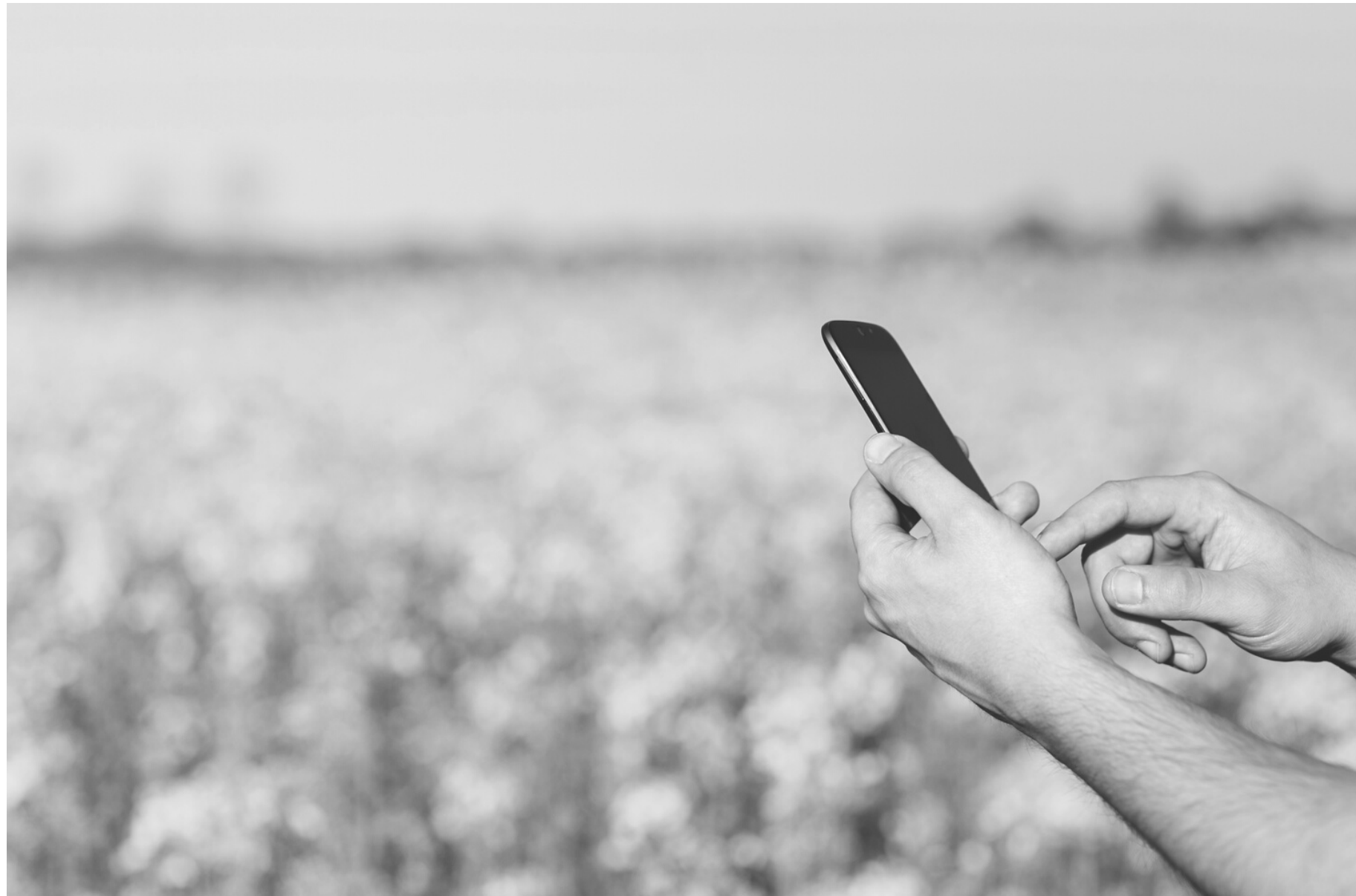


8 Response Templates For Negative Reviews

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Negative reviews, left by unhappy customers, present a serious problem for almost every business. When customers leave a negative review, it's a sign of broken trust and feels like an accusation.



