

How to build an Online Reputation

Reviews Build Trust

Review websites are increasing in popularity. Everyday consumers are interested in what real people say about the local businesses and services they're thinking about using. The facts. Top tips. Everyday consumers are interested in what real people say about the local businesses and services they're thinking about using. Whether it's looking for a hotel, choosing a place to eat or drink, or finding a handyman, people are spending more and more time using review sites to make purchase decisions.

Fostering feelings of trust within your audience is of paramount importance. If you're a trustworthy source, then people will come back for more. The more you're on their radar and the more the trust builds the more likely they are to buy with you. But trust is a hard thing to nurture, and is even easier lost.

Online reviews are a valuable thing to pursue if your company is quite new, but you do have a few happy customers under your belt. Review sites enable new companies to stand shoulder to shoulder with more established competition, and potentially gain a positive foothold in people's estimation.

The best thing you can present are testimonials or reviews from your existing customers. These are genuine comments from real people who have used your products or services.

Getting the most from online reviews takes time and a positive attitude but the benefits far outweigh any downsides. From time to time, someone may take issue with your business, but for businesses that demonstrate they are listening to their customers there is a huge amount to gain. You are showing you listen to your customers, generate word-of-mouth online, and increase your online reputation. You will have content which you can use on your website and link to your website. This isn't just content, it's content which is trusted by new prospective customers more than what you would say about yourself in your own marketing.

73% of consumers are more likely to choose a business that has online reviews compared to a business that has none. (Source: Critical Research Ltd, 2017)

In business, word of mouth is the holy grail of brand awareness; and in our increasingly connected online world, third party online review sites are worth their weight in gold – if we do say so ourselves! Sites like Yell.com, Google My Business, TripAdvisor, and TrustPilot provide ample opportunity to gather and publicise meaningful feedback from previous customers.

However, it can be tricky to maintain a steady flow of new incoming reviews, especially seeing as 56% of consumers who have read reviews expect the most recent review to have been posted within the last month (Source: Critical Research Ltd, 2017).

So what's a company to do? If your reviews pages are in need of some attention, check out the ways to encourage a steady influx of feedback.

Why Reviews are Important

You've probably heard it time and time again – listing your company on review websites is a crucial step to your ongoing visibility and a great opportunity for customer service. But why is that?

If you're on the fence about listing your business on a review site, or you're not convinced of the value it provides and how that relates your business' visibility, then this one's for you.

Credibility and Social Proof

We're inherently social creatures, and we like to know that someone else has had a good experience with a company before we make a buying decision. Much like we would ask friends and family for recommendations, review sites allow us to do this online.

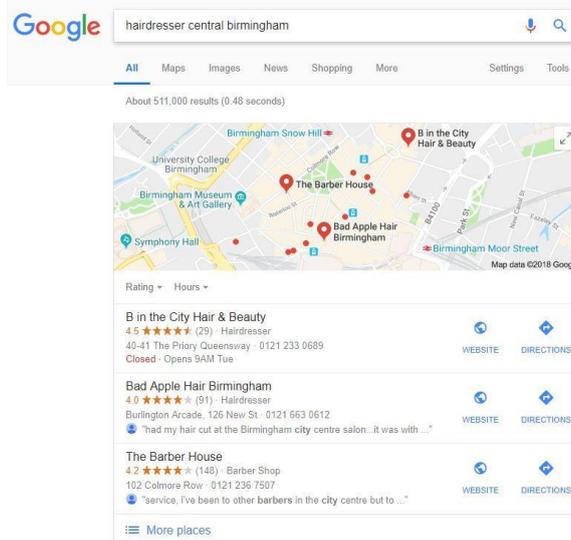
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Review Sites are Growing in Significance

Review sites are becoming more and more significant to people's buying decisions and purchasing intent; a trend that shows no sign of going away. As more of the older generation are coming online and the younger generation are growing up and needing to make their own purchasing decisions, online reviewing is only set to grow further.

Reviews Can Have a Positive Impact on Search Visibility

Reviews left on certain trusted review sites (including Yell.com reviews) can also show in Google's "knowledge graph". This is a crucial area of visibility within search results, especially on a local scale. Because reviews have the potential to show prominently on Google search results pages, people may see how awesome you are before they even go through to your listing page or website.



