



5 Best Practices for Retailers to Respond to Online Reviews



RETAILERS TAKE NOTE:

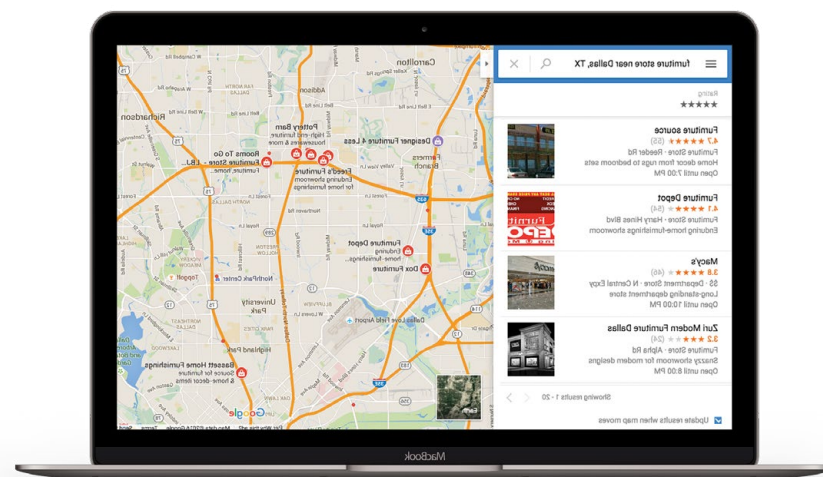
Customer engagement is a vital competitive differentiator, but if you don't understand your customers' preferences and aren't equipped to act on them, then you're regularly losing business.

HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:

Thanks to the proliferation of online customer reviews, your locations have a wealth of information they can use to optimize customer relationships.

BUT, REMEMBER:

Customer engagement is a two-way conversation, so once you know what they're saying in online reviews, your locations must respond back.





Here are five best practices to respond to reviews:

1. **Respond Quickly and Courteously**
2. **Always Respond to Negative Reviews**
3. **Craft Original Responses**
4. **Be Ethical**
5. **Keep the Lines of Communication Open**

1. Respond Quickly and Courteously

When a customer says, “Thank you for your outstanding service” in a store or on the phone, would the salesperson walk away or hang up without responding? Doubtful!

In the same vein, responding to customers online in a courteous manner is a must. Your team’s timely replies to reviews about your location’s service show that you value customers and their opinions.

This can greatly bolster customer satisfaction, so make sure your team responds to all feedback with energy and enthusiasm.



2. Always Respond to Negative Reviews

Common wisdom says that negative reviews are bad for business. But don't worry about the bad reviews. Worry about how your customer service operation handles them.

These days, the fallout from a badly handled online complaint can have a big impact on your reputation and long-term success. So don't ignore negative reviews; instead, ask your customer service team to take a hands-on approach by always responding to them.

When your team responds to each negative review, it shows that you value your customers and their opinions, and have a vested interest in reaching a solution.

Coach your team to reply by acknowledging the customer's frustration, then outline how they plan to resolve the issue. When the customer sees that your team is trying, he or she is more likely to be willing to work with you.

Next, apologize for identified problems on your end. It takes courage to admit to mistakes, and your customers will appreciate that. No one expects perfection, but they do expect you to try to improve.



3. Craft Original Responses

Customers want to know that you read their review and are responding to them personally. So make sure your team writes an original message; resist the easy way out of just posting a generic canned response.

In some cases, a bland standard-issue reply to a thoughtful online review will turn off potential customers who are curious about your business.

Have the team write individual replies that address the customer's specific experience. The response can be kept short and to the point, but should reference what the customer purchased, who served them, and what their review covers.

A good online reputation management platform provides a library of templated responses, that your team can adapt and use at scale.



4. Be Ethical

How your team responds to your customers has a direct impact on your company's reputation.

Never ask a customer to change or remove a review that is unfavorable to your business. Always address the review publicly unless prohibited by the review site.

Never offer a reward or other incentives for positive reviews; that will compromise the perceived integrity of reviews in the future.

5. Keep the Lines of Communication Open

Encourage customers to keep posting their feedback. Their ongoing critiques can help your business stay in touch with the needs and desires of your customers.

Learn More

Effective customer engagement starts when your teams show they care about customers' experiences by responding to online feedback directly.

Remember, you can turn even a negative review into an opportunity for your business to shine by handling the situation promptly and effectively.

Retailers that proactively employ an online reputation management strategy will not only develop more personal customer relationships — thanks to understanding their needs and preferences — but also gain more positive online recommendations and reviews, and repeat sales.



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