REVIEW GENERATION PLAYBOOK

COALMARCH by WORKWAVE®

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Happy customers are your best advertisements. Customer reviews hold immense power, serving as virtual word-of-mouth recommendations that can make or break your business. In fact, a recent survey* found:

- 98% of customers look at online reviews for local businesses when making a purchase decision
- Almost 50% trust online reviews as much as personal recommendations
- Service businesses like yours are among the industries where people see business reviews as most important – 55% of those surveyed said reviews for service businesses and tradespeople were "very important," while an additional 29% said reviews were "important"
- 87% of people use Google to research local businesses, up from 63% in 2020

*(source: https://www.brightlocal.com/research/local-consumer-review-survey/)

In this playbook, we'll provide you with the tools and knowledge you need to turn customer feedback into a powerful asset for your business, covering why customer reviews are crucial for your success, actionable strategies for getting high-quality reviews and real-world insights on how to harness the power of reviews to your advantage.

What is Review Generation?

Review generation is the process of actively seeking and encouraging customers to leave feedback or reviews about your business. The idea is simple: By using strategies such as asking satisfied customers for feedback, you can increase the number of reviews you receive, which will have a multiplier effect. Implementing a review generation system is paramount for businesses seeking to thrive in the digital landscape.

Why are Online Reviews Important?

There are several reasons that online reviews are important for your business.

They Impact Your SEO Ranking and Online Visibility

Search engines consider user-generated content, including reviews, when determining the relevance and authority of a website. Reviews are a significant ranking factor for both Local Service Ads (LSAs) and the Map section of the search engine results page. Google is comparing your star rating and your number of reviews to the companies you're competing with. The more reviews you have, and the higher your overall rating is, the better for your search results. Do you feel you're not getting the most out of your digital marketing efforts? Could your reviews be holding you back?

They Affect Your Business's Reputation – And Your Success

Online reviews play a pivotal role in shaping your business's reputation – which has a major impact on your overall success. Positive reviews build trust in your business and serve as powerful endorsements, attracting new customers and fostering loyalty among existing ones. On the flip side, negative reviews can hurt your image and deter potential customers from engaging with your services.

They Influence Purchase Decisions

Almost 100% of consumers read reviews when they're researching a purchase decision, making them an essential part of how you market your business. Positive reviews can influence potential customers to choose a particular service business, while negative reviews may deter them. Reviews serve as a form of social proof, indicating that others have had a positive experience with your company. This can be particularly powerful in persuading potential customers to make a purchase.

Getting Started – What to Consider

Yes, generating reviews is incredibly important. But it's even more important to make sure you're generating the right reviews: positive ones. Consider these important things before you start building a review generation system, running a campaign or even just asking your customers for reviews.

Deliver Exceptional Service

This is an obvious, but important, consideration. Genuine customer satisfaction is the foundation of positive reviews. If your customer experience is lacking, your reviews will be less than stellar. Make sure you understand your customers' needs, set clear expectations, train and empower your employees, and provide personalized service whenever possible.

Keep a Pulse on Customer Satisfaction

You might think your customer experience is fantastic – but your customers might disagree. Make sure you are meeting and exceeding their expectations by regularly asking for feedback. Negative feedback would naturally translate to negative reviews.

Identify Trends in Customer Feedback – and Make Changes Where Necessary

Constructive criticism provides insights into areas that may need attention in your business. Connect the dots on the feedback your customers provide and identify any areas of improvement. This may require you to make big changes in your customer experience, but it will be well worth the time investment when you see those positive reviews rolling in.

See How You Compare to Your Competitors.

Monitor your competitors online to see where you can beat them in terms of star rating and customer satisfaction – then plan accordingly. When it comes to online visibility, this is the single most important thing to take into consideration so you know how to set appropriate goals.
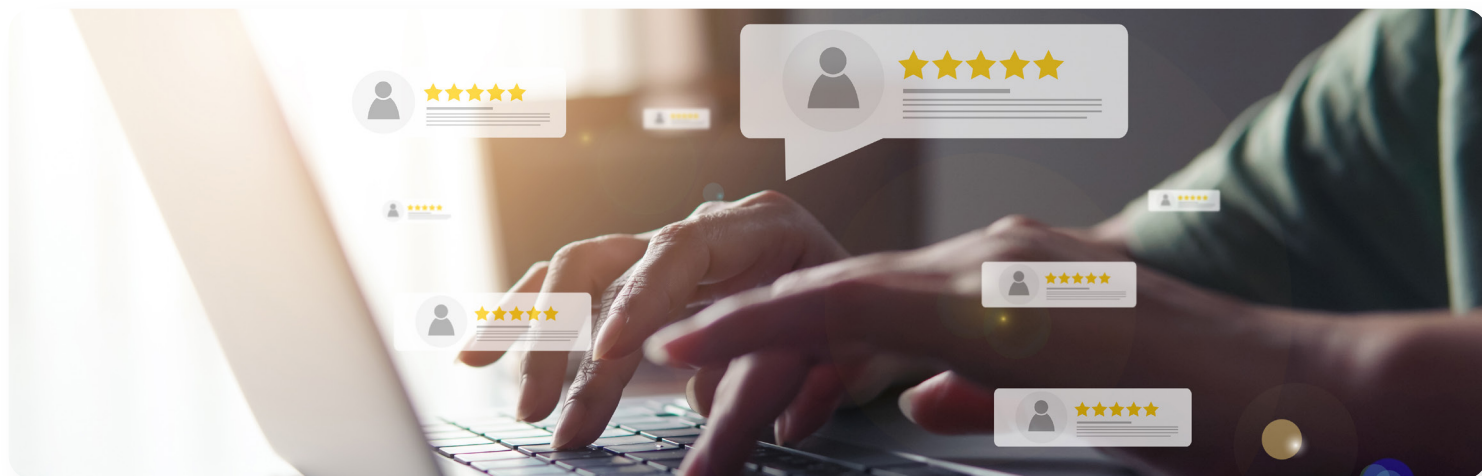
How to Implement a Review Generation Program

