



Word of mouth: review sites

Customer reviews may lend credibility to your organisation at no cost to you.

Word of mouth promotion can be a powerful tool, both offline and online. [According to one survey, 72% of web users trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations](#). Online reviews, appearing on third-party sites or your own site, can be an excellent way of generating this word of mouth promotion.

Here we will cover the following topics:

- [some of the benefits of online reviews](#)
- [promoting your organisation on user review sites](#)
- [using customer reviews on your own website](#)
- [promoting reviews from third-party websites.](#)

Benefits of online reviews

Online reviews could benefit you in a number of ways. For example:

- People may trust the opinions of their peers more than they trust an organisation's description of its own services products and services. Access to independent reviews can build up web users' confidence in the quality of your products and services and make them more comfortable with buying from your organisation.
- Even negative reviews might help you: they could provide an opportunity for you to identify and fix weaknesses.
- Online reviews on external sites can help build on the network of [hyperlinks](#) to your website, which is a key element of [search engine optimisation \(SEO\)](#)
- Word of mouth promotion is potentially free.

Promoting your organisation on user review sites

User review sites allow web users to recommend or critique businesses, products and services in a public forum. You may not need to add a listing for your organisation yourself, as a user review site may have already added a listing for your organisation that they acquired from a third-party data provider.

Examples of user review sites are:

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

- [Yelp](#) , for local businesses.

Buying advertising space

Some user review sites allow you to pay to promote your organisation on their pages. You can generally do this in one or both of the following ways:

- by paying for display advertising like [banner ads](#)
- by paying to promote your listing on the website's search results page.

A key advantage of advertising your organisation on a user review site is that you are likely to be reaching potential customers at a time when they are actively looking for particular products or services. This may make them more receptive to hearing what your organisation has to say.

Responding to negative reviews

It is a reality of user review sites that you may not always receive positive reviews. However, you may be able to use negative feedback as an opportunity to generate positive word of mouth about your organisation. To do this, it is a good idea to always try to respond to your critics in a way that is:

- prompt
- polite
- professional.

Doing this can help build up a public perception that your organisation genuinely cares about providing a good service. For more information on responding to reviews, see '[Online feedback](#)'.

A note on using review sites

Bear in mind that it is generally not a good idea to review your own organisation on a user review site. For example:

- By reviewing your own organisation, you could be violating the content guidelines of the user review site
- Web users are becoming increasingly good at spotting fake (as in, not independent) reviews. Being associated with this kind of practice could be a blow to your organisation's credibility.

Using customer reviews on your own website

Your user reviews do not have to reside on a third-party site—they can also be integrated into your own online presence. This means that you might be able to provide customers with the opportunity to leave reviews and ratings

on your site, directly related to individual products.

You may find that you already have customer rating functionality as part of your [sales platform](#). If not, you can get the web code for free or paid-for review and rating functionality at sites like:

- [Hot Scripts](#) 
- [Scripts.com](#) 

Promoting reviews from third-party websites

Positive reviews from published journalists can be a powerful promotional tool. You can make the most of this by representing them on your website.

If you have received glowing reviews, consider these tips for making use of them:

- Pick out the most impressive part(s) of longer reviews and publish them as short quotes on your website.
- Spread your reviewer quotes around your website, rather than confining them to any one section. This helps ensure that web users will see them when they visit your site.

Seeking reviews

In order to be reviewed, you may first need to approach publications. You might be able to increase your chance of being reviewed by actively sending your products or offering your services to review publications.

It does not necessarily matter whether these publications are print-based or online. Distribution to your audience is a more important consideration.

Published on 11 October 2012