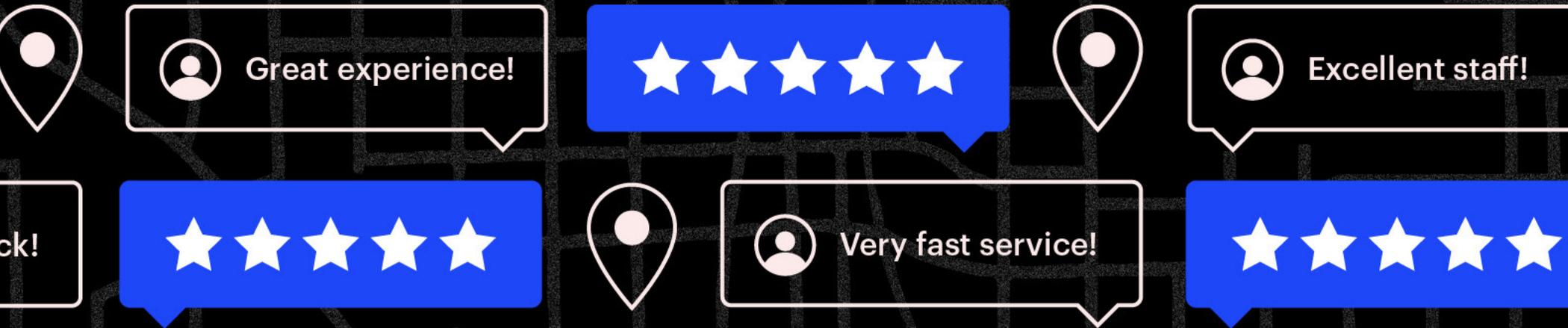


Online Reputation 101

The Online Reputation Playbook for Multi-Location Businesses



A collage of review snippets and star ratings on a map background. The snippets include:

- Great experience!
- Excellent staff!
- Very fast service!
- ck!

Each snippet is accompanied by a 5-star rating in a blue speech bubble and a location pin icon.

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Reviews are the new word of mouth



3

Reviews are the new word of mouth.

Online reviews are important. Nearly 90% of all consumers report reading a review before making a purchase or working with a local business.¹ Replacing the physical word-of-mouth referral, online reviews have not only filled the need for modern customers, they've now become the trusted source for choosing who to buy from.

Customers value third-party opinions to make purchase decisions:

- 72% of consumers say positive testimonials and reviews increase their trust in a business.²
- 70% of consumers consider online reviews more persuasive and trustworthy than traditional advertising.³
- 95% of consumers read a review before making a purchase.⁴

¹ https://www.highlevelmarketing.com/blog/The-Increasing-Importance-of-Customer-Reviews_AE425.html

² <https://boast.io/20-statistics-about-using-testimonials-in-marketing/>

³ <https://review42.com/resources/online-reviews-statistics/>

⁴ <https://learn.g2.com/customer-reviews-statistics>



But it takes more than reviews to build a good online reputation.

Your online reputation is the culmination of everything a customer or potential lead can find about your business online. Beyond a few Google reviews, your online reputation includes the quantity, quality, and recency of reviews to help customers make a decision about your business. Your average review rating, search result ranking, review responses, and other third-party review sites also add to the nearly-instant opinion a new customer forms about your business.

Your online reputation includes:

- Total number of Google reviews
- Third-party review sites (often specific to your industry)
- Social media presence (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)
- Review ratings and rank
- Review responses from both your business and other customers
- Your business listing's rank order in search results

75% of all clicks go to the top three to five Google search results.⁵

⁵ <https://backlinko.com/google-ctr-stats>

Managing online reputation can be an uphill battle.

For many multi-location businesses, collecting reviews, responding to reviews, ensuring those reviews accurately reflect a typical customer experience, and finding ways to improve the quality of reviews is challenging and time consuming. Add in businesses that must manage dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of business locations and it's a perfect storm.

