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## Online feedback




### How do you respond to the feedback you receive online?

Today, every customer is also a potential reviewer. Most web users are able to tell the wider public about your organisation through social media channels and on user review websites.

Feedback could be positive or negative; remember that you cannot control everything being said about your business. Responding in the appropriate manner to complaints may actually help you build a stronger relationship with your current and future customers.

### Feedback on user review websites

If your organisation offers a product or service, your customers may share their experiences on review websites. Popular user review websites include:

- [Product Review](#) , for products
- [Trade Critic](#) , for tradespeople.
- [Urbanspoon](#) , for local restaurants and bars
- [Yelp](#) , for local businesses.

### Feedback through social media channels

Your customers, donors or members may take to social media channels – like [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) – to share their experiences with your organisation. This feedback can vary in its degree of visibility.

- Some people may share their experiences with their limited social network of friends, family and subscribers.
- Some people may broadcast their feedback more publicly by posting onto your Facebook page or other social media pages.
- Some of your customers may run a blog, which is visible to everyone, where they can broadcast their opinions about products or services.

### How to respond to feedback

Most organisations need to respond to positive and negative feedback, whether by phone, by mail or in person. So it is probably worth thinking about how you will respond to feedback that comes from online channels.


In an online environment, you may have the option of directly responding to the customer in a private or public way. Whether you respond by adding a publicly visible comment of your own or by privately contacting the customer

depends on the type of feedback and the forum.

- If the feedback contains personally identifiable information, it is generally a good idea to contact the customer privately.
- If the feedback is not personally identifiable and is visible (for example, on Facebook), it might be worth responding publicly by posting your own comment. This may help you avoid creating the impression that you are hiding something or ignoring the issue.

## Tips for dealing with feedback

To help your organisation respond to and manage online feedback, consider the following tips:

- Monitor what is being said by using [Google Alerts](#)  and create a business account on user review sites.
- Do not automatically remove the negative feedback (unless it is obviously offensive or unlawful). Sometimes this can generate more attention than the negative comments themselves.
- Think of comments and reviews as a learning process. They can be a valuable tool to improve how you do business.
- If the situation cannot be resolved, contact the website where it was published for assistance to edit or remove offending comments.

Some organisations may also need to consider establishing a [moderation policy](#). This applies mostly to organisations who run forums or Facebook pages.

### A template for responding directly to feedback

A direct reply (that's either public or private) is often the best way to address feedback, whether on Facebook, a blog or a review website. This shows that you value your customers' opinions and are proactive about addressing their concerns.

You can use the following example template as a guide:

- Introduce yourself and your position at the company.
- Thank them for taking the time to submit feedback.
- If the feedback is negative, apologise and acknowledge their concerns. Explain what you have done to fix the issues.
- Offer to provide your direct contact details if they would like to discuss it further.

## Set a moderation policy for user generated content on your own website

If your own website gives users the ability to share comments or reviews, or if it gives users 'forum' functionality to facilitate online conversations, it is a good idea to:

- manage the expectations of users about how content will be reviewed and published.
- set clear guidelines about what conduct is suitable and appropriate for the forum, and what conduct is not.

You might like to consider setting a [moderation policy](#), and then managing your forum according to these rules.

Moderating user generated content requires care. It is generally considered good practice to use your right to moderate content only for clearly inappropriate behaviour, as defined within your usage policies, or behaviour that breaks the law.

Trying to ignore or remove constructive criticism or even angry comments about your organisation could lead to stronger criticism, and attract more attention to the criticism. It is generally considered good practice to address any criticism that is posted to your organisation's forum in an open and positive manner.

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