



Hotel Reviews

In today's digitally connected world, a click of a button can make or mar the image of a hotel. Hoteliers are often afraid of negative reviews going viral on the internet. We find out from the experts, how to respond to negative reviews and gain leverage from the positive reviews. **Kanchan Nath**

► Michael Tchong

Founder and Analyst
Social Revolution

▣ Respond to negative reviews



Respond fast: Most marketers respond quickly, with 70 per cent responding within 24 hours, and one fifth within as little as an hour. Don't let grass grow over negative posts.

Respond privately: This is common sense but it's remarkable how few marketers understand the importance of reaching out directly. While you know more about your business and the industry than the commenter does, remember that the customer is always king, so take a step back and put yourself in your customer's

shoes and be patient and understanding.

Ask the customer to remove the post:

In your private communication, it's quite reasonable to ask the customer to remove the negative comment, particularly, once they feel mollified by your personal and understanding approach.

Respond to the post: If the preceding tactics don't work, respond to the original post. Under no circumstance, should you ever remove a negative post. Your answer to their post should shed more clarifying light on their complaint. Make sure to be humble and express happiness in getting their business.

Community support: Let your community respond for you, which is really the desired result.

As a last resort, if the customer's commentary is uncouth or, worse, uses expletives, delete the post. But this really

is your last and the least desirable option.

► Gaurav Chiripal

Chief Executive Officer
Quadlabs

▣ Neutralise negative reviews by increasing customer satisfaction

Social media and online review systems are the best place to see and read about the real experience of the travellers at the hotels. I think negative reviews



should be taken in a good spirit and the hotels should work towards resolving the customer problem in a positive way. People want to see what the hotel did to rectify the issues. If this is communicated

to the customers in a proper manner, hotels don't have to worry about the negative reviews. However, there are always competitors and unwanted people who put incorrect reviews in order to bring down the image of the hotel. This is in the hands of the online review companies to verify the authenticity of the user posting the review. The best way to neutralise the negative reviews is to increase customer satisfaction at the time of service delivery. In case, more customers are posting positive about the hotel, a few negative reviews won't make too much of a difference.

+ Positive reviews lead to 50 per cent increase in bookings

If a hotel can maintain a positive review index, it impacts the overall brand value to a great extent. In these changing times, more and more travellers are relying on these user reviews. Hotel selections on most of the online sites are based upon

this index. We have seen in some of our booking engines that the increase in bookings could be more than 50 per cent to the positive-rated hotels than to the ones with moderate or negative ratings.

► Mike Kistner

Chief Executive Officer
RezNext Global Solutions

▣ Personalise responses to negative reviews

Reviews today can be on the service provided to the guest, about the food at the hotel restaurant, the spa program or about the room in general. Any positive or negative experience that a guest has at the hotel can result in a review. Hotels need



to adopt a proactive approach to reviews before others begin commenting on a review provided by a guest. A hotel must react immediately to a review and all the more faster to bad reviews. They need to establish themselves as a brand that cares and acknowledge the incident and show their concern to the customer about their feedback. Owning up to the service issue and promising to act on it ASAP reflects a responsive brand.

Another important factor is to make the response very personal and appropriate to the issue. Sometimes hotels have a standard response for negative reviews and a standard text for positive reviews. This is not a good approach. Guests don't like their reviews to be treated lightly. A standard response to a negative review can create further issues with complaints on how irresponsible the hotel is. Similarly a positive response should also be tailored to the review published, thanking the guest for choosing the hotel and asking them to revisit their hotel. The message

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should be such that it creates a personal connect with the guest.

The hotel should also follow up with the guests who posted negative reviews and let them know what measures they have adopted to improve the service and re-invite them to make a booking. The guest would feel important that the hotel has taken their feedback seriously and could consider giving that hotel a second chance.

For a proactive approach, it is impossible for hotels to manually keep track of all the reviews online. This is where solutions like TrustYou come into play. They aggregate reviews across 250+ online sites and alert hoteliers on the positive and negative reviews as soon as they are available online. TrustYou also facilitates a real-time response to these reviews immediately. With the growing influence of online reputation management on hotel booking behavior, it is imperative that a hotel pays close attention to online reputation management.

+ Impact of positive reviews

According to Channel Advisor 'Consumer Shopping Habits Survey', a TripAdvisor/Forrester Custom Online Study, social media directly influences more than 83 per cent of all online bookings, and 49 per cent of guests won't even consider booking a hotel that doesn't have reviews. Also, according to TrustYou Custom Value Study, guests want to know that they booked the right hotel, so they are willing to pay more for hotels with higher scores. On average, the room prices go up \$12 for every one per cent increase in a hotel's TrustScore. As consumers, we ourselves ensure that the hotel we look at, for our business and personal travel, has good reviews.

