

ARE YOU OVERLOOKING A KEY RESOURCE?

Your PR agency can manage reviews and strengthen your online reputation



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The proliferation of social media is giving people free reign to post about their experiences and opinions on products and services. In fact, 52 per cent of global internet users aged between 25 to 34 post reviews online.¹

However, while the frequency of posts increases, many brands don't have the in-house resources to actively manage and respond to customer complaints in real time. What these brands don't realise is that their PR agency is best-placed to manage this process and can help significantly improve the organisation's online reputation.

Popular review sites such as Facebook and Google Reviews and other third-party platforms play an influential role in helping businesses gain customer trust and enhance their overall reputation and success online. Online review sites are also an increasingly essential part of the decision-making process, with 95 per cent of Australians reporting they read reviews before buying something online.²

Consumer-reliant brands are sometimes reluctant to engage in online reviews, particularly if they reflect poorly on their product or service. Furthermore, businesses can fall into traps and pitfalls that affect a customer's perception by not responding to reviews, using generic language to respond to reviews, and not responding to reviews quickly enough.

Failing to appropriately manage online reviews can be catastrophic for a brand. However, getting it right can create opportunities to make a business stand out from its competitors.

1. <https://www.statista.com/topics/4381/online-reviews/>

2. <https://www.reviews.org/au/reviews/fake-reviews-survey/>



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The role of a PR agency in managing reviews and online reputation



Online reputation audits

A reputation audit is often the starting point for working on a company's online reputation to gauge the overall sentiment across various review platforms. At its primary level, a reputation audit involves a deep scan for every mention of a business's name. By frequently monitoring media mentions, agencies can help businesses avoid the potential loss of new leads. When a reputation audit reveals negative reviews, the automatic reaction is to remove, ignore, or negatively respond back to them. However, an agency knows that this approach can do more harm than good. Instead, a polite, professional response will reassure customers that the brand is actively seeking to resolve problems when they arise and is receptive to both praise and criticism.



Active review monitoring

Businesses that conduct product review management in-house often struggle with a lack of resources, including the capacity to have customer service teams work outside regular hours. In fact, many businesses delegate review monitoring to one single person, limiting how much one can monitor and remedy, especially when factoring in annual leave, sick leave, and other types of employee leave.

Having agency support means businesses have an entire team monitoring for reviews, especially on weekends and nights, which are high-risk times for flare ups on social media.



Legal advice

Because information is more widely accessible to the public, one negative review can hurt businesses in many ways. To combat negative attention, some businesses attempt to omit or edit these reviews to maintain a perfect five-star rating. However, contrary to widespread belief, loyalty has a lot more to do with how well businesses resolve problems and deliver on basic promises, compared to organisations that rely on over-the-top positive ratings. In a recent survey, 76 per cent of respondents said they would be more inclined to trust a product with a four out of five-star rating with 15 reviews, compared to a product with five stars and only five reviews.³ Another risk for businesses is not being aware of the liabilities around third parties who leave reviews and comments online. That's why it's often a good idea to seek legal advice before reaching out to the customer directly, particularly when the review is defamatory or threatening. An agency can help recommend whether reviews should be taken down or left up and responded to for transparency.



Response strategies

When a customer presents an issue, a business's first instinct is to provide an immediate solution to the problem in the hope of delighting the customer. Often, this is a quick-fix solution that fails to consider the root cause of the complaint in the first place. Instead, businesses should aim to respond to complaints and negative reviews with courtesy before trying to reach an amicable resolution that satisfies both sides. This is where having an agency on board can improve a business's customer service strategy. An effective agency will develop a response matrix that provides a framework on how to respond to reviews based on the nature of their issue, escalating as necessary.

3. <https://www.capterra.com.au/blog/1266/how-important-online-reviews-australian-customers>

While an agency doesn't replace customer service, it can enhance the customer service team and ensure customers feel heard.



The advantages of using a PR agency to improve online reputation instead of trying to do it all in-house



1.

Builds trust

A positive online presence builds trust and credibility, while a distinct lack of trust poses a significant threat to a business's ability to grow and develop relationships with its customers. Since most people depend on reviews to aid decision-making, teaming up with an agency that has expertise in helping businesses engage in authentic conversations on review platforms is key. Through communicating clear brand values and promoting positive engagement, a PR agency can rebuild trust with customers and create even stronger relationships.

2.

Reinforces brand and image

A successful partnership with an agency can have an incredible influence on an organisation's long-term image, particularly when it comes to reaffirming customer trust in a brand. By regularly monitoring the responses on any of their review platforms, PR agencies can help organisations build the brand image that they want. An agency can also track and identify repeat issues or questions that could be addressed through proactive customer communication or simple product improvements.

3.

Increases customer retention

With today's abundance of consumer options, businesses must constantly find new ways to increase customer retention and continue to grow revenue from existing customer accounts. While acquiring a new customer is exciting, it's often more expensive than retaining an existing one. A PR agency that has deep knowledge of the benefits that customer reviews have on retention can develop an effective retention strategy to build customer loyalty and engagement.

4.

Improves search engine optimisation (SEO)

Customer reviews aren't just a reflection of a customer's experience, they can also improve SEO ranking when used effectively. Reviews, even negative ones, often contain keywords that are relevant to the specific business. Keywords in reviews can help businesses naturally rank higher in search results, increasing traffic to the business's webpage. A knowledgeable PR agency understands the importance of customer reviews, positive or otherwise, and will engage with customers in a professional-yet-friendly manner to turn a negative experience into a positive one.

5.

Accelerates sales

Most people search online before deciding to buy a product or service, including trawling through customer reviews. Reviews paint an honest picture of a product or service that organisations can use to make positive statements about their company and generate new leads. The best PR agencies know how to use online reviews to accelerate a business's sales pipeline.



How our expertise can help your brand

Since 1986, Write Away Communication has been helping businesses to simplify their messaging and connect with the right audiences. We understand the importance of a positive online brand reputation to build trust, improve visibility, and achieve critical growth and success.

Write Away helps our clients manage their online reviews and avoid the many pitfalls that could damage the organisation's brand.

If you'd like to know more about how we can help you manage your reviews and online reputation, contact us today.

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