Yellow!

The complete guide to online review sites.

PDF

yellow

Why reviews are so important for SMBs.

For small business owners, there's nothing quite like seeing a real five-star review pop up – it's not just a sign you're doing something right, it's free marketing gold for your business.

The more reviews you can muster up, the more positive and genuine they are, and the more often they're appearing, the better for your business.

But how do you manage your presence on review sites, keep reviews flowing, and deal with negative reviews, if and when they appear?

In this guide, we lay out the details for Australian SMBs – from site setup to smart review management.

Contents.

The power of reviews.

Almost every consumer has read an online review – one survey found that an incredible 98% of Australians check online reviews before they buy something.

Because reviews are written by consumers, they're seen as more believable than marketing content or ads.

In fact, the same survey found that 94% of consumers trust reviews, making them a powerful asset for your business.

Reviews can also be a way to stand out from your competitors. They offer invaluable insights into your customers' thoughts, helping you find out what's working and what needs to be tweaked.

Of course, not all reviews are created equal. To be convincing, reviews need to be current and give an impression of honesty. According to the above survey, people are also sceptical of perfect ratings and uniformly glowing reviews.

Consumers prefer a larger number of written reviews with lower or varied ratings than a small sample of five-star ratings without accompanying written details.
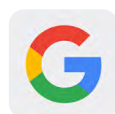
Review sites for Australian businesses.

So, how do you make sure you get as many reviews as possible? It starts with being active on review sites.

Most sites let you set up a verified business page or account where you can engage with your customers when they review your business.

Here's a look at some of the most-used review sites in Australia.

Google Reviews.

When a customer searches for your business on Google, Google Reviews show up as part of the search result. Anyone with a Google account can leave a review, making these some of the most accessible – and most visible – reviews around. Make sure to set up and verify a Google Business Profile so you can read and respond to reviews.

Facebook reviews.

If you have a business page set up on Facebook, customers can leave reviews. While Facebook isn't as well-trafficked as it once was, it's still worth keeping tabs on these reviews.

Yelp.

Yelp started as a restaurant review site but now includes reviews for retail stores, hotels and almost anything else.

TripAdvisor.

Hospitality and travel-focused, TripAdvisor includes recent reviews and links to booking sites, making it a valuable resource for customer acquisition.

TrustPilot.

TrustPilot lets consumers review almost anything, from restaurants to dentists to individual products.

ProductReview.

As the name suggests, ProductReview focuses on reviews for products rather than businesses. As well as reviews posted by consumers, it includes comprehensive reviews and product tests written and conducted by experts.

OpenTable.

OpenTable focuses on restaurants, cafes and other hospitality businesses. Customers can search by location, see recent reviews for their area and book a table directly from the site once they've decided where they want to go.

Yellow Pages Online.

A listing on Yellow Pages Online offers your business a great opportunity to showcase your products or services. Customers can check reviews when they search for your business and submit their own reviews once they've bought a product or used your services.

Set your business up for review success.

The first step on the road to review success is to set up your business on key sites, so you can check and respond to reviews as they come in.

Most sites will let you set up an official business account, which ensures that consumers know that they're talking to the actual business owner.

While set-up varies by site, make sure you include as much detail as possible. Creating a clean, consistent presence across sites makes you look professional and helps maximise the value of positive reviews.
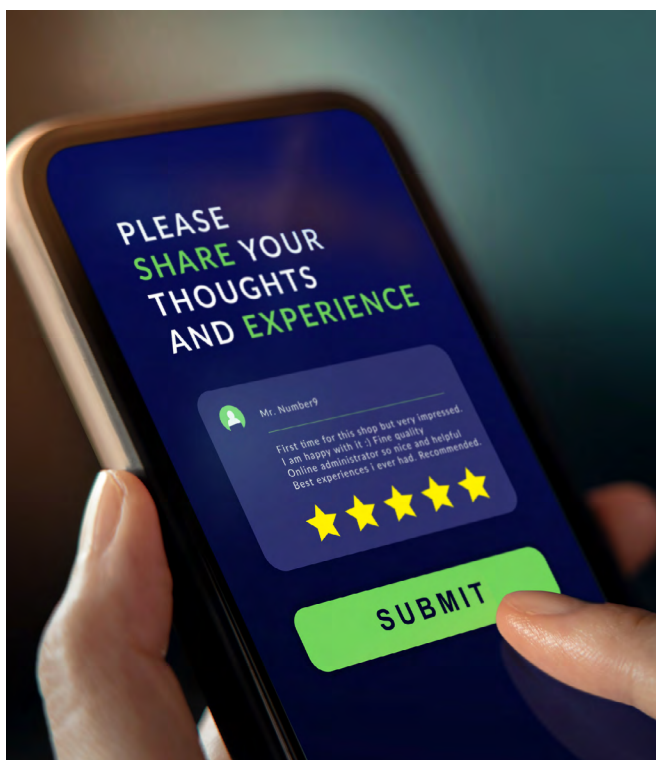
You want to make it as easy as possible for potential customers to find you once they've read about your business.