SHOULD YOU RESPOND?

If so, what's the best way?

No matter what, it's essential for you to know when there's a negative review about your business published. Review monitoring is going to be the first step in your review management strategy, then you need to know how to respond.

LET'S TAKE A LOOK.

FIRST THINGS FIRST.



Identify Your Reviewer

J.M. Rensink, researcher at the University of Twente, discovered that there are seven motivations behind positive and negative word-of-mouth. Today, we'll focus on the negative. Namely, why customers leave negative reviews.

Why do customers leave negative reviews?

1. VENGEANCE

This customer has had a bad experience. They feel you've wronged them in some way and they're out for revenge.

2. ANGER/ANXIETY REDUCTION

This customer is trying to self soothe. They're looking for a way to vent, to purge, relieve or reduce the pressure from their negative emotions.

3. SOLUTION SEEKING

These customers have a problem but feel they can't trust their company to fix that problem. They reach out to reviewers and prospective buyers for advice, multiplying your problem.

4. ALTRUISM/TEACHING

These customers are simply reporting the facts as they see them. They're focused on sharing their experiences with the public at large whether those experiences are positive or negative.

5. MESSAGE INTRIGUE

These reviews can be positive or negative. They're triggered by external activity (e.g. ads, commercials, or a public relations disaster).

These details inform and educate.

Prospective buyers use these negative reviews as profiling tools. They are resources buyers can use to evaluate your business quickly. With that in mind, let's take a look at our first response template.



Response template #1: The vengeful customer

This customer isn't looking for satisfaction. They don't want a resolution to the problem. Their focus is uncomplicated. They want to hurt you. The more damage they're able to produce, the better.

This customer hates their business. Not only are they willing to post a negative review, they're attempting to rally reviewers to their cause. They want to see this business fail.

How should you respond to a customer's review when you've let them down? Is there anything you can say to restore or salvage the relationship?

Here's a template you can use to respond to your vengeful customers.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:



Larry [blurred]
2 reviews



★☆☆☆☆ a year ago

THEY DONT EVEN DESERVE 1 STAR.

RUN THE OTHER DIRECTION!!!! STAY AWAY FROM THIS DEALER!!!! THEY SHOULD BE ON DANCING WITH THE STARS BECAUSE THE SURE KNOW HOW TO DANCE AROUND WARRANTY REPAIRS!!!

I WOULDNT LET THEM PUT AIR IN A BICYCLE TIRE!!!



1



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The vengeful customer

Response template #1: The vengeful customer

Hi [Reviewers Name],

[Name] here, I'm the [title] at [business name]. I'm so sorry we let you down.

We've taken your feedback, and the feedback of other reviewers, to heart. We're in the process of making some major changes.

[Specific yet concise list of changes]

Is there anything we can do to make this up to you? I completely understand if you're angry and simply looking for space/closure. However, I'd like to make things right if I can.

Are you open to this?

[Manager name | contact number]

- It's easy to attack a faceless corporation. It's not quite as easy to attack a specific person, especially one who is innocent and simply attempting to do their job. Beginning and ending with a name improves your odds of humanizing the conversation.

IT'S NO GUARANTEE OF COURSE.

- In fact, if you're dealing with a vengeful customer, the chance of this working is a low percentage.

THIS IS GOOD NEWS.

- This response isn't for your vengeful customer. This response is for future prospective buyers who stumble across your negative review. As a whole, customers are reasonable people. They expect to see negative reviews. But more importantly, they're interested in seeing how you respond to these negative reviews. That's the key.

Why it works.

These customers are angry. Their anger may be based on several legitimate or illegitimate factors concerning your situation.

HERE'S THE KEY DIFFERENTIATOR.

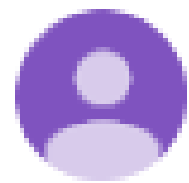
At first glance, these customers sound like the vengeful customers. But these customer had certain expectations going in and spent their money with the expectation of a particular return and those expectations weren't met.

THIS IS SALVAGEABLE.