Often, businesses struggle with review generation because it's just not part of their routine, or they're not sure when or how to ask customers for reviews. To be effective, it's crucial to be consistent. Build review generation into your day-to-day operations, and asking for reviews becomes part of your process with very little effort required to maintain. Here's a step-by-step guide on how to get there.

1 Define Your Objectives

What do you want to achieve as a result of your positive reviews? Is there a certain star rating you're aiming for? Do you need to hit a certain number of reviews to outshine a competitor? Clearly outlining the goals of your review generation program will help you focus your efforts and ensure team members are committed to your goals.

2 Train and Educate Your Staff

Make sure your entire staff knows about the importance of reviews, how to request them, when to request them and the positive impact reviews will have on your business. Equip them with scripts and best practices for asking customers.

3 Develop a Review Request Kit

In addition to scripts, provide your technicians with review request kits that make it even easier to ask customers for reviews. Items to consider include business cards with review instructions and a QR code that goes directly to the review site; branded materials like flyers, brochures and door hangers that explain the importance of reviews and how customers can leave them; and other materials. You should also include a line asking for reviews in your email signature, invoices, thank you cards and any other business communications.

4 Provide Incentives and Recognition

Develop a tiered incentive structure based on the number and quality of reviews generated. Consider different levels of rewards for technicians who consistently contribute to the program (cash bonuses, extra paid time off, gift cards, etc.). It's also good to implement a recognition system to acknowledge technicians who excel in review generation. This could include shoutouts in team meetings, certificates or small awards.

5 Performance Metrics

Set clear and measurable performance metrics, such as the number of reviews generated per technician, the average rating received and the overall impact on the business.

How to Implement a Review Generation Program Contd.

6 **Regular Performance Reviews**

Conduct regular performance reviews with technicians to discuss their progress in the review generation program. Provide constructive feedback and address any challenges they may be facing.

7 **Internal Communication**

Regularly communicate the progress of the review generation program to the entire team. This creates a sense of healthy competition and fosters a team-oriented approach.

8 **Customer Feedback Loop**

Establish a feedback loop where technicians can share customer feedback (positive and negative) with management. This not only helps in review generation but also in continuous improvement.

9 **Compliance With Review Platforms**

Ensure that the review generation program complies with the policies and guidelines of your chosen review platforms. Avoid any practices that may violate the rules of these platforms.

10 **Continuous Program Evaluation**

To keep the program engaging and motivating, regularly evaluate its effectiveness, solicit feedback from technicians and make adjustments as needed.

Start Getting Reviews!

Now that you've got your systems in place, it's time to start gathering reviews. Follow these steps for review success. And remember: The most important thing when it comes to getting reviews is to simply ASK. Almost two-thirds of customers will leave a review when asked.

Make it as Simple as Possible to Leave You a Review

The easier it is, the more likely your customers are to follow through. Create a quick, seamless review process by:

- Using direct links that take users right to the review site
- Using link shorteners and QR codes to skip extra steps
- Use review platforms that allow simple one-click star ratings so customers don't have to write a lot – they can always leave extra feedback if they wish
- Make sure the whole process is mobile-friendly and doesn't require them to download an app or create an account

The fewer obstacles your customers face when trying to leave a review, the better their experience in doing so – which will increase your review volume and boost the likelihood of higher quality feedback.

Ask for Reviews on Key Platforms

It's important to get reviews on the platforms that matter most. Nine times out of 10, Google will be the area to invest most of your time and effort. Google is widely considered the most important platform for generating reviews due to several key factors.

- **Search Engine Dominance:** Most searches happen on Google. When potential customers search for a business or service, Google reviews are prominently displayed in the search results.

- **Local SEO Impact:** Google reviews significantly impact local search engine optimization (SEO). Positive reviews enhance a business's organic visibility in local search results, making it more likely to appear in the coveted "Local Pack" or map listings, which can substantially increase visibility.

- **Maximize Zero-Click Searches:** Reviews are crucial for zero-click searches because they often appear as snippets or featured snippets in search results, providing users with immediate, concise information. In a zero-click search scenario – where users obtain the information they need directly on the search engine results page (SERP) without clicking through to a website – Google Business Profile reviews become even more important.

