



VIBEWORX

VRS PLAYBOOK • TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR ONLINE REPUTATION



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# INTRODUCTION

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Technology — it is a blessing and a curse. This can be especially true for today’s business owners. As more and more customers engage in social media and online review platforms to broadcast their opinions, responsiveness and transparency have become vital to online reputation management. However, without the right tools, manually managing your online reputation can be very time-consuming and shift focus away from running your business. Enter Vibeworx Reputation System (VRS). VRS does the heavy lifting for you by scouring the Internet for mentions of your business, aggregating reviews, and delivering to you tailored actionable results. From there, you can easily target to whom and how you want to respond. Not sure how to respond? No worries, the VRS Playbook has you covered. This playbook provides you with helpful tips about when and how to engage and reply, response examples, and information about how this all plays into your business’ credibility.

## LET’S BEGIN WITH A FEW STATISTICS:

- According to Forbes, “90% of consumers read online reviews before visiting a business.” (2016)
- LinkedIn reports, “97 percent of consumers read online reviews before making a buying decision.” (2017) And, “85 percent of consumers trust online reviews as much as recommendations from a friend or family member.”
- Sprout Social notes that “86% of consumers prefer an authentic and honest brand personality on social networks.” (2016)

## SO, WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

In short, reviews and online comments matter. Your online reputation can make a huge difference to your bottom line. It’s important to be aware of what is showing up in an online search involving your brand. While not exhaustive, here is a list of top sites where customers can leave feedback about your business:

## WORTH THE EFFORT

Both positive and negative reviews give you an opportunity to engage with a customer. The sincerity of your response can take the sting out of bad feedback, and elevate the trustworthiness of a positive comment. But never doubt the importance of your response — it demonstrates a concern for customer satisfaction. Prompt responses, carefully constructed, can make all the difference to your online reputation. Designating some time each day to consistently manage your digital dialogue can dramatically boost retention and acquisition.

### HOSPITALITY:

- Yelp
- Google
- Facebook
- TripAdvisor
- Booking.com
- Expedia
- Travelocity
- TripExpert
- Trivago
- Oyster

### RESTAURANT/BAR:

- Yelp
- Facebook
- Google
- OpenTable
- Zomato
- TripAdvisor
- Gayot
- Zagat
- Foursquare
- Grubhub

### RETAIL:

- Yelp
- Facebook
- Google
- Amazon
- BBB
- Yellowpages
- ConsumerAffairs

### SERVICES:

- Yelp
- Facebook
- Google
- Angie’s List
- BBB
- Manta
- Yellowpages
- ConsumerAffairs
- HomeAdvisor

### HEALTH/ WELLNESS:

- Yelp
- Facebook
- Google
- Zocdoc
- RateMDs
- Healthgrades
- Practo
- Vitals
- WebMD
- CareDash

### JOBS/EMPLOYMENT:

- Glassdoor
- Indeed
- Monster
- Vault
- CareerBliss
- Kununu

## II. TACKLE THE NEGATIVE

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It's hard to read something bad about your business. The impetus to be defensive is natural. When a customer takes to the Internet to air a grievance, it's not only hard, but it could potentially be damaging. According to LinkedIn, "50 percent of consumers will question a business's quality after reading negative online reviews." SmallBizTrends.com also relayed, "22 percent of consumers won't buy your product or service after reading just one negative review and four or more bad comments can take up to 70 percent of a business's potential customers away."

**Before you start aggressively hammering away at a retort, it's important to apply some guidelines that will help you make the interaction productive, rather than destructive:**

1. It's important to respond quickly, but don't be too hasty about your choice of words. It will benefit you to hold off if you need to cool off.
2. Don't get defensive, aggressive, or engage in an argument; it can only make you look bad.
3. Thank the person for their feedback, and apologize that their experience, service, or product wasn't to their liking.
4. If you feel the review was harsh or unfair, it may be best to get the customer's information, and contact them outside of the public forum. Just remember to maintain your composure, listen, and offer a fitting remedy if one is required.
5. Keep your response brief, to the point, factual, and respectful.
6. Try to make it right with the customer. Offer an incentive for a second chance like a discount, replacement product, or credit toward another visit.
7. Make the negative a positive. Relay your intention to take the feedback and implement a change or update.
8. Be sure you make your team aware of recurring criticism. Everyone has an off shift, but if there's a pattern of customer dissatisfaction you must fix the problem.

## II. TACKLE THE NEGATIVE (CONTINUED)

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### EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS:

#### REVIEW SCENARIO A:

A customer is not happy with the service you provided. The outcome of said service did not meet their expectation. They are unhappy and say they will not return to your business in the future.

