

Six Insights on Online Reputation for Franchises



A LISTEN360 GUIDE

1

I keep hearing about Customer Feedback and Online Reviews—what's the difference?

At Listen360 we know business is personal, which means it's all about relationships, trust, and undisruptable loyalty. What customers think about your business begins with how you make them feel, and nothing says “you matter” more than listening to and addressing the feedback they provide.

Listen360's Customer Feedback Management System allows you to easily and effectively collect and take action on what your customers have to say about their interactions with you, all based on the science and metrics of the Net Promoter System. You can use this “insider information” to improve your services or products in ways that really matter to your customers, or you can use it to engage them in a direct conversation that builds a trusting relationship. With Listen360 Customer Feedback, it's all up to you — you decide how, when, and with whom to share the information — and you remain the owner of that feedback at all times, no matter what.

On the other hand, Online Review sites like Google and Yelp! have a direct relationship with your clients—they own the reviews they collect and typically provide only a limited public forum within which you can respond to customer comments. Online Review sites can unilaterally decide which of your reviews they feel are most relevant (and should therefore be posted), and which should be filtered and removed from public view. As underscored in recent court decisions affirming their right to arbitrarily make such public-facing decisions, business owners have limited influence over what review information is displayed, how it can be responded to, and even how long it sticks around online.

To maximize the influence of the franchise owner on these types of sites, Listen360's Online Review Management tool makes it easy for your happy customers to post on Google and Yelp!. And think about it, with positive Customer Reviews on third-party sites, your Online Reputation is getting stronger and larger, providing a more credible and compelling positive message about your franchise for prospects, while at the same time reducing the importance of any single negative review you may have received.

2

Keeping up with Online Reviews sounds like a big job I don't have time for—are they really that important to a franchise?

They couldn't be more important. Over 80% of consumers base their purchasing decisions on Online Reviews—think about the weight you give reviews when you're trying to find out whether a product is truly fantastic, or whether it just had fantastic marketing. Online Reviews are among the most credible and compelling marketing weapons in your arsenal, and best of all, your customers are doing that marketing for you.

Online Reviews have been proven to increase click-throughs and conversions. They help prospects find you, and then hand them precisely the information they need to select you over the competitors in your space. And with Listen360's Online Reviews Management tool, you transform the positive Customer Feedback you've already collected into Online Review “Gold” — all with software that automates the process so your customers don't have to duplicate efforts or waste valuable time.

3

How can I get customer reviews posted online?

It goes without saying that the goal of collecting and posting customer reviews is to make it easier for prospects to find you and select you over the competition. To get these reviews posted online, you will need to make sure you have:

- Properly claimed your online listings on the review sites, primarily on Google Local and Yelp!.
- Invited your customers—especially deliriously happy promoters—to post reviews on these sites after significant engagements with you.

While you can always extend this invitation in “old school” ways like posting signage at your business or having your staff encourage customers to leave reviews, by far the most efficient and effective means to achieve your goal is to use a service like Listen360 that will *automatically* make sure it's done professionally, politely, and punctually after every significant service engagement. It's easy, efficient, and effective.

4

Do Online Reviews impact the major search engines such as Google and Bing?

While the parameters surrounding the Google Search algorithm can be somewhat fluid and certainly evolve over time, here's what you need to know today:

- After your franchise has 5 Online Reviews on Google, a star rating will automatically appear within the Google Knowledge Panel for your business, making it stand out visually against the competition.
- Online Reviews captured on Yelp! for your business automatically appear with a star rating for search results within Bing.
- Your business' star rating based on feedback collected by Listen360 can be used to display your star rating on Google AdWords, Bing, and Yahoo ads campaigns.
- Google states that ads and listings that appear with a star rating experience a 17% uptick in click through rate. But the goodness doesn't stop there. Many businesses are creating and hosting a dedicated review page that is optimized for Google search and appears in organic search results. Similar successful strategies include streaming reviews to your website (giving prospects authentic Customer Feedback as they are evaluating your products and services) and ensuring that reviews are “schema tagged,” which allows Google to view the content as up-to-date, again increasing organic search rankings.

5

What makes franchising unique when it comes to Customer Feedback and Reviews?

Because franchisors sell a piece of their business to the franchisee, it is the franchisee who bears ultimate responsibility for delivering on the brand promise to the consumer, even though the brand itself is owned by the franchisor. Historically, the only visibility a franchisor had into what customers were experiencing and feeling about the brand was through slow, expensive, and incomplete methods like mystery shopping or site visits by field operations consultants.

Using a Customer Feedback platform like Listen360 revolutionizes this process, providing the franchisor with an efficient and cost-effective way to comprehensively monitor the state of customer relationships across the entire brand on an ongoing basis.

And because it was built specifically with the franchise model in mind, Listen360 seamlessly addresses another common challenge for information systems in this space—the unique relationship between the franchisees and franchisors that requires both the sharing of information at certain levels and locations as well as the need to restrict access at certain levels of hierarchy and/or between individual locations.

From a software development perspective, this challenge becomes even more daunting in scenarios with area developers or master franchisees with multiple locations. While monitoring, controlling, and reporting on Customer Feedback and managing Online Reviews in these environments is something most software tools simply aren't designed to do, it is precisely what Listen360 was built to do.

6

What are the best practices around responding to negative Online Reviews?

When dealing with negative reviews online, there are a few key tips for responding.

Respond Publicly

Responding publicly gives you the chance to share your reaction and response not only with the reviewer, but also prospects who are doing due diligence on you. Keep in mind that your public responses to negative reviews will often tell prospects more about you than your responses to positive reviews.

Respond Promptly

Acknowledge reviews as quickly as possible, ideally within the first 24 to 48 hours. Reviews have a shelf life, so responses that come too late are likely to be viewed negatively by the reviewer, regardless of what the response actually says.

Respond Politely

Remember that anyone who is writing a review for you is a paying customer who has taken the time to provide feedback about your business. Positive feedback lets you know what you're doing well, and negative feedback provides insight into what you could do better. Either way, remember that they are providing you with the gift of insight you couldn't acquire any other way. Taking the time to thank each customer lets them know that you're on the other end of the conversation, that they are appreciated, and that you take their feelings about their experience with you seriously.



Learn more about using Listen360 Customer Feedback and Online Reviews Management to drive franchise growth & profit at listen360.com