

How to respond to a negative review

Reviews are the bread and butter of digital marketing, and an essential tool to back up your expertise and product claims. So... when it goes wrong, how do you respond?

Basic online etiquette for negative reviews

You can't expect every customer to have loved your product or service, and unfortunately, those who didn't tend to have the loudest voices online, which is why it's important to acknowledge and empathise with their experience. Ask for more details, so you can look further into their claim so you can:

- a) find a way to right the situation or
- b) ensure whatever has gone wrong can be righted for the future, and avoid even more negative reviews.

If they come back to you in response, always attempt to take them offline via an email or phone number - you'll do yourself no favours having a war of words in the public eye.

If needed, you can get a lawyer involved

This is a worthwhile step in a few scenarios, such as a competitor being a jerk or a begrudged former staff member leaving a negative review. If you don't want to muck around, a lawyer can send a letter on your behalf.

We at Mint once had someone leaving us a bad review for all the wrong reasons. They were furious at us due to them crashing into a branded Mint car and naturally, our insurance company chased them about paying for the damage. To put it lightly, they weren't nice people.

They got their friends to put bad reviews on our Google My Business account, which has a flowing track record of 5-star reviews from our happy clients. We know what a digital asset that is to us, and so we didn't muck around - we got our lawyer to write a cease and desist and the reviews quickly went away. Well worth the bill from the lawyer.

Responding to fake reviews

Sometimes, you may even receive a review from someone who may not be a customer. We actually see this often - it could be by mistake (they might have accidentally mistaken your business for another, which happens often with franchise brands or multi-location businesses). In other cases, it's purely malicious intent.

A client of ours who opened a new gym was (presumably) targeted by competitors who were unhappy that they were moving into the area, and in retaliation, they left a bad review on their Google account. Here's what we suggested that they reply with:

"Hi (customer name), we looked you up in our database and have no record of your membership. Further, we weren't actually open at the time of your review. Perhaps you have left a review for the wrong business? We'd appreciate it if you could remove your 1-star rating. As you can see from other reviews, we've got many very happy members who love being part of our community."

Reviews are a great tool for people who might be looking into your service and add an extra layer of trust for the audience. We'll leave you with this advice - be careful how you respond, stand your ground and make sure the culprits have genuine intentions.