

10 Q&A about Customer Review Marketing



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“Social Proof” is a concept psychologists have used for a number of years to explain social interactions: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_proof

General idea is that **people tend to look to the actions of others when deciding how to act in a certain situation.**

So, when people around you are shaking hands as a greeting during a business meeting, you might be disinclined to kiss them on the cheek. However, if you’re in a culture where kissing on the cheek is a proper greeting, and you see people doing it, then kissing on the cheek has been

“proven” to be the correct action. You’re probably thinking...

“Social proof, psychological mumbo jumbo... What does this have to do with my business?” Well, to put it bluntly, **social proof underlies much of the way marketing for businesses works.**

Let’s think of your business as a person at a party; and let’s say everyone at the party is bad-mouthing you, behind your back. If someone walks into the party without knowing who you are, everyone will tell them all these bad things. What will these people think of you (i.e. your business)?



No matter how nice you act towards them, or how good your products and/or services appear to be, these people will probably believe you’re bad. Their perception was manipulated by the social proof in the room.

The good thing about this is that you can use your understanding of social proof to positively influence what your potential customers will think about your business;

and you can do this by spreading the “good” about your business by influencing customer reviews on the internet.

As a small business owner, you may be wondering just how much an impact customer reviews can have on your ability to generate new customers. Or, maybe you’re not even aware that customer reviews exist online.



10 Q&A about Customer Review Marketing

1. What is an Online Customer Review?

Customer reviews have existed for practically as long as print media has been around. Everything from Consumer Reports to the book reviews in the Sunday Newspapers; these are all forms of customer reviews.

However, customer reviews weren't viewed as their own marketing force until the Internet came along. On the web, it's easier than ever for a customer to write a review that will reach a wide audience.

This is basically the **same power of having a mass-distributed newspaper at your fingertips** (perhaps even more powerful).

For many local businesses, such as restaurants, day spas, hair salons, and others, consumers use sites such as Yelp.com, Google+ Local, and Citysearch to leave feedback for businesses.

For books, there is Amazon.com... and there are a slew of other forms of reviews that can be found online.

These days, if a customer wants his or her voice heard, all it takes is a few strokes of the keyboard and a couple of clicks of the mouse. This can be good or bad depending on their experience with the company.

2. Why are Online Customer Reviews so Important?

Customer reviews are important because people trust them to an insane degree...

Did you know:

- **76% of people read online reviews** before choosing a restaurant to eat at, a dentist to go to etc. That means that they will be led by social proof in whichever decision they make regarding your business: to go or not to go.
- **72% of people trust customer reviews just as much as the recommendations of their friends.**

For a long time, marketing theorists considered word of mouth -- when you hear

something positive about a product from a friend - to be the holy grail of promotion. It was free to have someone else recommend a product, and unlike an advertisement, people were more likely to believe it if a friend said it. Customer reviews on the Internet have flipped the script a little. **The Internet and customer reviews have become word of mouth.**

These statistics show that every company, regardless of its activity or size, must position itself in the new marketplace and use new tools, not only to manage and control its reputation but also to **use its excellent reputation for purely commercial means. That's what is called Reputation Marketing.**



3. Which Customer Review Sites Should We Be Most Concerned About?

The websites that host consumer reviews are almost too numerous to name. Here are a few of the biggest ones with the most reach for local businesses:

- **Google+ Local** - This is a relative newcomer on the customer review scene, yet in the few years it has been around, Google+ has grown into a powerful force for customer reviews. Any business wishing to build its social proof needs to have good reviews on Google+ in order to be successful. The site's power comes from its connection with Google search, the most popular search engine in the world. Whenever someone does a Google search, or uses Google maps, they are automatically connected to a Google+ page for that business.

- **Yelp** - It's the king of restaurant reviews. In recent years, Yelp has become a juggernaut force in the food industry. Most people, before going out to eat at a nice restaurant, will check Yelp first. And the reviews can easily sway these people's opinions: to go or not to go. Remember what we mentioned about social proof at the party: A restaurant will need good buzz - good reviews on Yelp - to build its social proof.