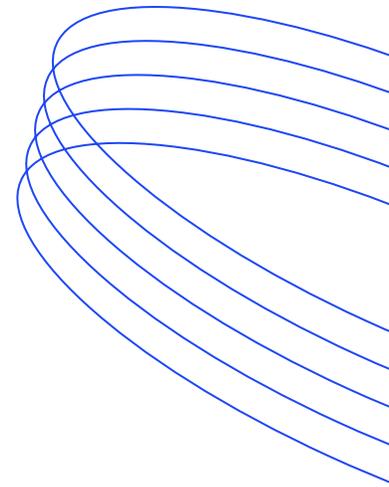
The most common challenges for managing a business's online reputation include:

- **Reviews posted organically aren't positive**

Without a formal review request process for every customer, organic reviews are left to customers that have had a negative experience with your brand. And when only disgruntled customers leave comments online, the reviews don't paint an accurate picture of your typical customer experience.

- **New customers can't find your business**

Without relevant reviews (using keywords for SEO), recent reviews, and a larger quantity of reviews, your business won't show up in the top three to five Google search results. And when you don't show up where leads are searching, your customer growth suffers.



- **Review quantity and quality isn't balanced across locations**

While certain locations might have plenty of positive reviews, others are lacking in both quantity and quality. When there isn't a formal process for gathering reviews across every location, each store is left to their own devices to ask and then follow up on reviews.

- **No formal review request or review management process**

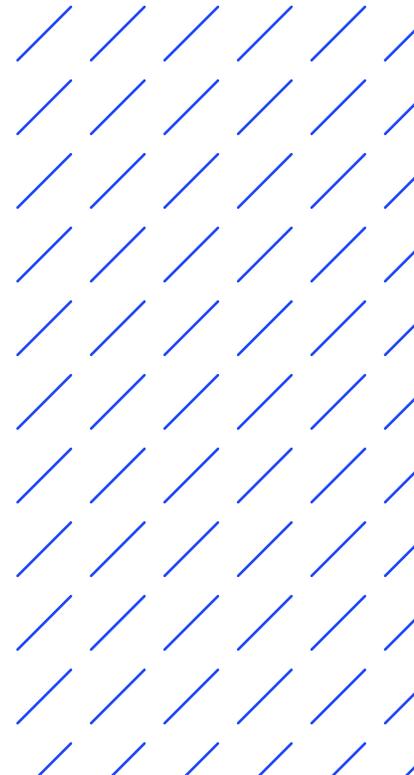
Even when customers are willing to leave a positive review, many don't know how or where to submit their message. And when customers post negative reviews, there isn't a documented process on who should follow up, connect with the customer, and try to make it right (encouraging the customer to change his/her review).

- **Review requests compete with NPS surveys**

Teams struggle to balance the timing of asks to customers, often selecting one request over the other. And when they send both requests, they're likely too close together, inundating the customer with multiple requests.

- **Customers don't post reviews when asked**

Mailers get lost, phone calls are left unanswered, and email requests are buried. When you ask customers for reviews using antiquated methods, the requests are often ignored.



How to build an online reputation program that works.

A successful online reputation program will help build brand awareness, drive more customers to your store (and grow revenue), and increase your ability to compete online.

Follow these 9 important steps to develop an online reputation program:





Step 1: Gather information.

Speak to each of your brand locations, dealers, and/or franchisees about their needs and current processes for collecting reviews. Identify what's working and what's not working and how you can create a single process that works for every location.

Consider asking the following questions to each franchisee owner and/or store manager:

- Do you know how many reviews have been posted online for your store location?
- How are you currently collecting reviews from customers?
- How many reviews do you collect on average?
- How are you following up on reviews for your specific location?
- What would you like to see in a new online reputation management program?

Step 2: Identify goals and KPIs to track.