Key details include:

• Business name and logo

• Contact details

• Link to website

• Photos and product or service details

Keep reviews flowing.

While it's easy to think that just providing great customer service and high-quality products is enough to keep reviews coming in, that's not always the case.

Many consumers will be happy with your product but not happy enough to feel motivated to comment – in fact, customers who have negative experiences are more likely to leave reviews.

How do you encourage customers – especially the happy ones – to leave a review? It might be simpler than you think.

1. Ask for reviews.

It sounds too easy, but just asking customers to leave a review can help. One survey found that 70% of customers will leave a review if a business asks them to. This could mean including a link to review sites when a customer buys a product online, or including a review request on your receipt for in-person sales.

You could also launch an eDM campaign to request reviews from past customers or set up a personalised email invitation to review triggered by a purchase.

2. Make it easy.

The easier it is to leave a review, the more likely your customers will leave them. This means getting set up on a range of review sites, so customers can find you on their preferred platform. You can also choose to include reviews on your own website.

3. Get staff involved.

Make sure your staff know how important reviews are, so they're motivated to ask customers for reviews after a sale.

Reviews you can use.

Positive reviews are a valuable resource, so make sure you're making the most of them. Feedback from reviews can help direct marketing campaigns and targeting, while reviews themselves can be used to strengthen your marketing content.

Here's how:

Use review content in your marketing.

Got a high number of four to five-star ratings or – even better – some seriously glowing quotes from happy customers? Using these in your marketing brings in that element of 'social proof' – you're playing into the fact that people believe other consumers over paid advertising and influencers.

You can quote particularly strong reviews in online ads or use your review stats to prove the value of your service or product.

Add reviews to eDMs.

Want to strengthen the message of your eDM campaign? Include links to relevant reviews at the end of the message. This works particularly well for targeted emails. If you're promoting a specific product or category, link to recent reviews for particular items.
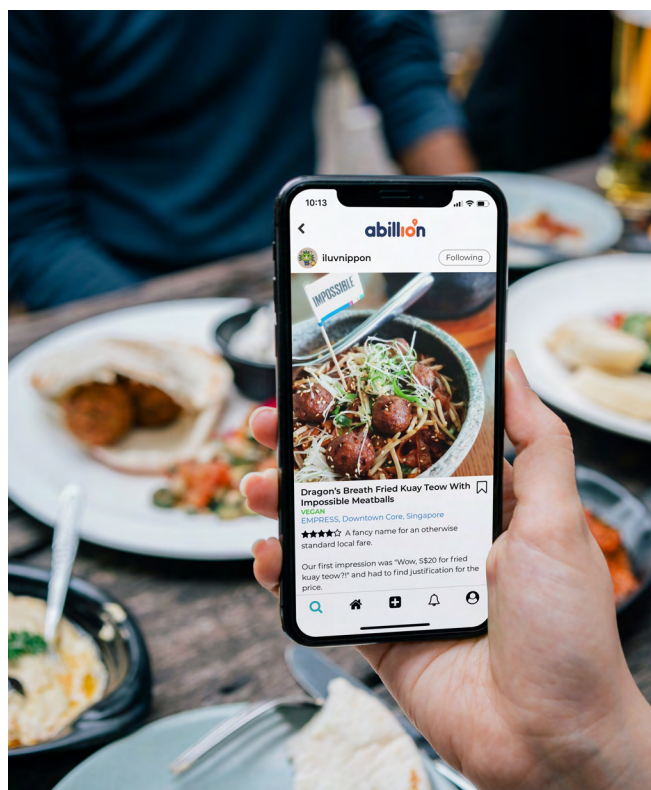

Target marketing campaigns based on review insights.