- **Yellow Pages** - This site is another one of the big customer review sites. It's pretty standard in its layout - a description of the business, with hours of operation and prices and menus, along with space for reviews from users.

Again, this is an invaluable tool for reminding your customers of your social proof in the marketplace.

There many others, such as Merchant Circle, Citysearch, Angie's List, Yahoo Local, Bing Local, and more...



4. How Do We Find Out What is Being Said About Us on These Review Sites?

The first thing that any business should do is to Google its own business name. Click through the first few links that pop up about your business, just to get a feel for the type of things being said about your company.

Note if it's good or bad, what kinds of things people are saying and where they are saying them. **Don't panic! No matter how good or bad things seem; everything is repairable.**

While you're doing this, consider what a potential customer would think about your company if he or she was learning about you for the first time on the web. Are these links giving you positive social proof?

Or are they like the people badmouthing you at the party?

The next thing you should do is check out the review sites listed above to get into the nitty-gritty of customer reviews. But first; brace yourself!

Some customer reviews on sites like Yelp are notoriously harsh. **Even the best businesses in the world are bound to have at least one negative review.**

A certain amount of negative customer reviews are fine - to be expected, even - so long as they are balanced out by some good ones.

A potential customer will need to see some good reviews if he or she is to take a chance on your company.

You can't find any reviews about your business, your products or services? Do not think that this doesn't matter! A prospect who has the choice will move to a competitor who has reviews!



5. Should We Actively Ask Customers for Reviews? If So, How?

Absolutely! If you have legitimately satisfied your customers, then why shouldn't you ask them to write a customer review for your business?

As long as you're doing your job, satisfying customers, giving them a positive experience with your business, then your customers would probably have no problem writing about it.

The important thing to remember with this stuff is to ask for customer reviews tactfully. **Don't just ask every single person who walks into your establishment to write you up.** To return to the party metaphor, this would be like if a new person at a party walked up to every guest and said,

"Please like me, please like me, tell all your friends how good I am!" This would be desperate. This party guest would be laughed out of the room, with everyone pointing and saying, "What's wrong with that guy?"

Asking for a customer review should come about naturally... Talk to your staff about recognizing opportunities to suggest that customers write a review. **If your staff has the right touch, and you train them correctly, the positive reviews should start streaming in.**



6. We Do Have Some Positive Reviews... How Do We Let People Know About Them?

There are numerous places where you can share your positive reviews. You can try posting them in your establishment. A printed out customer review shows potential customers that you value your relationships with your customers, and that you are committed to providing them with a great product.

It shows that you care about your customer's experience. Just remember to be careful with this type of thing. Print out too many customer reviews, and you might come across to your customers as gloating.

You can also **link to these reviews on your social media pages, like Facebook and Twitter...** With the interconnectedness of our Web 2.0 digital environment,

posting and sharing reviews is easier than ever. All you have to do is perform a couple of clicks, and your beaming reviews will be there for all your customers to see.

And why stop there? Positive customer experiences should be milked for all they're worth, so **link to them on your business's website.** This way, if anyone goes to your website looking for more information, they will see your positive reviews there as well.

If you're really happy about a customer review, you can post it on the **front page of your website,** or **publish videos on your YouTube channel** informing people about them.