TIP: Not only are reviews a great avenue for grabbing consumers' attention, but listing your company is totally free in a lot of cases.

If you haven't already, why not create a free listing here on Yell.com! Our intuitive process will walk you through every step of the way. Sign up today!

Getting Started

Reviews help give your prospects an at-a-glance idea of what you're like to work with, give your audience another avenue to engage with you, and can also help with local SEO too.

Let's look at how you can create a review acquisition strategy that works for you.

Building Your Review Acquisition Strategy

What your review acquisition strategy looks like will vary wildly depending on what your business does, how it serves its customers, and how you engage with them. But whatever line of work you're in, you need to start by thinking long and hard about your average sales process – starting from your customer's initial interest all the way through to a completed purchase. Where in that process would it make most sense/be most appropriate for you to ask for a review?

It might help you to write down your sales process. Make sure you've got a really good idea of what working with you looks like from the customer's perspective – from start to finish.

In terms of getting customers to leave reviews, it can be a case of "if you don't ask, you don't get". 42% of consumers said they're more likely to leave a review for a business if specifically asked to do so (Critical Research, 2017).

When you ask your clients to give a review, it helps to give them a good reason why they should. You could politely remind customers of their purchase and state that reviews help you out, and even negative reviews help you ensure that mistakes don't happen again. Make sure it's easy for them to leave a review online, providing a direct link to your review profile wherever possible.

There are no right or wrong answers for any of these steps – only you know which approach is likely to work for you.

We should also mention that you should never directly incentivise reviews – paying for fake reviews is a big no-no and is likely to get you booted from any review site. Don't do it.

Let's take a look at a few examples of how small businesses might implement a review acquisition strategy:

- An owner of a retail shop may include a link to their review profiles on all receipts and ask customers who spend over a certain amount to leave a review at one of the links shown.
- A tradesperson may mention their review profile as final payment changes hands. They may also follow up in a few weeks to make sure the customer is satisfied and to remind them to place a review if they haven't already.
- A professional services agency may email their client upon completion of the project, asking for a review; or could alternatively ask a few weeks later once the client has put the work into practice and seen the results.

TIP: Consider which review sites would be most appropriate for your business. Some review sites are good "all-rounders", appropriate for most industries – Yell and Google My Business are great examples.

Asking For Reviews

Take the time to contact recent customers to politely ask for a few words; a simple, personal letter or email is all you need to reach out to each customer. Thank them for choosing your organisation and politely ask if they would be so kind as to leave you a review. Always provide instructions on how to leave a review for all relevant sites to make the process as straightforward as possible. This little tip works for virtually any business.

It may be helpful to give them a suggested template or some prompting questions such as “why did you choose us over another company?”, “what made you decide on the product you chose?”, and “what was it about the experience that made you choose to review us?”.

It can be hugely beneficial for companies to have a presence on multiple sites – not just from a local SEO perspective, but also for the sake of people giving reviews. If you’re only accepting reviews through one site, you’re effectively demanding customers review through that platform alone.

If you rely on storefront appeal, many review sites (Yell.com included) allow listed companies to order promotional materials that publicise their listing and encourage people to read and leave reviews. This can take the form of window stickers, vehicle stickers, point of sale collateral, and postcards.

If possible, you could print appropriate review links on till receipts, ready for customers to share their thoughts after an in-store transaction. This can work especially well when you train your staff to briefly but politely ask for a review with every sale, highlighting how online reviews help you out as a business.

In a similar vein to the above suggestion, those who run ecommerce businesses could include a postcard with each delivery, prompting the customer to leave a review with instructions on how to do so.

Social media can be a great way to find happy customers to leave reviews. There are a couple of ways you can go about asking for reviews over social media; the most direct is to periodically post links to your review listings, asking previous customers to share their thoughts if they haven’t already. Alternatively, you could keep an eye out for mentions of your brand over social media (which is good practice anyway); when someone talks about your company in a positive way, approach them for a review with a link to your review pages.

It’s important that reviews have some kind of a presence on your own website. You may wish to have a “reviews” or “testimonials” page on your site to highlight your best reviews from third party sites – each linking back to the original review.

Once you decide on methods to encourage reviews, be sure to incorporate them into your average routine so they’re a matter of course when dealing with every single customer, and the question of leaving a review never gets forgotten. Don’t be afraid to try a few methods out and run with the ones that gain you the best response.

