

TURNING A NEGATIVE INTO A POSITIVE

**A how-to guide for responding
to negative reviews**



INTRODUCTION

As much as it probably pains you to admit, not all of the customers that you serve are going to leave your business happy – despite everyone's best effort.

No one likes to get negative reviews. In fact, it's hard not to take them personally. Having a strategy in place for how to respond to them, however, is essential.

If you don't have a plan in place, things could go horribly wrong, and possibly do irreparable damage to your business.

Especially if you respond to negative reviews half cocked. There is a famous case¹ a couple of years back where a business owner did just that. Faced with a number of negative reviews on its Facebook page, the owner of a restaurant in Arizona went ballistic. In the moment, this probably felt good, but the long-term impact it had on their business probably wasn't worth that brief moment of euphoria.

In this ebook, we will outline a proven process to respond to negative reviews, discuss ways that negative reviews can help improve your business operations, and review the benefits of having an online review management platform.

¹ <http://www.zdnet.com/article/10-social-media-lessons-from-amys-baking-company-facebook-meltdown/>



You've got a negative review, **now what?**

Below is a **step-by-step process to respond to negative reviews that has proven effective for our customers.**

- 1 APOLOGIZE** If you're a child of the 80s like me, you probably remember Chicago's number 1 hit, "Hard to Say I'm Sorry." And those words still ring true. There is nothing more difficult than A: recognizing you or your business has done something wrong; and B: admitting that wrongdoing by apologizing to the offended party. By apologizing you show your customers that not only do you care about their experience, but also that you listen to their feedback.
- 2 STAY CALM** The worst thing you can do is let your emotions get in the way. This is why we suggest making sure the person responding have some distance from the situation. This will prevent you from sounding defensive and make sure the situation isn't further exacerbated.
- 3 OFFER A SOLUTION** Even more important than the apology is offering a proactive solution to the problem. The solution should show that you have put some thought into the response, and should not be a canned answer that you have cut and pasted². While canned responses might increase efficiency, it won't read as authentic. And the more often a canned response is used publicly, the easier it will be for your customers to find out that your responses to customers aren't personal.
- 4 OFFER TO SPEAK PRIVATELY** Finally, you should offer to speak to them privately and refer them to a customer service manager or someone who can remediate the situation. Doing so doesn't mean that you don't believe in transparency. It's just easier to communicate over the phone or via email than going back and forth on Google or Facebook. This will make sure the problem is solved as quickly as possible.

² <http://www.inc.com/john-rampton/8-steps-for-fixing-negative-online-reviews.html>

A close-up photograph of a wooden basket filled with bright yellow lemons. The lemons are piled together, with some showing signs of being squeezed or bruised. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the lemon skin.

...the lemons in this scenario are **negative reviews**

WHEN LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS...

There's probably nothing I love more than a glass of fresh squeezed lemonade. The recipe for lemonade is simple enough – lemons, water, and sugar – but the process of extracting enough juice from the lemons is just difficult enough that I don't enjoy lemonade as often as I'd like.

So why am I talking to you about lemonade in this ebook about negative reviews? If you haven't figured it out by now, the lemons in this scenario are negative reviews. By themselves, lemons are sour and bitter and not very desirable. But with a little work and a little love (and a lot of sugar), you can turn that lemon into something delicious.

The same can be said of negative reviews. On their face, they are something that a business wouldn't want – some might say they leave a bad taste in your mouth – but they can be an important ingredient in improving your business operations.

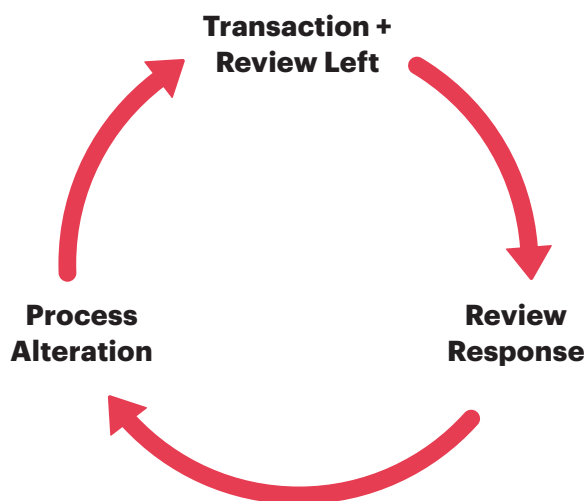
A negative review can shed some light on a problem employee or a process that isn't working as well as you had hoped, and give you the insights you need to correct that problem and improve your business. It's important that you not only respond to negative reviews, but also use them to effect positive change to your business. And just like with the lemonade, if you put in a little work and show the customer a little love, you can turn a negative experience into a positive one.

Customer Experience Feedback Loop

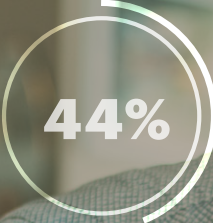
To help you respond to negative reviews – or positive reviews for that matter – we recommend you implement the Customer Experience Feedback Loop.