Relationships like these can be repaired. But only if you're able to use the right verbiage. Here's a template you can use to respond to your angry customers.

Response template #2: The angry/anxious customer

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:



Janann *[Redacted]*
1 review



★☆☆☆☆ a year ago

Worst experience of my life!! Totally unreasonable to work with customers. Won't come thru with warranty work. Wrecked our brush cutter that was brand new and refuse to repair or replace. \$70k Skid Steer has been at their shop for a total of three months for repair work because of being a defective piece of equipment. Would not recommend them to anyone.



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The
angry/
anxious
customer

Response template #2: The angry/anxious customer

[Reviewers Name], you're right.

You expected [result], you should have received that but that's not what we delivered. If I were in your situation, I'd be pretty upset too.

I'm so sorry we missed the mark on this.

We should have caught this the first time but we didn't. These mistakes have been hard (and expensive) lessons to learn. We're using your feedback to [concise list of changes].

Can we make this up to you (at our expense)?

I'd like to do whatever I can to correct our mistake and earn your forgiveness. What can we do to make this right?

Please reach me directly at [Manager name | contact number]

Why it works.

We're using the language of apology. Most people aren't aware of the fact that apologies have their own language. Most people expect specific things from the apologies they receive.

1. REGRET

These customers want to hear the words "I'm sorry." They want to see and understand that you feel regret for your actions.

2. FORGIVENESS

These customers want you to request reconciliation. They want to see your humility and/or vulnerability. Some may intentionally reject you when you ask. Others may welcome you back with open arms.

4. REFORM

These customers want to know what you'll do to prevent this issue or problem from ever happening again.

3. RESTITUTION

These customers want you to restore them, to make things whole. This could be issuing a refund, doing the work for free, replacing a particular item.

5. OWNERSHIP

These customers want you to accept responsibility for your mistakes and own them - without excuses, evasion or blame.



The angry/anxious customer

Which one is most important to your customer?

YOU HAVE NO IDEA.

Which is why it's important that you include elements of all five in your response. This isn't as important with vengeful customers as they're simply looking for ways to hurt you.

Customers aren't always emotional. Some customers just want a solution to a specific problem but they're too afraid to ask for help.

RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE REPAIRED

But you need to be willing to:

- Go above and beyond for your customers (e.g. making yourself fully available to customers) and/or
- Reversing the risks they face with a promise of some kind (e.g. guarantee, warranty, or seller-assumed risk). Here's a template you can use to respond to your solution seeking customers.

Response template #3:

The solution seeker

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:



Cole
4 reviews



★ ★ ★ ★ ★ 2 years ago

Called to see if they would be open till 5. The parts guy told me they close at 5 and that no one would be able to help me. I asked if they would be able to stay a couple minutes later because I really needed to get a customer's machine up and running tonight. I was told no. I ended up making it there a couple minutes before 5 and as I'm running up to the door employees are walking out before 5 telling me "we are closed pal". As this is my first experience with this dealer it will be my last. I'm not sure how the customer service it during the day but know that they won't give an extra 30 seconds for you.



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The solution seeker

Response template #3: The solution seeker

[Reviewers Name], thanks for reaching out.

Your concerns make sense. We could have [taken particular actions] to relieve your stress and anxiety but we didn't do that. I'm sorry about that.

Here's what I can do for you.

I can [concise list of solutions/action steps].

As a courtesy, I'd also like to offer a complementary [bonus actions/reward/incentive]. Would this help to make things right?

Please let me know,

[Manager name | contact number]

This gives solution-seeking customers a way to solve their problem. If you've missed the mark somewhere along the line, now's the time to apologize. Just be sure to use the appropriate apology language.

YOU'LL NEED SOMETHING ELSE TO SEAL THE DEAL.

A bonus, reward or incentive. Your goal here is twofold:

1. Reduce the risks to customers searching for a particular problem and
2. Take those risks onto yourself.

Why it works.

These customers are simply about reporting the facts as they see them. Their focus is on helping others who are interested in an unbiased account of their experience with you.

