can hear what your clients are saying
- Easy on-the-go access
- Receive alerts to know what people are saying about you

Respond

- Respond to reviews from inside the dashboard, so you don't have to log into each site
- Negative reviews are easily managed to improve your customer service
- Don't have time? We can respond for you!

If you don't want to log in to all of the separate sites where online reviews may be left for your business, and/or to read and respond to every review yourself, an online review platform is extremely beneficial to maintaining a positive online reputation.

Conclusion

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Although this guide has a lot of information, the key takeaways are simple.

1 Online reviews are important.

2 You need to ask customers to leave you reviews.

3 While negative reviews can have an undesirable impact on your business, you can reply to them in a way to turn a bad thing into good.

We hope this guide helped you become well-informed about how to manage your reputation with online reviews.

4 Online reviews don't only help manage your brand reputation – they can also aid in your SEO efforts and improving your business offline, too.

If you have further questions regarding reputation management or are just interested in learning more, visit www.callsource.com for more insights and solutions.

We are the experts in call tracking, call management, performance management, review management and digital management. Contact us today to learn how we can help with your reputation management needs.

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