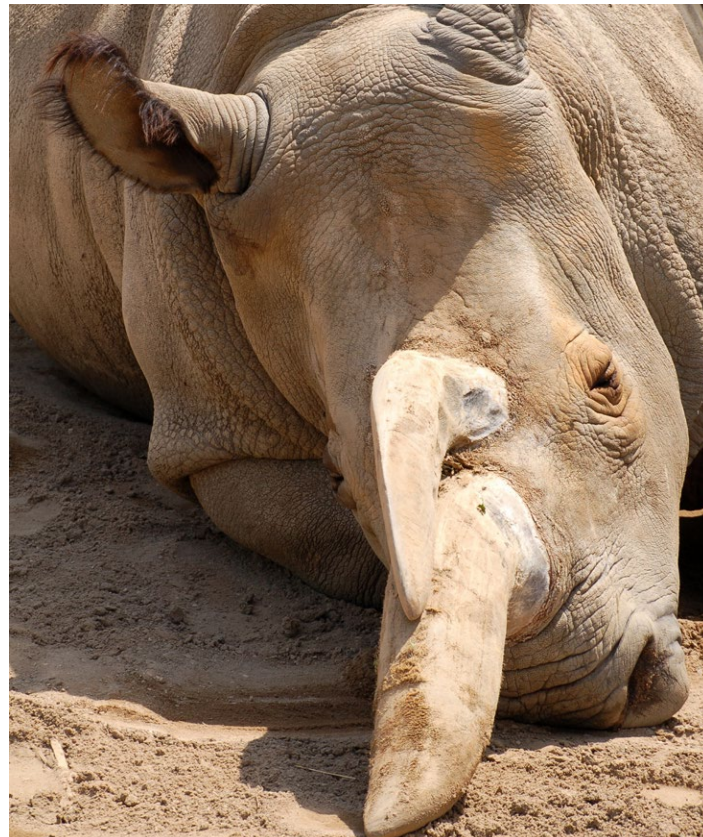
7. We Only Have a Few Negative Reviews. Can That Really Hurt Us?

Like we said earlier, **ONE NEGATIVE REVIEW can seriously hurt your business.** Heck, they might even sink your whole ship... That is, unless you have positive reviews to counterbalance them.

Positive reviews are the real key to the whole customer review world. Consider a negative review like lead, a very dense substance, and positive reviews as cotton.

You will need a whole bunch of positive reviews to outweigh one or two negative ones.

Don't despair over a few negative reviews. Everyone expects negative reviews when they read customer review sites - they're just a reality. A few bitter people will always write nasty things about companies, regardless of their actual experience. All you can do is focus on getting as many positive reviews as you possible.



8. Should We Only Respond to Negative Customer Reviews?

No, you should respond to the positive as well. **Always respond to your negative reviews.** You want to show your customers that you care about them. And if they had a bad experience at your establishment, then you should ask them what you can do to do better next time.

Maybe it's a simple fix - a simple fix that could save you customers in the future.

As far as **positive reviews, shoot for responding to approximately 50% of them.** Save your time on the other 50%, but even happy customers like to be acknowledged from time to time.

9. How Should We Respond to Negative Customer Reviews?

Pay attention, because the following advice is important. First, **read the review carefully**, and try to glean why they were upset in the first place. If they mentioned a specific problem, then **make that problem the subject of your response**.

Keep your response short and upbeat. **You want to stay positive** in the face of their negativity. Tell them that you are

actively working toward fixing their stated problem. **List some steps as to how you plan on addressing the problem**.

Lastly, **invite them to communicate with you offline to fix the problem**. Consider bringing them in to help guide you in the process. **Remember to keep it offline, though**. You don't need any more negative publicity on the internet.



10. Can Social Media Help Us With More Positive Customer Reviews?

Of course! That's what social media is there for. Unlike review sites, which sometimes seems to be the stomping grounds for consumers to tear down stuff they don't like, **social media is effective for getting people to talk about the things they like** and are passionate about.