It's a simple three-step process:

- 1 A transaction takes place and an online review is posted.
- 2 You take note of the review and respond if necessary.
- 3 If the review is positive, it reinforces the process is working. If the review is negative, you alter existing processes to improve customer experience.



The benefit of using online reviews to gather feedback is it allows you to respond to problems that may arise in real-time rather than waiting to get feedback through an annual or semi-annual net promoter survey.



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— BRIGHT LOCAL

WHY DO YOU NEED AN ONLINE REVIEW MANAGEMENT PLATFORM?

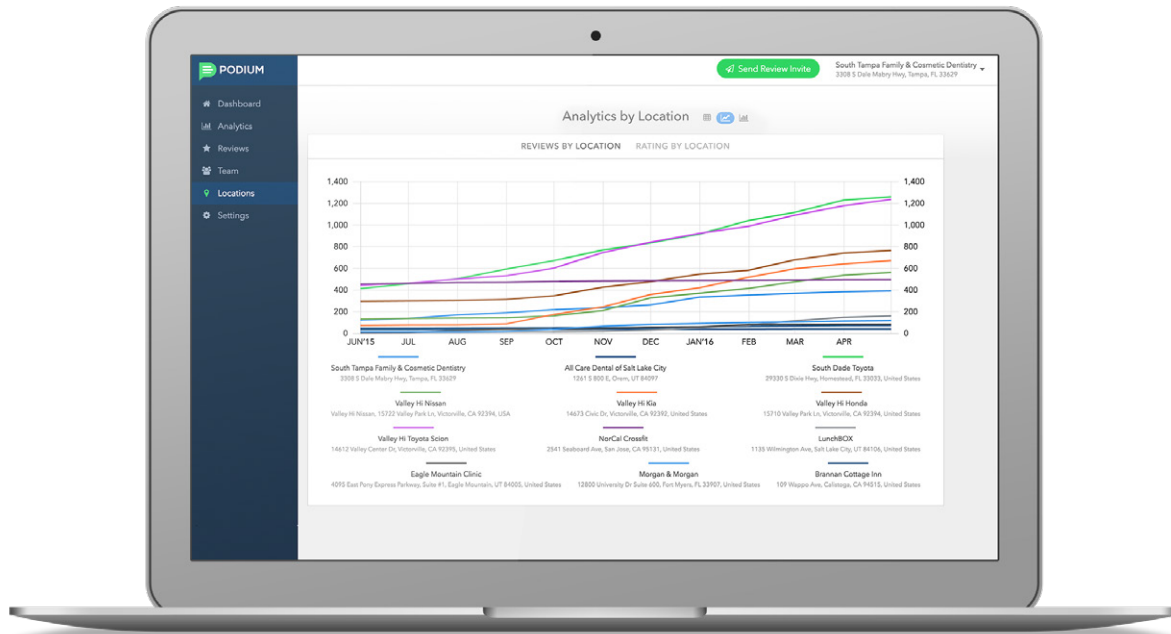
An online review management platform streamlines the collection and management of online reviews, which can improve local SEO standing, boost revenues, and help you maintain a stellar online reputation. The more frequently your customers review your business the less impact the stray negative review can have as it pushes the bad review further down on the list. Additionally, consumers will give less weight to older reviews³, especially when juxtaposed with more recent positive reviews.

For example, consumers will give more credence to reviews that were posted more recently. In fact, 44% of consumers stated that reviews older than one month are no longer relevant.⁴ The more often your business has online reviews the better because it will give potential customers a more accurate representation of how your business is operating.

Because of this, you should put in the effort to get the flywheel of online reviews moving. This will not only mitigate the effect negative reviews have on the perception of your business, but it will give your business positive momentum as consumers who find you online will see how passionate your customers are about the service you provide.

³ <http://searchengineland.com/87-percent-customers-wont-consider-low-ratings-228607>

⁴ <https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey/>



WHY PODIUM?

Podium's online review management platform gives your business the ability to fully harness the power of your online reviews. Through its seamless mobile experience, you can easily convert your happiest customers into online advocates for your business. This is accomplished by:

- Leveraging your customers' existing apps to match the reputation needs, thereby producing a balanced online review presence across multiple review platforms.
- Allowing you to monitor and manage your online reputation in real-time and respond quickly to any problems in your business or with employee performance as they arise.
- Integrating with industry-leading software platforms, allowing you to collect and report on new reviews as they come in.

Cultivating a library of reviews can humanize your brand on a medium that can at times be impersonal. Kristin Smaby, a leader in the customer service space, noted in a recent article that businesses should no longer shy away from online interactions with their customers. She said, "It's time to consider an entirely different approach: building human-centric customer service through great people and clever technology. So, get to know your customers. Humanize them. Humanize yourself. It's worth it."⁵ ■

⁵ <http://alistapart.com/article/being-human-is-good-business>

Call or Text us at 1-833-276-3486





WATCH OUR DEMO

and learn how Podium's software can help you master this new approach to customer service, while also enabling you to increase revenue, build trust with potential customers, and improve your business operations.



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