

The reverse of a positive Google business review is a negative one. If a customer is unhappy, it's easy for their feelings to quickly spiral to epic proportions. We've all seen it before: negative comments on social media, a flood of bad reviews, and any other form of online—therefore public—communication to express their dissatisfaction. So how do you handle this?

Although Google isn't the only place you can receive this kind of feedback, it's undeniably the most commonly-used tool for finding information online. This means it should always be your first port of call when building your reputation or managing your online reviews!

Bad online reviews can cause potential customers to shop elsewhere, negatively impacting your business' bottom line. If your business has received a bad online review, here are steps you can take to handle it and minimise the damage.

### **Understand which reviews to report for removal**

Report only reviews that violate Google policies. Learn more about Google's content policies.

Don't report a review just because you disagree with it or don't like it.

Google doesn't get involved when businesses and customers disagree about facts.

There's no reliable way to tell who's right about a particular customer experience.

### **Respond to Customer Reviews**

Ignoring a bad review won't make it go away. On the other hand, responding to customer reviews can result in better ratings and improve your business' online reputation.

The Harvard Business Review analysed tens of thousands of hotel reviews and responses from TripAdvisor. According to the study, hotels that respond to customer reviews receive 12 percent more reviews and their ratings increase by an average of 0.12 stars.

Yelp for Business Owners points out that responding to reviews is a great way to learn from your customers and build goodwill among your most vocal customers.

### **Be Nice and Avoid Getting Personal**

If you've received a bad review online, it can be tempting to defend your business — and get personal in the process. However, as Google Business Support advises, it's important that business owners remain polite and avoid getting personal when they respond to customer reviews.

Replies should be useful, readable, and courteous, because it's difficult to win an argument with an unsatisfied customer. That's why it's important to think before you reply to a negative review. If a reviewer believes you're being "rude, condescending or disingenuous in any way, there's a chance he or she could get angry and make the situation even worse."

### **Thank Your Reviewers and Customise Responses**

You might be angry over a bad review, but your response should be professional, authentic, and humane. Apologise to the customer and thank them for taking the time to highlight issues with your business. That can help transform a negative review into a positive one.

Also, make sure you use the reviewer's name and recap their specific complaint. Customising responses will show that your business genuinely appreciates customer feedback.

Show You've Taken the Necessary Action ... If You Are In The Wrong

Customer feedback is an essential part of improving business performance. If you've received a negative online review, showing that you've taken the steps to resolve the issue could help turn a negative review into a positive one.

Once you've acted upon the issue your customer raised, reply to the complaint on the review site so that other customers can read what about what you've done.

### **How to respond to negative feedback**

- Address the customer by their name. It's just a little trick, and you may think that there's no need to do this.
- Apologise to the customer.
- Sympathise with the customer's problem.
- Say you're solving the problem.
- Offer a gift.
- Ask the customer to change the review.
- Accept negative reviews.

### **How do I remove negative Google reviews?**

- Submit a one-time appeal of a review
- Go to the Reviews Management Tool.
- Click on the three dots next to the review
- Select the reason for appeal.
- Click Submit an appeal.