TOP 10 BENEFITS
OF ONLINE CUSTOMER REVIEWS

Top 10 Benefits of Online Customer Reviews

Introduction

Why should you care about online customer reviews?

This is a question many businesses have, especially local companies that don't necessarily do any selling online. How much of a difference can online reviews actually make for your company if most of your business is conducted offline?

The truth is, they make a LOT of difference:

- 88% of consumers trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations
- 72% say that positive reviews make them trust a local business more
- 92% of users will use a local business if it has at least a 4-star rating

People love voicing their opinions on the products and services they use and the internet has made it extremely easy for them to do so. The popularity of smartphones and tablet devices has also made it easy for consumers to search for information for local businesses while on the move.

Although it's impossible to please every single customer, that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Even when you do manage to keep the majority of your customers happy, satisfied customers don't usually go out of their way to write a review. That means if you want one, you're going to have to ask.

Online reviews don't just help you to get more leads for your business, they are also extremely powerful when it comes to converting those leads into customers.

Online reviews started out on dedicated review sites, such as Google Local, Yelp, Yahoo Local, and others. But now they can even be incorporated onto your own business website and social media profiles. No matter where your consumers choose to leave a review, they will work in your favor by helping you attract more leads and convert them into customers. That's, of course, if most of them are good.

Along with their actual thoughts, the customer will be asked to leave a star rating. There are usually 5 stars to select from, with 1 being the lowest rating and 5 being the highest.

What's important to note here is that the star rating is potentially the most important part of the review. Businesses which receive the most 5 star ratings are always shown first in search engines. So if you're looking to draw in new customers and boost sales, those 5-star ratings are key.

So online reviews work in two ways. One, they help increase your search engine exposure automatically on popular search engines. Two, they provide information to consumers actively looking to find out more about your company.

The benefits reach a lot further than that however. Read on to learn more about how online reviews can help your business…

Top 10 Benefits of Online Reviews

So you know their importance and how they work, but what exactly are the benefits of online reviews?

1. People Trust What Others Say About Businesses

Consumers aren't going to choose your products and services simply because you say they should. You're obviously going to be biased about your own products. Customers on the other hand, provide an unbiased insight based upon their actual interaction with you.

To the consumer, a customer's opinion is far more reliable than the word of a business. They're more likely to say if something went wrong. There's nothing in it for the customer other than sharing their experience to help others, so that's why people trust them more than the business itself.

Customer opinion matters in this day and age and with so many review sites out there, along with social media, the customer voice is stronger than ever before.

2. Attract More Serious Leads

Online reviews are also going to help you attract more serious leads. If a consumer is reading a review on your company, they're already interested in buying from you. So a positive review could sway them to make a decision. Put simply, customers heading to your website after reading a review are a lot more likely to make a purchase.

Your marketing efforts can help to draw in a large amount of traffic to your website, but the sad truth is that the majority aren't going to make a purchase; they're simply curious about your brand and the products you offer. But those who are reading online reviews are the most likely to move along in the purchase process.

3. Boost Click Through Rates & Sales

As mentioned earlier, the star rating on reviews is particularly beneficial. When displayed in search engine results, they make a significant impact on click through rates. Some studies show that the star rating shown in search engine results can increase click through rates by 10%-20%.

It's not just the click through rates that increase, your sales will also improve. Following on from the previous benefit, consumers who have read a review on your business are already thinking about doing business with you. So, if the review they read is positive, it's going to persuade them to take the plunge and make a purchase.

Not only that, but they're likely to spend more when they do. Research shows that customers are likely to spend an estimated 31% more on a company that has received excellent reviews.

4. Free Word of Mouth Marketing

For years' word of mouth has been the most successful form of marketing. However, before the internet it had a very limited reach. Online reviews can be viewed by millions of people, making them one of the most powerful

types of digital marketing. Your customers are essentially doing all of the hard work for you too.

What's more, they don't just generate interest in your business as soon as they are posted. They carry on working long after they are published. So if you want to really market your brand, online reviews are definitely something you need to focus on.

5. Increases Customer Loyalty & Retention

It can't be stressed enough just how important customer loyalty and retention is these days. It's not enough to focus all of your effort on drawing in new customers. You also have to make sure your existing ones are happy.

