



# *A Resume Guide:*

## HOW TO HANDLE **NEGATIVE FEEDBACK** ONLINE



OCTOPUSCREATIVE

# HOW TO HANDLE NEGATIVE FEEDBACK ONLINE: **A RESCUE GUIDE**



## **REVIEWS | COMMENTS | SHARES | REACTIONS**

Your reputation matters. Not in a shallow water sort of way but in a real-life, ocean depths way.

Negative online reviews, comments, and shares can make a business owner feel like they're drowning. This rescue guide will show you how to respond to criticism in a way that ultimately improves your reputation and builds better relationships with customers.

## DON'T PANIC

---

Negative reviews are a part of life.

If a business has been online long enough they're bound to receive gloomy feedback. The important thing to remember is that it's less about the criticism and more about how you respond to the criticism that matters.

This rescue guide will help you tackle bleak critiques in a way that helps you improve customer service and shows you how to manage your reputation so you come out ahead of the competition.

## REVIEWS

---

Did you know online reviews have a bigger impact on purchase decisions than word-of-mouth recommendations? It's true.

Today, 97% of people read online reviews before making a buying decision or choosing a service provider.

A slightly smaller percentage of people, 85%, search out negative reviews when making the same decisions. Why? Because they want to:

1. Get a feel for how a business handles customer concerns, and
2. Understand what sort of things have gone wrong in the past. A potential customer can then decide whether it's something they want to risk by making a purchase. We call this 'worse case scenario' research.

## **BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE REVIEWS HAVE THEIR PROS AND CONS.**

Too many positive reviews about a business and a person will start to doubt they're real and trustworthy. Too few, and it becomes a red flag.

A business obviously wants to minimize negative reviews. Having said that, having the right amount can be valuable.

## THE BENEFIT OF NEGATIVE REVIEWS

Negative feedback can give a boost to your business in unexpected ways.

It may seem counterintuitive but when it comes to reviews, your goal shouldn't be to get more five-stars, your goal should be to **respond** to your reviews as quickly and as genuinely as possible.

The way a business treats a less-than-positive write-up tells a customer a lot about them. Do it right and you can strengthen customer loyalty and build your reputation as a trustworthy business.

So, what's a business to do with a bad review?

### 1. DON'T IGNORE NEGATIVE REVIEWS, EMBRACE THEM.

A negative review isn't the problem. Ignoring a negative write-up is the problem.

Address criticism quickly and you can turn an unhappy customer into a happy one. Ignore it, and you might as well steer your ship into a sea of never-ending 100 foot waves.

### 2. COME UP WITH A PLAN OF ATTACK

Like a great white shark, your plan of attack matters to the success of your customer interaction. But unlike a shark, you don't want your attack to be fast and impulsive, you want it to be careful and deliberate.

Set yourself apart from other companies by replying to complaints in a professional and attentive way.

Follow these steps to come up with your bad review attack plan:

#### » Before you reply to a disgruntled customer, wait.

If you react too quickly you may say something you'll later regret or won't be able to follow-up. Don't risk your reply backfiring or making the situation worse by responding too hastily.

#### » But don't wait forever to respond to a review

As much as you don't want to answer feedback too fast you also don't want to be too slow.

The longer you wait to get back to an unhappy customer, the greater your chance of forgetting or putting it off indefinitely. **53% of consumers** expect a business to respond to their negative review within a week.

### » Assess the negative reviewer for their clout.

Not all negative reviews are created equal.

Ask yourself, is this one-star rating from a real customer or an internet troll?

Is the person offering constructive criticism in the form of valuable, specific feedback or are they simply looking for attention and making trouble?

If it's the former and you're hearing a critique from a genuinely disappointed customer, go out of your way to listen to them and fix the problem.

If the review is from a cyberbully, don't waste your time trying to make them happy because you never will.

## 3. CHOOSE YOUR VOICE

What type of business do you have? What voice do you use in your communications and marketing? Is the language you use formal and tactful or friendly and conversational?

Cater your communications with disgruntled customers using a voice that mirrors your brand.

Whatever direction you take remember to:

- Stay genuine
- Don't answer with a templated reply
- Take the time to look into each customer concern individually, and
- Respond accordingly

## 4. SCRIPT YOUR REPLY

We realize this sounds counter to "Don't answer with a templated reply" but hear us out.

As much as you don't want to use the same response for every complaint, you also don't want to miss key points in your answer.

## OUR 5 POINT SCRIPT: USE THE BASICS OF A GOOD APOLOGY

### POINT 1: Apologize, empathize, and thank them

As with any good apology, start by saying you're sorry. Thank them as well.

Put yourself in your customers' shoes and empathize with how they're feeling. Say, "We're sorry to have disappointed you. We get how frustrating this must be for you. Thank you for bring the issue to our attention."

### **POINT 2: Reaffirm what your company stands for & accept responsibility**

Say something like, “At Great White Sharks Inc., we work to make every customer feel welcomed and important. We’re sorry we missed the boat this time around (no pun intended).”

### **POINT 3: Ask what you can do to rebuild their trust**

A simple, “Please tell us what we can do to make it better” will start to rebuild your relationship with the customer.

You’ll also be telling them you’re willing to listen.

### **POINT 4: Explain what you’ll do to ensure it never happens again**

Say something like, “We promise to do XYZ to ensure this never happens again.”

Give a concrete example of what you’ll do, not something vague.

### **POINT 5: Ask for forgiveness**

It may sound obvious, but saying, “Please forgive us” shows your humility and goes a long way to building trust with the customer and the public.

### **POINT 6: Move the conversation offline**

Give the client the contact information of someone at the company who has the power to do something about their concern, or has direct access to someone who does. By moving the conversation away from the public eye, you can get into the specifics of the concern.

## **5. KEEP IT SHORT & SWEET**

The script we’ve given you includes 6 touchpoints, but this isn’t an invitation to write the equivalent of Moby Dick in your replies.

Stick to the point. Longer responses not only waste time but can also seem disingenuous.

#### **PRO TIP: THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE REPUTATION**

Don’t include the name of your business or relevant keywords in your replies. This type of information will stick around on the internet and can come up in future searches of your business or service offering.

**Avoid as many search results pointing to negative reviews about you as possible.**



# COMMENTS

## THE EXTRA POTENCY OF NEGATIVE COMMENTS

Negative comments made on social media are especially important to manage because of their visibility. Public comments are more likely to:

1. Be made by less loyal customers
2. Come from trolls or online troublemakers
3. Have less weight in terms of a gripe or a real problem you can solve
4. Be made up or be about a false claim
5. Draw more public attention,
6. Create a ripple effect of additional negative comments, and
7. Get out of control quickly.

### PRO TIP: MAKE IT EASIER BY USING SOCIAL SOFTWARE

There is software out there that you can use to more effectively manage your social media comments. Tools like [Hootsuite](#), [Sprout Social](#) or [Octopus Creative's Social Management tool](#) can make responding to social comments much, much easier.

With the right tool, you'll spend less time searching for comments that need a reply and more time addressing your customers' concerns.

## ASSESSING THE RISK TO YOUR REPUTATION

Depending on the size and scope of your business, the likelihood of receiving a negative comment that's from a troll or that's about something that never happened will vary.

If the comment comes from a cyberbully, the risk to our reputation may be very low. A real customer will be savvy enough to spot a complaint that comes from a troll. In this case, it won't have an affect on your work.

Nonetheless, it's important to monitor social comments so that you don't miss any of the real comments that need your attention.

### **PRO TIP: BE WHERE YOURS CUSTOMERS ARE**

Your customers may spend most of their time on social media which means they'll go there to leave a negative comment. Make sure you monitor social comments and direct messages (DMs) so that you don't leave an unhappy client hanging.

**Remember: the worst kind of negative review is the one that's ignored.**

### **PRO TIP: KNOW WHEN IT'S OK TO DELETE NEGATIVE REVIEWS**

Did you know that in some cases it may be perfectly acceptable and appropriate to delete negative comments and reviews?

**There's a secret to removing negative comments when it's appropriate. [Get in touch](#) with us to learn when and how.**





# SAMPLE REPLIES

Here are templates you can use when replying to negative reviews. Whether you use a formal tone or a familiar one, these scripts will help you ride the wave of negativity.

Cater the templates to the specific situation and person who made the review.

## SAMPLE 1: FORMAL

### When replying on a review site

Dear [Reviewer's Name],

My name is [your name here] and I'm the [title] at [business name].

I'm very sorry we let you down. Please accept our sincerest apologies.

We take your feedback seriously. We are in the process of making significant changes to ensure [insert issue] never happens again. [Explicitly explain the changes you're going to make].

What can we do to make things right?

I would like to discuss the situation further with you. Please contact me at the number below and we can continue the conversation.

[Manager name | contact email/phone number]

### When replying to a comment on social media

@[customer's handle] We understand your [product they purchased] isn't performing as expected—that doesn't sit well with us. When you have a moment, please send us a private message so we can follow up with you.

#### PRO TIP: ADJUST YOUR REPLY BASED ON CUSTOMER TYPE

Adjust your response based on the type of customer. Are they angry? Anxious? Vengeful? Are they hoping to teach you something about a glitch in customer service? Is the customer looking for a solution?

**Your reply needs to speak to how your customer is feeling.** Tweak your response based on the sentiment of their review.

## SAMPLE 2: FRIENDLY

### When replying on a review site

Hi [Reviewers Name],

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feedback with us. I'm disappointed to hear that you were treated so poorly—you didn't deserve it, nor is this how [insert business name] looks to treat its loyal customers.

I'm very sorry.

We've taken your feedback to heart and are in the process of making major changes to ensure [insert issue] never happens again.

If you're open to it, I'd like to make it up to you.

Please contact me and we can go from there,

[Manager name | contact email/phone number]

### When replying to a comment on social media

Hearing this doesn't sit well with us. Please send us a DM—we're happy to continue the conversation there. We want to turn this experience around for you.

#### **PRO TIP:** ADJUST YOUR RESPONSE LENGTH TO THE PLATFORM

Review sites like Yelp or Google allow more space for replies. Social media, on the other hand, works best with 'short, short, short & sweet' responses.

Replies to comments on social media should be shorter than replies on review sites.



# WE HOPE THIS GUIDE HELPS YOU FEEL **MORE CONFIDENT** ABOUT REPLYING TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS

But if you need an extra hand, we have eight you can use.

## GET HELP FROM THE **PROS**

BOOK A FREE 30-MINUTE STRATEGY CALL WITH US

**NEEDA**  
*Reputation*  
**MANAGEMENTSIDEKICK?**

Online is evolving faster, and weirder than anyone can possibly keep up with. We know, sometimes you need a sidekick. A Dory to your Nemo. A Butch to your Cassidy. A coffee to your doughnut.

Or, if you want to get technical, a pro agency that'll be your entire marketing department without you having to buy desks and dental plans and stuff.