Before you implement an online reputation program, it's critical that you document your specific goals. What is your desired outcome of the program and how will you measure it?

Example goals could include:

- **Goal: Brand awareness**

Measurement: Number of reviews + increase in web traffic + search ranking

- **Goal: Beat the competition**

Measurement: Search ranking increases + number of reviews compared to competitors

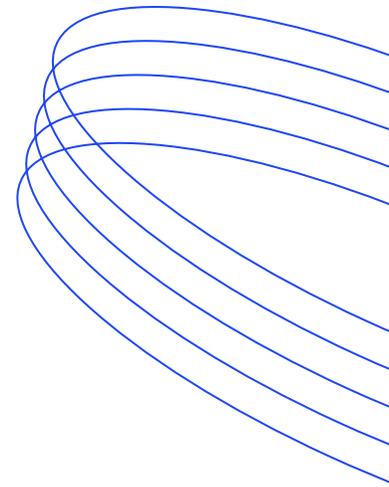
- **Goal: Customer acquisition**

Measurement: Web traffic + correlation data about increases in leads and/or bookings/revenue

- **Goal: Customer experience**

Measurement: Star rating + number of positive reviews + increases in number of reviews

Once you've determined your goals and KPIs, create a dashboard to help you track progress and easily share results. Your Reputation Management software provider should also be able to help you with this.



Step 3: Involve key stakeholders.

Identify which departments and team members you will need to include in your online reputation management program.

Consider the following questions as you identify who should be involved in the program:

- Who will be the gatekeeper of the incoming review data?
- Who will analyze the data for trends?
- Who will route reviews to the right internal team?
- Who will respond to negative reviews?
- Who will close the loop on relevant customer feedback?

Also, try to find an executive sponsor to back your goals for this initiative. They can not only provide support, but can help evangelize the program throughout the organization.

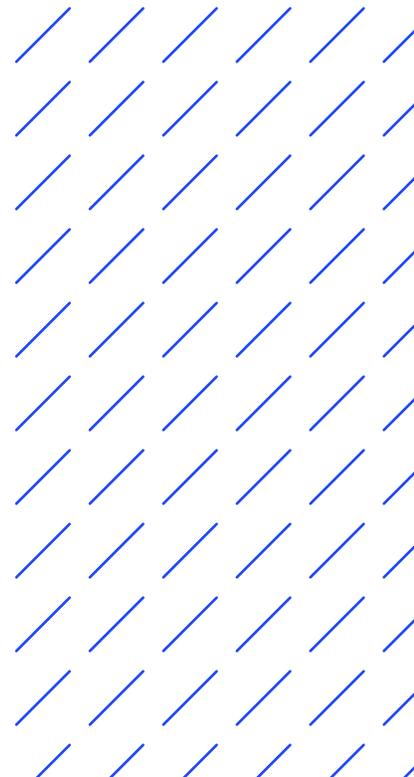


Step 4: Map out the desired customer experience.

As you implement your online reputation management program and create a consistent customer experience for each location, consider what that process looks like and document your best-case scenario.

Consider the process from both your internal perspective and the customer experience. Be sure to answer the following questions:

- When will the customer receive a review request?
- Who will send the request or how will the request be automatically triggered?
- How and on what channel will the customer receive the review request (and what will be included in that request)?
- How many steps will be required of your customer to complete and post a review?
- Are there any steps you can automate internally to streamline the request of reviews?
- Are your employees trained to help customers who have never left a review before?



Step 5: Document program ownership.

Each online reputation program should include at least three areas of ownership: requesting reviews, responding to reviews, and closing the loop—apply changes to the business operationally. Determine which internal team or department will manage each area and how the handoff between steps should be implemented.

Your program ownership document should include:

The team or department responsible to ask for reviews:

- How will they ask for reviews?
- Where will they pull contacts?
- What will the message to customers be?