After all, happy customers stay loyal and will continue to help you maintain a healthy stream of profits. So how exactly do online reviews help with customer loyalty?

Online reviews give your customers an avenue to give their opinions about products, services and businesses. Asking customers what they think about you makes them feel important. It also shows you care about the customer's experience.

Now we've largely talked about positive reviews so far. But even negative online reviews give you the chance to build up loyalty and retain customers. For instance, let's say one of your customers has a negative experience and writes a review about it. If you don't respond to that review, they're simply going to go elsewhere (and likely tell their friends and family to too).

However, if you respond in a timely manner and provide a good solution, it shows you care about their experience and you're willing to do what is needed to compensate. In turn, they are more likely to give you another chance and write a more positive review, or update their negative one, if they have a much better experience the second time around.

Having a loyal customer base also increases your chances of attracting new customers. So it's a win-win situation.

6. Enhance Local SEO

A key part of getting noticed online is ensuring you're targeting local SEO. Online reviews really help with this. How? Well firstly search engines look out for continuous, fresh and unique content. Online reviews nail this.

If you manage to get a good level of online reviews, it's going to really boost your rankings on mobile search, as well as on standard desktop search results.

Not only do they boost search engine rankings, but they'll also push you to the top of review sites too. If a customer heads to a review site to try and find the best products and services, they'll be presented with the businesses that have gained the most reviews. So if you're looking to boost your local SEO efforts, reviews are the way to go.

7. Valuable Market Research

Online reviews don't just provide value to the consumer, they can also give you a unique insight into what people actually think about your services. You'll discover what customers like about your products and services, as well as get to see whether there's anything this dislike. Are there any products and services that continue to get glowing reviews? If so, you'll know to continue offering them.

Rather than getting disheartened by negative points made in a review, instead you can view them as a learning opportunity. See it as a chance to improve your services and perhaps even create new products which better meet the needs of the customer.

Knowing what your customers want is a powerful tool that shouldn't be ignored. Start taking notice of the reviews you're receiving and use them to boost your success.

8. Build Trust & Credibility

Trust is essential in business. People aren't going to buy from you if they don't trust you. With 72% of consumers admitting they trust a business that has received positive reviews, you get an idea of just how much they really matter.

They also build up your credibility. If you're receiving reviews it shows you're an actual, genuine company. People have bought from you and they've received the products and services you are advertising. Due to just how popular online reviews have become, if a business doesn't have any these days it does make a consumer suspicious.

Positive reviews also eliminate risk; something that can really prevent a consumer doing business with a company online. There's always a risk involved. Will the products or services be of good quality? Wil they arrive in a timely manner? Consumers also want to know what will happen if there's a problem during the transaction. Without any reviews, all of these questions remain unanswered.

9. You Gain an Edge Over the Competition

What's the one thing you need to do in order to succeed? Stand out from your competitors! Providing that the reviews you receive are good, you're going to gain an edge over your competitors, encouraging consumers to buy from you, rather than elsewhere. A glowing review is simply evidence that your products and services are better.

It will also put your site ahead of your competitors in search rankings and gives you a much more dominant online presence.

10. Create Brand Awareness

When customers review your business online, they help to build brand awareness. In particular, good interactions between you and your customers will spread quickly on social media and other online spaces.

People who may not have otherwise known about your company are now seeing it pop up. Not only that, but listings that have good reviews show up higher in the search results. So as searchers continue to see your company

showing up in the top ranks, they will become more familiar with your brand.

Also, reviewers encourage further reviews. If a consumer see's other people commenting on your business, they're likely to join in.

Reviews give customers the ability to comment and share their tips and advice on products and services. This engagement keeps building up your brand, significantly increasing awareness.

Conclusion

Overall, online reviews are an extremely important tool for local businesses. As you can see, they provide all kinds of benefits and have the power to really influence the consumer. Of course, they also have the potential to really damage your business too.

Negative reviews can't always be prevented, but how you respond to them will make a massive difference to how they affect your company. Remember to respond to ALL reviews quickly and politely. Not only will this minimize any potential damage of a negative review, but it will also encourage more customers to leave one.

Not sure how to encourage more customers to leave a review? Why not benefit from professional help? Contact me personally today at the number below and I'll answer any questions you have and help get you started on the right track to gaining positive, glowing online reviews.

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