

How to Monitor and Respond to Reviews of Your Bar or Restaurant

By Rieva Lesonsky

In “Using Ratings & Review Sites to Market Your Bar or Restaurant,” I covered the basics of how ratings and review sites can benefit your restaurant or bar. In these days of social networking and 24/7 media, many restaurant and bar owners worry that one bad review will tarnish their reputation forever.

Don’t let this fear scare you away from using ratings and review sites. If you monitor your accounts and take appropriate action to deal with negative reviews, you’ll find that negative comments don’t have to hurt your business. In fact, they can actually help! Here’s what you need to do.

1. **Monitor your accounts:** Setting up a Google alert on your bar or restaurant name is the simplest way to track what’s being said about you online. You can also sign up for tools such as BoardReader, Social Mention, Trackur or other social media tracking products (many are free). However, for a bar or restaurant, reviews are important enough that you should visit each review site daily to make sure you don’t miss anything crucial.
2. **Take action on negative reviews.** When you get a negative review, the worst thing you can do is ignore it or let it sit unanswered. First, ask yourself whether the reviewer has a legitimate complaint about a situation your bar or restaurant needs to resolve. If so, take steps to remedy the problem immediately. Be careful and thoughtful before sending any response, public or private. Keep in mind that an angry reviewer can easily escalate the situation, and that any response (even one sent privately) can quickly go public and viral. Yelp! offers very thorough advice on responding to both positive and negative reviews [here](#).



3. **Learn from reviews.** It's easy to get defensive about bad reviews, but try to look at them as a learning experience. Feedback from customers, whether negative or positive, is always a good thing, and if used wisely, can help you improve your restaurant or bar experience for future guests.
4. **Encourage reviews.** With the increasingly social nature of the Web, reviews and ratings are going to become more and more important for bars and restaurants. Encourage customers to leave reviews by including links to review sites on your website, such as "Review us on Yelp!". Thank customers for reviews and highlight positive ones on your website or in your email newsletter. (Be aware, however, that you can't pay customers for reviews.)

What if you get a bad review that you know is fake or posted by a competitor? It does happen. If you suspect this is the case, it's best to alert the rating/review site and let them investigate the issue, rather than engaging with someone who may just be looking for an excuse to trash your business online.

Used wisely, ratings and review sites are an invaluable tool. Talk to your [SCORE](#) mentor about making them part of your bar or restaurant marketing plan.

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