The team or department responsible for responding to reviews:

- How will they follow up with negative reviews?
- How will they route reviews to the right person for a specific follow up?
- What messaging will they use to respond publicly to negative reviews?

The team or department responsible for implementing changes to the business:

- How will they identify specific patterns or trends in the review data?
- What baseline will be required in order to implement changes across the business?

Step 6: Claim and maintain your Google My Business listings.

If you haven't already, claim each location's Google My Business listing and then make a plan to check each one for accuracy.

As you update and maintain your Google My Business listings, include the following:

- Business hours (including holidays)
- Phone number (including a textable number)
- Website link
- Location address
- Photos of each specific location

Beekman Furnishings
4.3 ★★★★★ (909)
Furniture store in Portland, OR

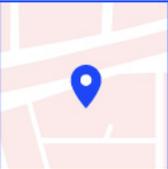


CALL DIRECTIONS SAVE WEBSITE

Furniture showroom featuring sofas, bedroom sets, mattresses, home decor & more.

✓ In-store pickup ✓ Delivery

2640 E Burnside St,
Portland, OR 97214



Open · Closes 8PM

Step 7: Conduct a pilot program.

Start your program roll out with a small pilot program. Identify the contacts or specific locations you want to start with on a smaller scale and execute your program. Track your KPIs in those areas to see how your program performs. Determine beforehand what success looks like so you'll know when it's time to do a broader program launch.

In your initial run of review requests, be sure to:

- Personalize your ask by including each customer's name in the review request
- Include the link to the review site to reduce friction for the customer's process
- Thank each customer for their business!

Step 8: Roll out to all locations.

Once your pilot program is complete, analyze your results. If your customer experience was positive, your internal team was clear on their responsibilities and executed each task in a timely manner, and your customers engaged with your ask for reviews, it's time to roll out the program to your entire contact list and each location.

As you move from beta to a live online reputation management program, don't forget to:

- Identify checkpoints to make sure everything is running smoothly
- Consider different review request methods (e.g. texting your review request vs. email)



Step 9: Report on performance.

After your online reputation management program rolls out to your entire business (and each location), don't forget to report on the performance of the program.

In your report, include the following:

- Employee (corporate and local) feedback on how the program was executed
- Total number of reviews collected
- Specific trends or patterns that will inform change for your business



How to get started with Google Reviews.

Google Reviews impact your online reputation more than any other review site. Because they are tied directly to your search ranking when a new lead or current customer searches for a business like yours on Google, it's a smart idea to focus your efforts on Google Reviews first.

Google Reviews increase your exposure to new leads, add to your SEO efforts, improve brand trust, convert more customers, and improve click-through rates to your website—all from your Google My Business listing.

