



# Best Practices for Customer Reviews

[BusinessCreator, Inc.]



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Customer reviews are among the most sought-after sources of information about your business. Digitally savvy customers will search for a service provider or check out your company on Google, Yelp or Facebook before asking their friends for advice.

A BrightLogic survey found 88% of consumers read customer reviews before deciding whether to do business with a new company, and 72% act after reading positive reviews.

Some business owners wait for their happy customers to post something nice about their experiences. Others reach out proactively -- and even automatically -- to their customers, giving them easy tools to create and post their reviews in a few minutes.

The proactive approach reaches out to the “silent majority” of customers who like working with your company just fine but wouldn’t express their satisfaction on Yelp, Facebook, Angie’s List or other public forums unless you ask them.

You’ll generate more reviews, and more positive reviews, if you ask for them instead of waiting for your customers to act.

## How do I ask customers to write reviews?

This is probably the hardest part of the customer-review process for many business owners. These tactics will help you encourage more customers to rate and review their experiences:

### **1. Ask for the review as soon as possible after the purchase or service.**

Your customers love your services because you solve problems -- doing an oil change, unclogging a sink, etc. -- that allow them to get back to what they were doing. Ask for the review while your service is still fresh in the customer’s mind, before it fades away in the hustle-bustle of everyday life.

### **2. Include links to top review sites in your review solicitation email.**

This will encourage more customers, especially those who are pressed for time, to take a few minutes to write their reviews on the sites they prefer.

### **3. Test the review services yourself to make sure they're as customer-friendly as possible.**

Most review services are set up to let customers rank your business on multiple factors and generally require them to write comments before accepting the review. Visit the review sites you want customers to use and look for potential stumbling blocks. Ask other employees to do test runs as well.

### **4. Ask permission to share reviews in other channels.**

Ask customers if you may publish their comments on your website or in company promotions, ads or email messages. That's another benefit of customer reviews: Your customers become your marketers, helping you to spread the word.

Most people write reviews expressly so others will read them on the review sites. A BazaarVoice study found a whopping 87.5% of reviewers participate to help others make decisions. But it could be jarring to your own customers to see their five-star Yelp or Google comments on your homepage or in a local ad if they hadn't given permission.

### **5. Ask customers if they want you to contact them about their reviews.**

When following up with customers after a sale or service call, ask if they would like someone from your company to contact them personally about their review comments. This approach can help you resolve problems before they blow up in public, but it can also reveal good customer stories from people who aren't comfortable writing extensive comments.

### **6. Say "Thank you."**

Say it twice, in fact. First, thank your customers for their patronage when you ask for the review. Explain that you want to know how their experience was, their feedback will help you improve your service, and real people will be reading their comments.

Then, respond to people who write comments, both positive and negative, in their reviews and thank them for their time and insight. The review space isn't the place to resolve problems, but your acknowledgement lets complainers know they've been heard.

## Speaking of negative reviews ...

### What if someone writes a bad review about my business?

Everybody gets bad reviews now and then. Don't fear or discard them. Although it sounds contradictory, an occasional negative review actually makes you look more legitimate than a company displaying nothing but 5-star ratings and glowing comments. In fact, studies show that 68% of consumers trust reviews more when they see both good and bad reviews.

Naturally, you should respond. A prompt response can contain the damage a negative review can inflict, especially on social review sites like Yelp. But, be careful not to respond while you're angry or write a detailed, defensive reply.

Take a breath. Then, write a positive and constructive response that acknowledges what happened and explains how you fixed the problem or what you will do to make things right. This will help potential customers feel more confident about doing business with you.

**Tip:** Ask another employee to review what you wrote and take out anything that sounds defensive, angry or unflattering.

If you have been able to resolve the problem, consider asking the customer to delete the review or write a follow-up.

Above all, don't threaten or belittle customers who post negative reviews, even if you think they were wrong. It will give the review more importance than it's worth and even generate the wrong kind of social-media publicity. Always take the high road, even if your customer doesn't.

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