TIP: Whatever you do to bring in the reviews, be sure you’re doing it in a consistent and timely manner.

Responding Professionally

Online reviews now play a massive part in our everyday buying decisions. If you'd have told us 25 years ago that we'd be choosing whether or not to do business with a company on their public online score through online platforms like TripAdvisor, Yelp, Reevo, and of course Yell.com – rather than listening to the recommendations of friends and family, we would never have believed it.

It's important to respond to all reviews that you receive, both positive and negative. how great this would be for your business?

Responding to Online Reviews

- Sincerely thank the reviewer for their visit or order, and thank them for taking the time to share their thoughts via review
- Be personable and refer to the reviewer by name.
- Recognise the positive points they made and reinforce their positive view. For example, if the reviewer particularly liked a pasta dish you served, feel free to state something like "our pasta is handmade fresh in our kitchen every day to a traditional Italian recipe" (as long as that's true of course!).
- Give your reply some substance. Provide a suggestion as to what to try on their next visit, or make them aware of an upcoming event or offer that they could take advantage of.
- If they have some nice things to say about particular staff members, say that you'll let those staff members know (and do so).
- End on an invitation to come back or ask them to tell a friend – or both!

Responding to Negative Reviews

- Always take a breather before responding to any negative reviews. It can be all too easy to take criticism to heart and want to retaliate angrily. It never pays to snap back or get on the defensive. Always remain professional and take the high road. Take a walk or sleep on it if you need to.
- Never just outright delete or report a bad review. Everyone's opinion is valid and deserving of attention, so be nice.
- Start off your response with a genuine and sincere apology for whatever happened.
- Just as their review is in the public domain, so too should your reply.
- Explain what you are doing to fix any problems, express gratitude for the honest and constructive feedback and put a plan of action into place to stop the problem again if the need is there.

TIP: Occasionally, overall good reviews may mention some negative element to the experience or a point of constructive criticism. In this case, thank them also for their honest feedback and state what you are going to do to ensure that it won't be a problem for future customers. If it's a situation you can put right retrospectively in any way, absolutely do that! Recognise their issue and apologise sincerely, but keep it short; let the positive element of the feedback take centre stage.

Using Reviews for Marketing

Collecting online reviews from previous clients is great practice for companies of all kinds. Customer reviews honestly and sincerely present your capability as a company and the value you have provided to clients over the years. They're an invaluable source of social proof – the new word of mouth.

It's a great feeling when your business receives a glowing review through a site like Yell.com, TripAdvisor, or Google My Business – but it doesn't have to end there. Why not maximise the promotional potential of your most complimentary reviews by integrating them into your other marketing communications?

Let's take a look at 10 excellent places to republish your business's online reviews.

- 1. Your Website** - Your company's website acts as a virtual storefront – where better to get people to pay attention to your reviews? Featuring a “Testimonials” page on your site is a great idea, but it's not the only option available to you.
- 2. On Individual Product Pages** - Here's one for you online retailers! It's not really a place to republish reviews – more of a source of new feedback. Retailers should consider implementing review functionality for every product in their catalogue, and display star ratings and textual reviews front and centre. Though these ratings will be different to your overall business rating, they're still a great source of visible customer feedback. You can then republish rave product reviews within the item's listing or elsewhere.
- 3. Social Media** - Social media is a great place to share your most glowing reviews. If the reviewer is happy to be identified, you can also tag their social media handle in the post – an excellent way to show that your review has come from a genuine person or organisation. Though reviews make great text posts, we are naturally drawn to visual media, so using the text of their review to create a simple but attractive image (perhaps using a free tool like Canva) can really help a review stand out on your feed.
- 4. Promotional Videos** - There's a lot to be said for video testimonials. A happy customer singing your praises on video is incredibly valuable. Viewers not only get to see that the compliments are coming from a real person, but can see the genuine satisfaction in their body language and facial expressions.
- 5. Printed Brochure / Leaflet** - Online review content can also be used to great effect in offline print media. Magazine ads, leaflets and brochures can be quite impersonal, so including reviews or evidence of star ratings can provide valuable social proof.

TIP: Start repurposing your reviews and get as much value out of them as possible. Don't forget to ask for permission from the author of the review.