



**better
hospitality
reviews** 

Turn 1-Star Reviews into 5-Star Revenue:

Why Negative Reviews Are Good for
Business (and Exactly How to Respond)

INTRODUCTION

Every hospitality business receives a negative review eventually, it's inevitable. But what if that criticism was actually a marketing opportunity in disguise? At Better Hospitality Reviews, we've helped hundreds of venues transform bad reviews into trust building moments that increase bookings, foot traffic, and brand loyalty.

In this guide, we'll show you why negative reviews aren't something to fear, and how to reply in a way that builds credibility, demonstrates leadership and even boosts your Google Maps ranking.

PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER



I started Better Hospitality Reviews because I saw too many great venues underrepresented on Google Maps. Business owners work hard to create amazing experiences, and we believe your online presence should reflect that. If you're a local business doing your best, we exist to help you demonstrate it clearly online.

Joshua Farrugia
Better Hospitality Reviews

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01

Why Negative Reviews Happen (even to the best)

No matter how good your product or service is, you'll get a bad review at some point. Why?

- ✓ Expectations vary wildly between customers
- ✓ Mistakes happen, especially in high-volume service environments
- ✓ Some people weaponise reviews when they feel unheard in person
- ✓ If your business tried to please everyone, it would likely please no one, negative reviews are a part of providing a unique experience

What matters isn't the review — it's your **response**.



02

Why You Should Respond to Every Review

Whether it's a glowing 5 star or a brutal 1 star, every review is a chance to show your values.



Nurture past customers and increase chances of return visit by up to 41%



Signal to Google's algorithm that your profile is active and trustworthy



Demonstrate tone of voice and show potential customers you're present, engaged and care



Stat Boost: 71% of consumers are more likely to use a business that responds to online reviews.

03

Tone of Voice: Staying On Brand in the Heat of the Moment

Your brand doesn't disappear when someone leaves a bad review. In fact, this is where it's most tested.

Whether you run a grungy burger joint, a family pizza restaurant, or an upscale sushi bar, your tone of voice online is everything:



Be respectful, not robotic



Be warm, not weak



Be confident, not defensive

Checklist: On-Brand Review Response

- ✓ If our business was a human, is this how it would sound?
- ✓ Is it helpful and constructive?
- ✓ Does it reflect leadership and care?

04

The 3 Levels of Review Response

with examples

Level 1: Basic Acknowledgement

A simple apology and contact info. Good for low-stakes complaints.

Example 1 (Pizza Shop):

"Hi [Name], we're sorry to hear you didn't enjoy your visit. Please reach out to us at hello@tonyslice.com as we'd love to understand more and make it right."

Example 2 (Cocktail Bar):

"Hey [Name], thanks for taking the time to leave your feedback. We're sorry it wasn't the experience you expected. Feel free to email us at talktous@speakeasybar.co to share more."

Level 2: Acknowledgement + Offering + Staff Mention

Adds a soft re-invite and human touch, **however to be used with caution as free offers will not fit with all brands.**

Example 1 (Mexican):

"Hi [Name], sorry to hear your tacos weren't up to scratch. That's not our usual standard. If you're open to it, swing by and ask for Pedro and he'll make sure your next round's on us."

Example 2 (Sushi Restaurant):

"Thanks for sharing, [Name]. Quality is everything to us and we want to do better. If you're nearby again, ask for Chef Sato and he will look after you"

Level 3: Marketing Flip – Use the Complaint to Create an Offer

Taking things up a notch, here is how we can be bold, humorous, and **create an opportunity out of a threat.**

1. Review Complaint: "The coffee was cold and bitter. Won't be coming back."

Response: "Hey [Name], that's rough. We've flagged this with the team. For anyone reading this, we don't shy away from feedback. Come in this weekend, say 'cold coffee review' and we'll shout you a free coffee with any breakfast. You be the judge."

2. Review Complaint: "Waited 40 minutes for food. Ridiculous."

Response: "Sorry [Name], that's not the experience we aim for. We've tightened up systems since then. If you're reading this and have ever waited too long anywhere, come try our service. Flash this review and get 20% off during our new 'No-Wait Weekday' happy hour."

3. Review Complaint: "The curry was way too spicy. Couldn't finish it."

Response: "Hey [Name], spice level should never ruin the meal. We're reviewing recipes and retraining staff. To anyone reading, take the 'Spice Level Challenge'. If you can handle our Dragon Curry, dessert's on us. Just mention this review."

4. Service Complaint? Invite Them to Meet the Team

Review Complaint: "The staff were rude and disinterested."

Response: "[Name], that's not who we are, and we're truly sorry. Since then, we've refreshed our training and culture. For anyone reading, come meet the team yourself. We're offering a free drink with any main this week. Just say, 'I heard the staff are rude.'"

05

Summary & CTA: Let Us Help You Manage This At Scale

Negative reviews aren't the end of your reputation — they're the beginning of a new customer's decision-making process. With the right strategy, you can:

Rebuild trust

Boost conversions

Improve rankings

Keep your brand voice
consistent



**Want done-for-you review
management that turns critics
into customers?**

Contact Us

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Book a free strategy call with Better Hospitality Reviews and let's make your reviews your most powerful marketing tool.