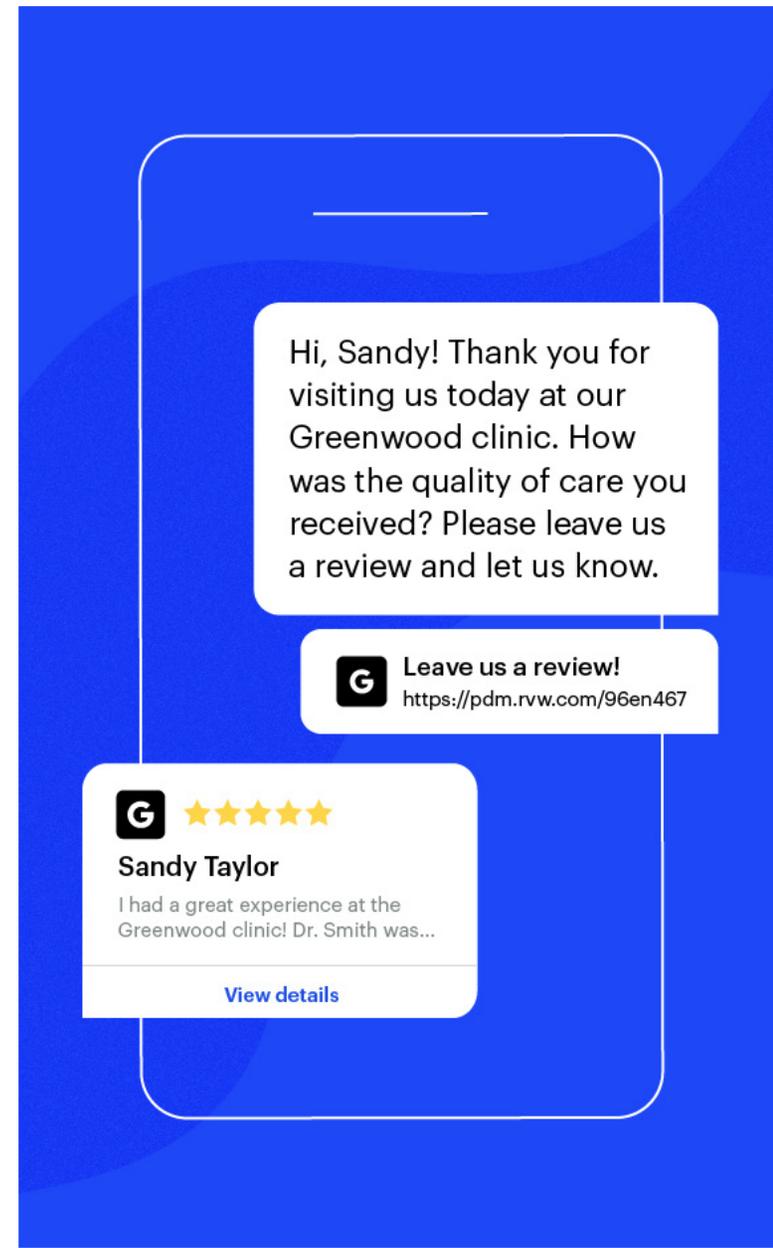
If you haven't already, it's time to claim your Google My Business listing—for each store location. After you have claimed your listing, be sure to verify your account via email, phone, or email to ensure only you have access to edit the details on your listing(s).

For detailed instructions on how to add or claim your business listing with Google, [click here](#).

For detailed instructions on how to verify your account with Google, [click here](#).

To optimize your Google My Business listing, keep all of your information up-to-date. Include correct business hours, a phone number (include a textable number if you have one), address, website link, and photos and videos of each specific location.

After each listing has been reviewed and updated, start asking for reviews.



How to improve your online review requests.

To improve your online review requests and increase the quantity and quality of reviews your customers leave for you online, follow these tips and tricks:

- **Consider the timing of the review ask**

As many as 70% of all reviews are generated from post-transactional review request emails⁶. The key in this data point is in the timing. After your customer purchases a product or service, follow up with a request for a review immediately. The more space between the purchase and the review request will only negatively impact the number of reviews your business will capture from happy customers.

- **Review your platform options**

Nearly 60% of all online reviews are posted directly from a mobile device⁷. And it's no surprise—consumers spend nearly 4 hours every day on their phones (that's more time than they watch TV each day⁸). When you ask for a review in the right channel, your customers are more likely to complete your request. Switch from asking via email (a 20% average open rate) to asking for reviews via text messages (a 98% open rate⁹).

⁶ <https://www.reviewtrackers.com/guides/ask-customers-review/>
⁷ <https://www.reviewtrackers.com/guides/online-reviews/>

⁸ <https://www.emarketer.com/content/average-us-time-spent-with-mobile-in-2019-has-increased>
⁹ <https://theblog.adobe.com/marketing-with-98-percent-read-rate-and-10-more-compelling-stats/>

- **Increase the chances of a review completion**

By communicating with customers the way they want to communicate with you, you'll increase your chances of a review completion while also building a positive relationship with your customer. And because 90% of customers already say they prefer to interact with a brand via text message¹⁰, it's a good idea to implement texting with your customer before they complete their purchase. Offer the option to set appointments, check local inventory, connect with local sales reps, and more. You'll build the relationship before the critical review ask—thereby increasing your chances for a positive review online.

