

Business Technology Program

How-To Guide: How to Market With Ratings & Review Sites

Today, many consumers do research online before ever visiting a retailer or deciding on a service. To make sure your business gets the customers it deserves, you need to be listed on as many ratings and review sites as possible, especially the ones specializing in local businesses.

Ratings and review sites feature opinions of businesses posted by consumers. They can be especially valuable marketing tools if your business relies on local customers, such as a retail store, a food establishment, a hair salon or any business servicing the tourist industry.

How to Get Started

You may find your business already listed on a local search site without having to do anything. Many sites add information about local businesses on their own. However, you want to make sure the information that is available to potential customers is accurate.

Step 1: Visit the site to “claim” your listing

Step 2: Make sure all the information on the site is accurate. If there’s nothing posted, add basics such as your business’s address, hours of operation and phone number.

Step 3: Since you are using the site for marketing purposes, you want to make a good impression. Add images of your store or restaurant, a picture of your staff, a detailed description of your business, directions to your location and any other information that will appeal to customers.

Step 4: Consumers are looking for good deals and something special, so make sure you include descriptive menus, coupons or specials you are running.

Watch Your Reviews

It’s important to watch your reviews closely. Monitor your listings regularly, paying special attention to negative reviews.

Responding to negative reviews can be tricky—you don’t want to seem too defensive, and you don’t want to start an online war with a customer. The response must be handled tactfully. Keep it short and simple: Thank the customer for their opinion and ask how you can remedy the situation. For more advice on how to respond to reviews, visit Yelp’s Support Center: http://www.yelp.com/business/review_response.

Use ratings and review sites not only as a marketing tool but also as a market research tool to learn what your customers like and don’t like about your business. Most review



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and ratings sites also have free tracking and analytics tools for businesses. Use these to learn where users come from and where they go online after reading a review of your business.

Popular Review Sites

Here are some of the most popular ratings and reviews sites:

- [Ask.com Local Search](#)
- [CitySearch](#)
- [Google Places](#)
- [Insider Pages](#)
- [Local.com](#)
- [LocalSearch.com](#)
- [Merchant Circle](#)
- [RatePoint.com](#)
- [Yahoo! Local](#)
- [Yelp!](#)
- [Yellow Pages](#)

In addition to these big names, you'll also want to investigate ratings and review sites that are specific to your industry or to your city or local area.

What are some local or industry-specific review sites? Make a list here:

