



Four Steps for Combating Online Negative Reviews



Let's face it, customers exert a remarkable amount of power over businesses these days – anyone with taste buds and a wifi connection can become a restaurant critic with the click of a button. Sites like Yelp & Tripadvisor have revolutionized the way consumers talk about and discover restaurants.

If you're like many restaurant operators, you prefer to ignore the online review sites as it feels out of your control. However, a recent Harvard study found that an up-tick of just 1 star can have up to a 9% overall increase in your sales. There is no doubt that these review sites put forth a significant amount of influence over your customer's actions. Here is a 4-step guide to help you combat negative reviews, as well as utilize online review sites as one of your greatest marketing tools!



1 Embrace Online Reviews

It can be a daunting task to think about how consumers can openly talk about your brand. There are literally hundreds of sites where people can write reviews! However, the 5 key sites you will find nearly 80% of posted online reviews are Yelp, Tripadvisor, Google, Facebook, and Zomato. In order to embrace these sites fully, your first step should be to claim your profile and set up notifications each time a new review is posted. In reality, negative reviews aren't the end of the world. In fact, negative reviews can actually be great for a restaurant. Here's what I mean: if a customer sees only 5-star ratings, they may become a bit skeptical. However, if you see some negative reviews mixed in, a 'positive review sandwich' if you will, it actually creates much more credibility for your restaurant. Everyone knows that a human-based business isn't perfect ALL the time. Embrace that thought and use the negative reviews to your advantage. Which leads to our next point.



2

Always Respond To Negative Reviews

Now that your profiles are claimed, it's important to make a commitment to respond to all negative reviews moving forward. We believe responding to these reviews not only helps pacify an angry customer, but it can also easily turn a negative review into a positive. It shows the thousands of people reading the on line review that there is a earnest & thoughtful management team at this restaurant. You will diffuse the negativity of the review, but you'll also get a chance to show your restaurant's personality and culture to future viewers. Your goal should not be to win an argument when dealing with negative reviews. The goal is to let the customer know you hear their concerns, and that those concerns are important to you. If you work in the restaurant industry you can understand that the customer may not always be right, but that doesn't mean we have to tell them that.

3

Take Bold Steps To Improve Based On Feedback

It's easy to write off negative reviews as it might sometimes appear they come from 'trolls.' However, we encourage you to look at the reviews objectively and seek ways to advance your restaurant. Be transparent with your customers and with your team, by talking about the concerns both internally and publicly. In some cases, you may even want to celebrate the feedback on social media by showing the world what you're doing to improve. This will go a long way to build trust and credibility.



4

Get More Positive Reviews

Ok, we know what you're thinking, Duh, that's the whole goal here! How you might accomplish this however, isn't so obvious. A sure fire way to get more positive reviews online is simple. Ask for it! Add a feedback element on your website or facebook page, advertise the ability to give feedback through your website in your check presenters, add a sign on the back of your front door with a link to your site, add a link to the bottom of your receipts. The point is to not let a customer leave your restaurant without knowing they can give you direct & candid feedback through your website. Once you get that feedback you have the chance to respond and manage the negative reviews, but also to personally invite the positive review customers to write a review on a review website.

We believe there is always a lesson to be learned from customer reviews. Just as you invest your resources into marketing your restaurant, you should actively enhance your online reputation. Our hope is that you're feeling slightly more empowered about your online reputation.