RELATIONSHIPS CAN BE REPAIRED

Responding to a negative review from an altruistic/teaching customer is straightforward. Just the facts. They're going to share the facts and details of their situation: their experience, the events in question and specific details.

That's what your response needs to include. How do you do that? Here's the template you can use to respond to your altruistic/teaching customers.

Response template #4:

Altruism/teaching customers

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE:



Jeremy [redacted]
11 reviews



★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆ 6 years ago

Bought an aftermarket part for my lawn tractor, was told even though they weren't a cub cadet dealer that the part would work and had a replacement warranty. 1 week, and 1 use later, the part fell apart. I took it back to replace it as per the warranty and was met by the "owner/manager" at the counter who refused to honor the warranty and was rather nasty and profane in his response. I have contacted the Better Business Bureau and have filed a complaint against this company. They sell junk parts, refuse to stand behind their warranties, and treat/talk to customers like dirt. Beware of this company.



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**Altruism/
teaching
customers**

Response template #4: Altruism/teaching customers

Hi [Reviewers Name],

I wanted to thank you for sharing your thoughts and feedback with us. I'm disappointed to hear that you were treated in a way that was less than you deserve. I'm so sorry for that.

This shouldn't have happened to you. We dropped the ball completely here. If you're open to it, I'd like to make this up to you.

Please let me know,

[Manager name | contact number]

This response is light on emotional language. Remember, these altruistic/teaching customers are typically focused on the facts. They're interested in giving those around them a truthful, fair yet unbiased account of their experience with you.

WHICH JUST SO HAPPENED TO BE NEGATIVE.

Go above and beyond for these customers. Do whatever it takes to woo them back to your corner. Take care of them. Shield them from the issues that created these negative reviews in the first place.

TAKE CARE OF THEM.

Do it without an expectation of return. Even if it means you're still rejected by them. Do it for your future buyers. Respond even if you're unsure about the outcomes or potential profit.

Why it works.

Response template #5: Customer blackmail

SOME CUSTOMERS AREN'T FAIR.

They're willing to use blackmail to get what they want from companies. A recent post in CNET found that hotels and restaurants are noticing an increase in blackmail threats.

BUT WHY?

"Instead, they apparently suggest that unless the establishment doesn't treat them in an exaggeratedly accommodating way, they'll post a negative review to a site like TripAdvisor. They allegedly demand upgrades in hotels, or free meals in restaurants."

YIKES.

- If you're a B2C organization, make sure you have surveillance cameras with audio.
- Save all written communication as evidence.
- Report any demands or claims to the police immediately. You can use it as evidence to exonerate you, even if the blackmailer isn't caught.
- Consistently request reviews from customers, this will make it more difficult for blackmailers and spammers to attach themselves to your business.

Simply having evidence you can use or reference in your reviews provides you with the tools and resources you need to counteract any claims against you. Here's a response template you can use to address their accusations.

**Strategies
you can
use.**

Response template #5: Customer blackmail

This customer is attempting to blackmail our business.

They contacted us on [date] and demanded an upgrade to their hotel room.

On the call, they implied that they would post a negative review if we didn't fix the problem.

Only there was no problem.

Here's a screenshot of their email and the audio from their phone call.

[Manager name | contact number]

If you can provide future prospects with the evidence they need, most customers are more than willing to take your word for it (provided that your claim is a compelling one).

YOU MUST BE MORALLY APPROPRIATE.

That means no name-calling, personal attacks, raging, condescension or manipulation. Tell the kind truth, even though your blackmailer doesn't deserve it. This gives you the moral high ground, and it shows everyone you're willing to do what's right.

Why it works.

REVIEWS ARE LEGITIMATE IF THEY:

1. Were written by a bona fide customer who has used your product or service.
2. Represented the facts of the transaction from a reasonable but subjective point of view.
3. Follow the terms and conditions of the review platform the review is posted on.

THIS ISN'T WHAT SPAMMERS DO.

No, these spammers are notorious for breaking the rules.