Reviews are a valuable source of both negative and positive customer feedback that can help inform your marketing strategy. For example, if you come across a large number of reviews complaining about your service, you could create a marketing campaign to address those concerns.

On the other hand, if you have multiple reviews raving about a particular product, you could create a campaign to promote it.

Turning negatives into positives.
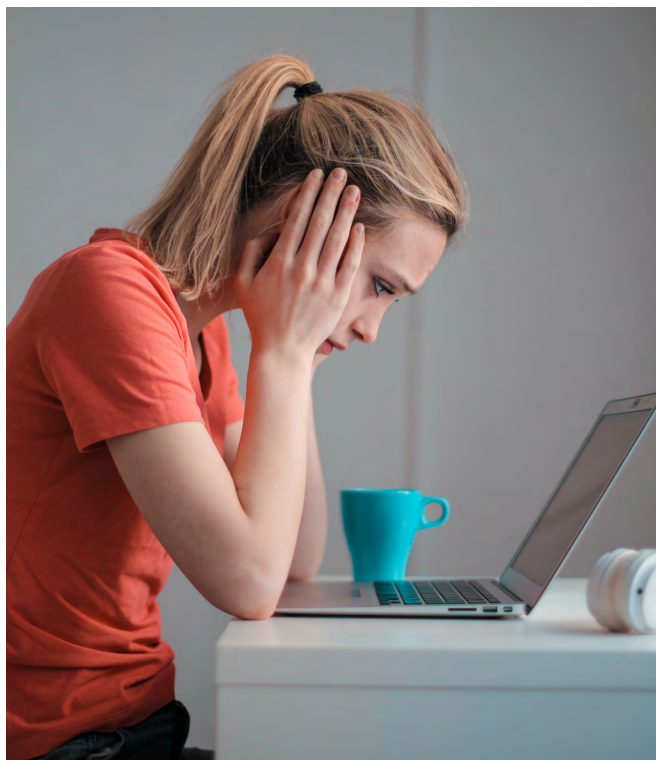
Dealing with negative reviews is, unfortunately, part and parcel of being a small business owner. While it may not be the most fun part of the job, it is an opportunity to show your customers that you take their concerns seriously.

Sometimes, a great response to negative feedback can even turn a lost customer into a loyal one. It is important to leverage negatives in this way given that it takes many positive reviews to offset one, unaddressed negative review. You can even glean useful feedback and turn negative reviews into key business improvements.

It can be tempting to take negative reviews personally and respond in anger, but it's crucial that you don't.

An angry or disproportionate response can end up bringing more attention to a negative review and make your business look worse.

Here's what to remember when responding to negative reviews:

- **Respond every time:** Try to respond to negative reviews within 24 hours. One survey reports that over 50% of reviews are not responded to and almost 90% of customers want a response.

- **Take accountability:** Often, acknowledging the issue and providing an explanation can go a long way to winning a consumer over.

- **Offer a solution:** Without a concrete solution, apologies can look a bit hollow, so offer a resolution as soon as you can. That can mean a refund, a voucher or a replacement product being shipped out.

- **Be human:** These days, consumers are alert to business-speak. They don't like it when businesses talk down to them or use meaningless platitudes to communicate. Instead, respond as you would to a customer in your store or restaurant.

- **Take it offline:** Offer to call or direct message customers early on in a difficult situation. This can make it easier to hash out the issue and discuss the details away from the public eye.

Make reviews work for you.

Customer reviews can feel like a mixed blessing for SMBs. While great reviews are like gold dust for your business, negative feedback can have an outsized impact.

If you want to maximise the value of great reviews and mitigate the impact of negativity, it's crucial to spend time managing your online reviews.

Set up profiles on review sites that fit your business, check regularly, and respond to negative and positive reviews as quickly as you can.

Even better, leverage positive reviews and great ratings by including them in your marketing content. It's all part of running a small business in the digital age.