#### RESPONSE:

[First Name], first let me apologize that your service wasn't satisfactory. I value your feedback, and want you to know that I take it seriously. I'd like to get some further info from you and see what we could do to earn your business back. Please email me at [email].

#### REVIEW SCENARIO B:

A product you sold through an online storefront arrived with a flaw, and a picture of the item was posted. The customer is requesting a refund.

#### RESPONSE:

Hello, [First Name], I'd like to apologize for the condition of your [product]. Myself and my team strive to ensure quality in our products, and would like to make this right. Please email me your information at [email] when you can. We value your business and want to resolve this for you immediately.

#### REVIEW SCENARIO C:

A client felt that they were overcharged for the service they received. The person cites another local business, its rates and reputation as a better choice.

#### RESPONSE:

[Name], thank you so much for giving [business] a try. I'm sorry you felt your service wasn't in line with the cost. We are committed to delivering both fair pricing and quality service, and would like the opportunity to speak to you about your experience. We value your business and hope you reach out to us at [email].

#### REVIEW SCENARIO D:

A customer complained about their accommodations. They allege that the facility was dirty, the staff was rude, and their stay was overall unpleasant. They urge others to avoid your business.

#### RESPONSE:

Hello [Name]:  
I am so sorry you had this experience. We work very hard to ensure the comfort and satisfaction of all our customers. I want to get to the bottom of this and would like to reach out to you personally. Could you please get in touch with me at your earliest convenience at [email]? I'd like to make this right. We take all feedback very seriously, and appreciate the opportunity to better our property. I look forward to hearing from you about this matter.

#### REVIEW SCENARIO E:

A customer is lambasting your business using outrageous claims to disparage your staff and your establishment. The criticism is uncivil, unkind, and the customer is being belligerent.

#### RESPONSE:

[Name], I apologize if you felt like you had a disappointing experience. We've been in business for [XX] years and serve thousands of customers a week. We truly value customers' opinions and always encourage constructive feedback. I'd like to speak with you so we can get this sorted out, please email me at [email].

### III. HIGHLIGHT THE POSITIVE

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Modern consumers look to the Internet to find businesses, products, and services with positive recommendations. The more positive your online reputation is, the more likely you are to attract new customers. According to Forbes, “97% of consumers use the Internet to find local businesses and three in four people who use their smartphones to search for something nearby end up visiting a local business within a day.” Also, “90% of customers say that what they decide to buy is influenced by positive online reviews, and 94% will use a business with at least four stars.”

**Consequently, each positive review you receive should be acknowledged with an appreciative response that, ideally, prompts other happy customers to also give their enthusiastic two cents. The more positive reviews you have, the more they drown out any negative ones. Keep the following in mind:**

1. Begin with a sincere thank you, and say you value their business.
2. Make the response personalized to the reviewer’s comments about their experience.
3. As with negative review responses, keep your reply brief, but honest.
4. Encourage future purchases or visits by inviting the customer to return for more of what they loved or to try something new.
5. Make sure you relay how much you care about customer satisfaction, and that it means a lot to get great feedback.
6. Boost visibility of positive reviews in an online search by including keywords and your business’ name.
7. Encourage the reviewer to recommend your business to friends and family, or to share their review on other platforms.
8. Try to avoid a response that seems too generic or canned, especially when the review is positive. Being genuine demonstrates your integrity.

### III. HIGHLIGHT THE POSITIVE (CONTINUED)

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#### EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO POSITIVE REVIEWS:

##### REVIEW SCENARIO A:

A regular customer writes a glowing review about what keeps them coming back to your business. They detail all the ways you make them feel special and well taken care of.

##### RESPONSE:

Awwwww, [Name], thanks for the kind words. It's customers like you that make us look forward to going to work. We are grateful that you keep coming back to [business], and that you tell other folks why you do. We're looking forward to seeing you soon.

##### REVIEW SCENARIO B:

An out-of-town visitor chooses your business over others based on what previous reviewers have said. Their stay exceeded expectations, and they want other travelers to know.

##### RESPONSE:

Hi [Name], Thank you so much for the lovely review. We appreciate the opportunity to share our property with folks visiting [town]. We're glad you enjoyed the plush beds and oversized tub here at [business]. We want our guests to feel relaxed, rested, and restored after they visit. Hope to see you again soon.

##### REVIEW SCENARIO C:

Your crew went above and beyond for a customer, and the person wants others to know how much your business helped them.

##### RESPONSE:

Good morning, [Name]. It was our pleasure to help you with your [project]. Thank you for choosing [business] to be of service. We hope you let others in on the worst secret in town — how much we value our customers and stand by our high-quality work. If you ever need help in the future, just let us know.

##### REVIEW SCENARIO D:

A reviewer tried your business for the first time, and they wrote it was just an OK experience. But they gave you a second chance, returned, and were blown away by improvements.