Hotels can leverage reviews to drive more guests to their website. Generally, guests tend to check the hotel website, then check the hotel reviews on a popular review site and most often the booking is then concluded on that site. For hotels, this is a missed opportunity. They should display the reviews for the hotel on their own website and convert every



opportunity into a booking. Furthermore, it is also important to list the negative reviews too to ensure that the hotel is being honest. Action taken to improve those services can also be mentioned on the site. The TrustYou solution is being used by 12000+ hotels globally to simplify their online reputation management efforts, including analysing, benchmarking, responding to reviews, tweets and all other user generated content.

► Zubin Billimoria

Managing Director - India
ResNet Services India

▬ Negative reviews are an opportunity to better oneself

Negative reviews should be looked upon as two-fold:

1. As an opportunity to improve the service commented on; and
2. As an opportunity to respond to the guest and gain their confidence to visit you again



Normally, hoteliers get worried and disappointed when one receives a negative feedback. For sure, any hotelier would get worried, but, that is no solution. We, as

hoteliers, should take a positive approach and consider these as an opportunity to better our services. It is important to share this with all employees in the hotel and make them aware of the feedback received, whether it is negative or positive.

Hotels which received a negative feedback should always approach the guest as personally as they can. They should assure them that they can expect a better level of service or comfort the next time. They

should add them to the hotel's mailing list of offers. They should provide them a special negotiated rate as a gesture to balance the negative review.

+ Positive reviews increase ratings

Many travellers today refer to Online Reputation Websites before they travel. A positive review helps in climbing up the rating on the Online Reputation Management (ORM) website. They certainly help a traveller make more effective decisions in selecting a hotel, or even a particular room or floor in the hotel. An hotelier should always reply to these good and positive reviews as well.

► Raman P Rama

Vice President & CTO/CIO
JHM Hotels

▬ Reputation management is essential

Responding to negative reviews is part of reputation management. The hotels should take reviews, positive or negative, as a tool to connect with their customers. Reviews



are like someone rating you for who you are, what kind of a hotel you are and what kind of services you provide. Customers like to post reviews, positive or negative, on the social media sites, but negative reviews are seen more than positive reviews. No hotel likes to see negative customer feedback, but when it happens, one has to be ready to see them as an opportunity to go into action and offer feedback on what you have done to correct the situation, so that other guests do not experience the same issue. This also gives you an opportunity to offer the reviewer/commenter a discount to return back and experience the hotel services again. It offers an opportunity to give well-informed responses and offer constructive feedback to the customer of how the problem is resolved. Guests are smart and they weigh the positive feedback with the negative feedback and

then decide if they want to use your hotel. More credibility comes into play when the hotels respond to both positive and negative feedback about corrective actions taken by the hotel. This kind of two-way communication helps in neutralising the bad comments and also helps in promoting the hotel to the readers or the reviewers. If you do nothing, it means you are accepting the fault and are not doing anything about it, so it works against the hotel. Today, the customers have a lot of options and choices and the hotels that have good relationships with their customers are the winners. So make it a point that all reviews should be read by the management each day. You can turn a negative review into a sales opportunity with your responses and invite the guest again to experience the hotel services.

+ Good reviews enhance brand image

The impact and reach of good reviews go a long way on social media sites or OTAs.

No matter how loud we tweet our horns that our hotel is the best compared to our competition, the expression of experiences by past guests speaks volumes and help in increasing the credibility of the hotel.

Social media does not require as much investments as other media advertisements for promoting your hotel. One should take advantage of the good reviews and use the quotes of customers on the hotel website with the permission of the guest. The guest must be credible and these good reviews must not be manufactured. The customers will find out very soon that you played games with them and they will not trust your hotel.

At check-out time, the guest service agents at the front desk should ask how the guest's stay was and ask each guest to give their personal review about their stay on the social media pages of your hotel. Make them like your site. The more members you have on your social media page, the more popular you are

considered to be. You must have a lot of followers. You can also reward those that post reviews to your site.

The guests are our eyes and ears and they are free inspectors for the owners and managers or management companies. One must capture all the feedback and share it with the staff members for corrective actions or for praises. Employee awards can also be formulated based on the comments received and special awards should be given to staff members.

Today, the Gen X, Y and Z trust social media reviews for their decision-making hence, it is very important to engage with the social media sites. Social media is a fantastic sales tool as well. All staff members are sales people and should help in promoting their own hotels on their social media sites or even in their groups. Social media sites are the most visited websites nowadays and all statistics show that it is the most popular medium of communication in today's age.



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