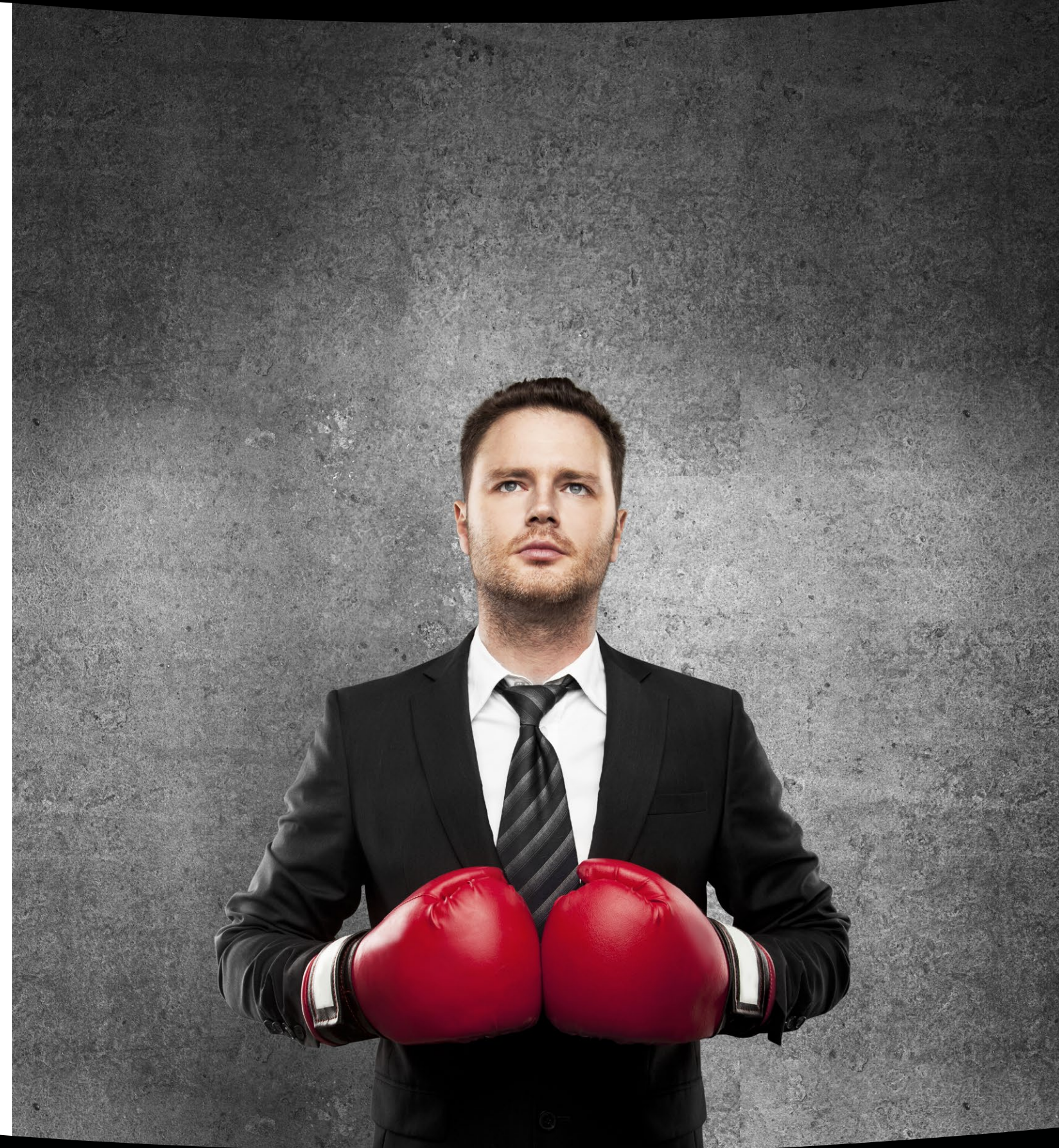
We've progressed a lot from the time when word of mouth was the only way for people to get information from their friends. Now word of mouth has expanded into the vast world of social media. If your business isn't taking advantage of this world, and your competitors are, you're going to have a tough time keeping up.

Customer reviews are a good thing for your business. However, they could be a bad thing if you do not stay on top of what is being said about your company on these sites.

Not only that, but responding to these reviews will give your business a positive image, as well as help you get to the

bottom of customer service issues you may not have been aware of.

Letting your competitors grab your share of the local market could end up being a huge and costly mistake; one way to avoid this is to ensure that your overall image online is a positive one that truly builds trust in your brand.



About Reputation Aegis:

The Aegis, as stated in the Iliad by Homer, is the shield of Athena and Zeus. The concept of doing something “under someone’s Aegis” means doing something under the protection of a powerful, knowledgeable source. We are that source!

Reputation Aegis is a full-featured reputation management platform designed to help businesses:

- establish a 5-star reputation,
- market it both online and off,
- and monitor any changes.

Your reputation is everything! Don't leave it to chance. Learn more by visiting us at: www.reputationaegis.com



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