- **Include the right information**

Reduce any friction in your review ask by including everything your customer needs to complete your request. Important information could include a thank you for their purchase (reminding the customer what they purchased and what they could include in their review), a clear ask to complete a review, and most important—a link to click and complete the actual review. And if your review ask is coming via text, it makes it that much easier to include the link (and to encourage your customer to complete the review right on their mobile device—the preferred method of communication and review posting).

¹⁰ https://assets.ctfassets.net/2fcg2lkzwxw1t/5l4ljDXMvSKkqiU64akoOW/cab0836a76d892bb4a654a4dbd16d4e6/Twilio_-_Messaging_Consumer_Survey_Report_FINAL.pdf

Ask the right way

Just as including a direct link to complete the review request is vital to increasing your total reviews online, asking in the right way can directly impact if your customer wants to write a review. Consider thanking your customer for their purchase, asking clearly and directly for a review (including how long it will take them to write a review), and then including a direct link (removing any friction or confusion for the customer). In certain scenarios, it's a good idea to explain why reviews are critical for your business. Here are a few examples:

The image displays three vertical panels, each representing a different customer interaction. Each panel contains a blue message bubble with a personalized request for a review, a direct link to the review page, and a corresponding review card showing a 5-star rating and a snippet of the customer's feedback.

- Panel 1 (Left):** Message: "Hi Lisa! Thanks for choosing Canyon View Property Management. Could you take 30 seconds to leave us a review using the link below?" Link: <https://pdm.rvw.com/96en467>. Reviewer: Lisa Harris, 5 stars. Snippet: "I've lived in apartments managed by Canyon View for 2 years and..."
- Panel 2 (Middle):** Message: "Hi Sam! Thank you for purchasing the Andrew couch from our Ashtonville location today! Would you be willing to leave us a review online? It should only take 30 seconds!" Link: <https://pdm.rvw.com/96en467>. Reviewer: Sam Porter, 5 stars. Snippet: "Tanner Furniture was the perfect place for me to find the couch of..."
- Panel 3 (Right):** Message: "Hi Becky! We are so grateful to have you as a patient at our clinic! We hope you had a positive experience with Dr. Lawrence today. Would you be willing to leave us a quick review online?" Link: <https://pdm.rvw.com/96en467>. Reviewer: Becky Park, 5 stars. Snippet: "Dr. Lawrence and the staff at the Aspen clinic are really helpful..."

How to optimize your review request program.

With multiple locations and a thriving review program, you're likely to get inundated with more than reviews. Negative reviews, customer service requests, increased web traffic and leads, and more often come up when more customers post reviews online. And whether your review program is routed through one corporate team or to each location individually, you can optimize your review request program to get the best results.

Consider these best practices to optimize your review request program:

- **Standardize the ask for reviews across all locations**

While some locations might be better at asking for reviews than others, there should be consistency for your brand. Scripts, templates, and even standard times for review asks should be the same for every location in order to create a consistent customer experience. Standardizing when you will ask for reviews is also important. Some data suggests that the best time of day to ask for a review is between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. or 6:00 and 7:00 p.m.¹¹ Whatever time of day you do make the ask, be sure to ask your customer within the same 24 hours of a purchase or visit.

¹¹ <https://www.reviewtrackers.com/guides/ask-customers-review/>

Report on the right data

The data your brand can collect from reviews is incredibly important to improving your customer experience and understanding what you're doing right as a business. Track review count, average star rating, and search result ranking for each location at least quarterly. The more reviews you have and the higher your average review rating climbs, your search result ranking should improve. And for many industries, showing up on third-party sites (outside of Google) is just as critical.