##### RESPONSE:

Hello [Name], Thank you so much for giving [business] another try. We take feedback like yours very seriously, and are constantly looking to implement helpful suggestions. It appears that our hard work paid off for you, and we couldn't be happier. We can't wait for you to visit us again.

##### REVIEW SCENARIO E:

A customer took a chance by buying your product, largely based on its 5-star status. They weren't disappointed and will recommend it to others.

##### RESPONSE:

Thank you for your review, [Name]. I am so glad that your [product] arrived safely and exceeded your expectations. We're all about quality at [business], and our goal is to have the highest level of customer satisfaction. Please let others know about [product] and how it met your needs. Thank you again.



## IV. NAVIGATE THE GRAY AREA

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Every opportunity to engage with a customer can be good for business. Answering questions, commenting on benign posts, using platforms to your advantage, and offering insight or expertise is all part of customer service and reputation management. When you demonstrate enthusiasm about your business, brand, industry, community, and clientele, it can make a big difference in how your current and future customers perceive you. Lack of responsiveness can indicate lack of credibility or concern. Treat your online customers as you would an in-person customer.

**Sometimes a review or inquiry isn't positive or negative, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't respond promptly and thoughtfully. Even if it's just a quick quip or a straightforward answer, your level of engagement matters. Here are some things to consider:**

1. If you are asked a question via an online channel, try to answer it as quickly as possible. It could mean the difference between getting their business or not.
2. Pictures tell a story, so call out a customer's image if you've been tagged in a good one.
3. If someone has a suggestion for your business or product that is helpful, tell them so and that you appreciate their insight.
4. As always, be authentic and make your response relevant to the discussion.
5. Treat every customer interaction like it is significant, because it is. It's an opportunity to add value without increasing cost.
6. Follow through with your responses, if necessary. Your willingness to be helpful and accessible will go a long way with your customers.
7. You humanize your brand with each response. It reminds customers that there is a person or people behind the business.
8. It's imperative to identify and respond to engagement opportunities that could add clarification about your business, service or product, or dispel an untruth.



## IV. NAVIGATE THE GRAY AREA (CONTINUED)

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### EXAMPLES OF RESPONSES TO GRAY-AREA COMMENTS:

#### SCENARIO A:

A customer wants to know when or if you plan to adjust your hours for a seasonal change, because they hope to visit on a Monday evening.

#### RESPONSE:

Thanks for your interest in [business], [Name]. We will be changing over to winter hours on [date]. Our new hours will be [hours]. We hope to see you soon!

#### SCENARIO B:

A customer couldn't secure a reservation, and wants to know if you have a wait list in case of cancellations.

#### RESPONSE:

We'd sure love to have you, [Name]. We book up a couple weeks in advance, but cancellations do happen from time to time. Please email me your information at [email], and we can reach out to you if we do have an opening. Thank you!

#### SCENARIO C:

Your product arrived without a component, and the customer wants to see if the piece can be overnighted.

#### RESPONSE:

Hi, [Name]. I am so sorry that your [product] arrived incomplete. I believe it is early enough in the day to overnight the piece to you. However, due to mail times, it may take two days. We strive to ensure the utmost quality and customer satisfaction, so I apologize for this oversight.

#### SCENARIO D:

A potential customer wants to know if you accommodate people with particular food allergies.

#### RESPONSE:

Hello, [Name]. We take food allergies very seriously for the safety of our guests. We do take special care to accommodate our patrons with food allergies. Please speak to your server upon seating to notify the kitchen of your needs. We will do our utmost to take good care of you during your time at [business].

#### SCENARIO E:

Someone posts the information of a competitor's business on your social media page — nothing else, just the name, phone number, and website.

#### RESPONSE:

Yes, they are also very good at [industry]. We're proud of our [XX] years in business, and always like to see other local businesses succeed as well.

## V. OPTIMIZE YOUR REPUTATION

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Diligent responses to online feedback signal to all reviewers that you actively manage your online reputation. This could dissuade some negative commenters from posting unsubstantiated claims about your business, and inspire positive write-ups from happy customers. Not only this, but online reputation management is an important component of your local Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategy. Help prospective customers find your business if they do a search. For example, if a person is looking for a local coffee shop on Yahoo! Local, it features reviews from Yelp, which pushes results higher. Also, if someone is searching for a certain retail item, they typically narrow the search by only looking at products with positive reviews. Having new content being posted about your business is also useful, as it satisfies certain search criteria on platforms like Google.

Think of your customers as a reflection of your business, and the Internet has magnified that reflection. Your image, in this digital world, needs to be constantly tended. No matter the size or scope of your business, the bottom line is this:

**Reputation is everything. Make the most of yours.**