Response template #6: Review spammers

Who your reviewers could be:

- A competitor who's looking to bury your business under an avalanche of negative reviews or accumulate positive reviews for themselves
- A legitimate customer who had a transaction but decided to lie about it for their own personal gain
- An illegitimate customer who never had a transaction with you but decided to lie about it
- An incentivized reviewer who is compensated or rewarded in some way to write a review that's for or against your business
- The reviewer violates any review platform guidelines (e.g., discriminatory, hateful or libelous content)

Response template #6: Review spammers

This review is fraudulent.

We don't have any clients with the name [Client Business]. And we don't serve any clients in the [financial] industry. We've only ever focused on clients in the [outdoor] industry.

Why it works.

These reviews are factual. They're focused on the events that happened in the truth behind the reviewer's claims. There's no defensiveness, no name-calling, condescension, anger or contempt.

JUST COLD HARD FACTS.

This level headed approach is far more believable to customers than one that's overly defensive or difficult.

Response template #7: The angry mob

Ayesha Curry, wife of Golden State Warriors point guard Stephen Curry, decided to open a new BBQ restaurant. In Houston.

THE PROBLEM?

The Golden State Warriors defeated the Houston Rockets in the NBA semi-finals. Fans responded by flooding his wife's restaurant with fake one-star reviews before it even opened.

HOW DO YOU HANDLE AN ANGRY MOB?

You rally your customer base and ask them to come to your defense. Here's an email template you can use to do that.

Response template #7: The angry mob

[Customer Name],

We need your help. [Reviewer Name] wrote some nasty reviews about our restaurant. They stated that our restaurant was:

[insert quote here]

You're one of our very best customers and I wanted to know if you'd be willing to share the truth about us. If you'd be willing to share the truth about your experience with us, we'd be grateful!

Appreciate you,

[Manager name | contact number]

If you're able to rally loyal customers to your cause, you can accomplish several things.

1. Rally loyal customers to your defense to counteract fraudulent reviews.
2. Reduce the likelihood of attacks against you in the future.
3. Add credibility to your requests when you reach out to the review platforms in question.

WHAT IF YOU DON'T HAVE REVIEWS?

You'll need to use traditional marketing channels (advertising, guest posts, interviews, publicity, etc.) to counteract the negative reviews and hate trolling.

Why it works.

The non-customer review is a variant of the spammer. This reviewer could be a competitor, a spammer, cybercriminal, or disgruntled ex-customer. They could be motivated by revenge, profit or control.

HERE'S AN EXAMPLE.

Mark Jackson, founder of Vizion Interactive, wrote a scathing post about a review platform. That post led to Google taking action against the review platform. The owners of that review platform retaliated against his company posting negative non-customer reviews on Yelp and other platforms.

So how do you handle these reviewers? You call them out with facts and you share evidence. Here's a response template you can use to do that.

Response template #8:

The non-customer review

Response template #8: The non-customer review

This review is fake.

We don't have any clients with the name [Client Business]. And we don't serve any clients in the [industry]. We've only ever focused on clients in the [your] industry.

or

This review is fake news.

We've received threatening emails from a competitor who is looking to punish us for a post we wrote exposing unethical behavior at their company. Here's a screenshot: [link].

We've never worked with anyone by the name of "[Reviewer name]"

It's a factual account that's combined with a story. It gives readers (and prospects) a compelling reason to believe you instead of your negative reviewer. It also (ideally) gives them facts and evidence to hang their belief on.

Why it works.

Negative reviews scream for a response

A negative review, left by an unhappy customer, presents a serious problem for almost every business. When customers leave a negative review it's a sign of broken trust.

IT FEELS LIKE AN ACCUSATION.

And it is. Prospective buyers use these negative reviews as profiling tools. Straightforward tools they use to evaluate your business.

Negative reviews aren't as good as positive reviews (which you should also respond to). But they aren't a fatal blow either. Aside from taking the time to work with your unhappy customers (and sometimes getting them to change a bad review), when you generate positive reviews, you can offset the damage. Asking for reviews with email review requests can provide a bit of a moat from the one-off unhappy customers.

Customize these negative review response templates. You'll have the tools you need to respond to a negative review appropriately.



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