

How to Turn Around a Bad Review by Bernadette Lopez

Did you know on average it takes 12 positive experiences to make up for one unresolved negative experience? According to helpscout.net, bad reviews reach more than **twice as many** ears as a good review. This is huge. Online reviews are worth their weight in gold, literally. Online review sites such as Google, Yelp, and even social media platforms are the “go to” for consumers looking to get a feel for all companies they want to do business with. Imagine a prospective customer looking at your gymnastics school and your closest competitors. What will it come down to? If they millennials (born between 1982 and 2002) most likely they will be looking at online reviews to assist in their decision. For you that means young moms and dads.

So what should you do when you get a bad review? You can't control what consumers or spiteful competitors may write, but you can minimize the damage so when consumers are checking out your reviews, they get the best picture possible.

1. If you feel a review is false (false as in made by a competitor) and was made to hurt the company's reputation, report it to the site that is housing the review. Most large review sites offer this option. However, they do not take removing a review lightly. They will evaluate it and decide if it is obscene or an impersonation of a customer. Remember, just because you report it, it doesn't guarantee it will be removed.
2. If a negative review is legitimate and/or is going to stay put, here are few things you should definitely do:
 - A. Don't wait to address it. The eyes are upon you, people are watching to see how a company handles a bad review. Have you ever seen negative reviews with zero response from a company? Doesn't look good, does it?
 - B. Keep it brief, people are busy. Apologize and thank them for their concern, opinion, and/or suggestions. Let them know you are looking into it and taking steps to improve the issue.
 - C. Do not try to un-justify their review by telling them how many satisfied customers you have. This will only upset the reviewer. It will not win them over, and in the eyes of others reading the review, you will look arrogant. Even if it is all true, zip your lip!
 - D. Don't get defensive or sound the slightest bit offended. Even if they are inaccurate, take the high road. That goes a long way in the eyes of those reading it and deciding if they want to give your business “their business”.
 - E. These days consumers are all about friendliness and a casual atmosphere. Keep your words light and humble but serious as well. Don't try to make a joke out of it. When people complain they are either hurt or angry.

- F. You know you can't please all of the people all of the time. So even if you do not win over the negative reviewer, consumers out there are watching. And, the way you handle negative reviews just might win them over.
- G. Bring bad reviews to the attention of your staff. Not just staff it affects, but your whole staff. This can be a very valuable learning experience. The value here is not just to learn from mistakes but to brainstorm as a team, so this situation does not happen again. And, if it is a false review or over exaggerated, still show staff. Let them see what's going on out there and it may help them handle all sorts of personalities in the future. Use the situation as a way for staff to be on the lookout for potential problems. There are a lot of sensitive people out there ready to over-react. They need to know it's ok and these reviewers still need to be shown respect and compassion.

Here is an excerpt from #186 - Maximize Facebook for Your Gymnastics or Dance School, available at tumblebear.com. It's a good sample how Patti's All-American, the gym I manage social media for handles any bad and/or misleading review.



Disgruntled reviewer- “I’m disappointed in the thought of if you’re running late to pick up your child, that you guys would actually charge \$1 a minute until you pick them up?! This is ridiculous and I would rather drive out of my way then deal with B.S. like that.”

Our response –“Yes, you are right, that would be ridiculous. Sounds like there is some confusion regarding our policy (*used complainers name here*). Many times parents are late to pick up due to weather, trains, etc. This is a normal occurrence that happens to each parent from time to time. We understand that since most of us our parents ourselves. Unfortunately, there are some parents who are habitually late (usually longer than 10 minutes). The policy is designed and ONLY enforced in these specific situations in hopes an effort will be made to pick their child up at the designated time, just like all the other parents do. We’re sorry for any discomfort or confusion. Our goal is to be fair to all parents and we take all questions, suggestions, and criticisms seriously. Please feel free to contact us any time with any other concerns.”

Let’s take a moment to talk about “good reviews”. That’s a nicer topic! Your best form of advertisement is a happy and satisfied customer. I bet you have some really positive and glowing reviews out there on Facebook, Yelp, and Google. Use them to advertise how amazing your staff, building, and curriculum are. Add them to fliers, e-blasts, collect them all and post them simultaneously in a Facebook post. Get creative, they are your reviews... you earned them! Just like sharing negative reviews with staff is

important, so is sharing positive reviews. A study published by Forbes shows that receiving compliments helps improve performance in a similar way to receiving a cash reward. So make sure you share those reviews, especially if particular staff members are mentioned. Read them to staff and help them see the impact of their quality performance.

Lastly, don't be afraid to ask for those reviews. Ask your loyal "regulars" to do you a personal favor and leave a positive review on the site of Google or Facebook. Ask only that their review be honest and sincere. This idea is two-fold... who doesn't want glowing reviews plus it might just help push any poor reviews down.

In conclusion, remember it doesn't take a lot of time to address a poor review, but it needs to be done quickly. Stick to the facts, keep it simple, and take the high road. Don't forget to encourage your loyal customers to post positive reviews of their experiences. Future consumers can gain a lot of insight by reading what current customers say. A bad review can become an opportunity for your gym to shine. So turn lemons into lemonade and continue to move forward. Most importantly, learn from your mistakes and grow.



Bernadette Lopez works as Patti Komara's Administrative Assistant at Patti's All-American Gymnastics and Tumblebear Connection in Dyer, Indiana. She is also heavily involved with the marketing of both companies and is the Social Media and Website Manager for both. For the past six years, Bernadette has been consulting with gyms across the United States. She helps gym owners and managers improve their websites and learn how to use social media and marketing ideas to increase revenue. ***Need help with your business marketing, website design, social media, and e-blast campaigns? Bernadette offers one-hour phone consultations to help you meet your marketing goals. Please contact her at 219-765-5604 or bernlopez71@yahoo.com for more details and availability.***

Please visit Tumblebear.com for information on her two books - #186 - Maximize Facebook for Your Gymnastics and Dance School and #187 – How to Drive Your Profits with Effective Email Marketing for Gym and Dance Schools. Plus, over 100 products authored and created by Patti Komara to help your gymnastics school, coaches, marketing team, and customer service team be the best they can be. Additional products available from Patti include: year-long lesson plans, progressionsheets and award systems, best-selling #500 Fast Track Preschool Training System, and custom wooden position handstamps. All products come with a 30-day money back guarantee.