Here are a few examples of third-party sites based for retail and healthcare:

Retail:

- Yelp
- Trip Advisor
- Facebook
- Yahoo Localworks
- Consumer Reports

Healthcare:

- Healthgrades
- Vitals
- Doctor.com
- Yelp
- Wellness.com
- Facebook
- Rate MDs

- ◉ **Route negative reviews and other messages to the right customer service team**

Any negative reviews or messages or even customer service requests need to be routed and escalated to the right department or team quickly and efficiently. Location-specific requests should always be delivered to the correct local staff, connecting local customers with their local business.

- ◉ **Respond to negative reviews as soon as possible**

Follow-up messages for negative reviews need to be posted quickly and publicly. Customers reading reviews take into account how a business responds to reviews online—in fact, 9 out of 10 customers that read reviews also read businesses' responses.¹² A private follow up message to the disgruntled customer should also be sent when possible.

- ◉ **Improve your customer experience based on customer feedback**

Aggregate and analyze data and customer feedback to identify patterns and trends. Translate any actionable feedback into an implementation plan to improve your customers' experience.

¹² <https://review42.com/online-reviews-statistics/>



Reviews impact buyer decisions.

“Reviews impact my buyer’s decisions. That’s what I have seen, and that is what the data says. So I know if we have enough good reviews, people who are looking for carpet cleaners and run across my business will give us the nod.”

—Chris Carson, Head of Marketing, Zerorez



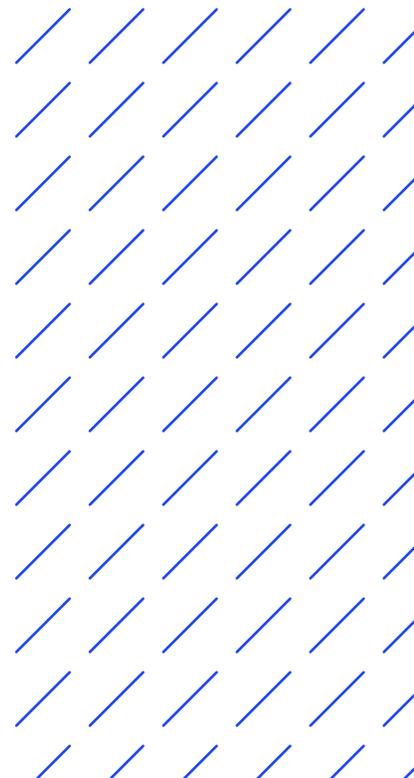
Your online reputation is important. Manage it with the right Interaction Management™ solution.

Leverage every preferred messaging channel—one secure inbox for all messages (and every location for your brand) from Facebook, Google, and more.

Gather reviews easily and quickly—a simple text has a higher chance of response than email and only takes 30 seconds.

Convert website visitors to text conversations—use a web chat box that keeps the conversation going.

Offer speed and convenience across all interactions—find a solution that prioritizes ease in all communications including scheduling, feedback, payments, and reviews.





Podium customers get more reviews

Podium customers get more reviews.

- Trane dealers who use Podium see an average of 402% increase in online reviews
- Vasa Fitness saw a 131x increase in average monthly reviews and a 38% increase in their average rating, going from a 2.9 to a 4.0
- Dunn Tire saw a 41x increase in their average monthly reviews, increasing their star rating by 5%
- American 1 Credit Union quickly increased their Google star rating from 3.9 to 4.6, generating 1,000+ reviews
- Ambiance Design Windows (Hunter Douglas) saw a 500% month over month increase in reviews

Press send with Podium.

Connect to your customers throughout the entire customer journey with Podium, the Interaction Management™ platform your multi-location business needs.

Save time—manage all communication channels and separate systems through a single, secure platform.

Convert leads—attract the right customers with higher local search rankings and relevant reviews.

Delight customers—a multi-channel, frictionless customer journey from first impression to post purchase.

[Watch a demo here](#) ↗