- **General Consumer Trust:** Consumers often rely on Google reviews to gauge a business's credibility and reputation, even when using other mediums like Yelp, Facebook or Angi.

As we mentioned earlier, it's crucial to focus on how you stack up amongst your competitors on each platform. Once you're well above competitors in star rating and number of reviews on Google, you can move on to less important platforms like Facebook and Yelp.

Automate the Process

Collecting customer reviews manually can be a tough and time-consuming task. Automating the process can save you time and boost the number of reviews you get. With review generation tools, you can create personalized campaigns to increase conversions from your review requests, or set up a drip campaign effortlessly.

Customize Your Review Requests

Even when you're requesting reviews at scale, it's important to maintain a personal touch in your requests. Personalized outreach will increase response rates, make customers feel special and help you get more positive feedback. If you're automating review generation, use a platform that gives you customizable templates. Some tips to include personalization:

- **Make sure your requests include your branding and messaging**
- **Choose from several formats to ensure you get the most actionable responses and increase customer reviews**
- **Address the customer by name**
- **Reference the service the customer recently purchased from you**

Send Review Requests through Multiple Channels

Every customer has unique channel preferences and when/where they'll be most likely to take action. Chances are that you have a lot of happy customers out there. Some of them may check their email daily, while others may lean heavily on text as a communication channel. Others would prefer a face-to-face request from their technician. Make sure you reach them in the way that is most convenient for them — this will lead to the best results.

Our recommendation is to send review requests to your customers via text and email. Remember: Text has a 99% open rate and high response rates, so skipping this channel means missing out on tons of potential reviews. Here are a few templates that you can use to request your customers' feedback:

We appreciate your business and hope you enjoyed your experience. We'd love to hear your feedback. Click below to leave a review.

[Customer Name], thank you for choosing (Your Business Name). Please provide your feedback by clicking the link below.

Hey [Customer Name]. Thank you food visiting (Your Business Name) today. Please take a moment to leave your feedback. Your responses will help us serve you better in the future.

Review Request Templates: Text Message

Here are a few templates that you can use to request your customers' feedback. These are basic scripts that can be easily customized based on the services provided along with individual personalities and preferences, providing a springboard to start from. Feel free to adjust these scripts to fit your company's communication style and the specific dynamics of your interactions with customers, and to ensure they align with your review solicitation strategy.

Text Message:

Script 1: Casual and Direct

Hi [Customer's Name], it's [Your Name] from [Company]. We hope you're enjoying your beautifully maintained lawn! If you have a moment, could you share your experience with us by leaving a review? Your feedback helps us improve and lets others know about our service. Here's the link: [Insert Review Link]. Thanks a bunch!

Script 2: Gratitude With a Request

Hey [Customer's Name], we just wanted to say thanks for choosing [Pest Control Company]. We are committed to keeping your home pest-free! If you're happy with our service, would you mind leaving us a review? Your feedback means a lot to us. Here's the link: [Insert Review Link]. Much appreciated!

Script 3: Personal Touch

Hi [Customer's Name], it's [Your Name] from [Lawn Care Company]. We truly value your business and want to ensure we're meeting your expectations. Could you take a moment to share your experience with us by leaving a review? Here's the link: [Insert Review Link]. Thanks for being an awesome customer!

Script 4: Friendly Reminder

Hi [Customer's Name], just a quick reminder from [Pest Control Company]. If you're happy with our service, we'd love it if you could leave us a review. Your feedback helps us grow and improve. Here's the link: [Insert Review Link]. Thanks so much!

Review Request Templates: Email

Email Scripts:

Script 1: Thank You Follow-Up

Subject: Thank You for Choosing [Lawn Care Company]!

Hi [Customer's Name],

I hope this email finds you well. We wanted to express our gratitude for choosing [Lawn Care Company] for your lawn care needs. We strive to provide top-notch service to all our customers, and your satisfaction is our priority.

If you have a moment, we'd greatly appreciate it if you could share your experience with us by leaving a review. Your feedback helps us improve our services and assists others in finding quality lawn care.

Here's the link to leave a review: [Insert Review Link]

Thank you once again for your trust in us. We look forward to serving you again in the future!

Warm regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Position]
[Lawn Care Company]

Review Request Templates: Email & In-Person

Email Scripts:

Script 2: Friendly Review Request

Subject: Help Us Improve - Leave a Review for [Pest Control Company]!

Hi [Customer's Name],

We hope this email finds you well and that your home remains pest-free!

At [Pest Control Company], we're always striving to provide the best possible service to our valued customers. Your feedback plays a crucial role in helping us achieve that goal.

If you could spare a few moments, we'd appreciate it if you could share your experience with us by leaving a review. Your honest feedback helps us understand what we're doing well and where we can improve.

Here's the link to leave a review: [Insert Review Link]

Thank you for choosing [Pest Control Company]. We truly value your business and look forward to continuing to serve you.

Best regards,
[Your Name]
[Your Position]
[Lawn Care Company]

Example In-Person Scripts:

Script 1: Direct Approach

Technician: Hi there, [Customer's Name]! I hope you're happy with the service we provided today. If you are, would you mind sharing your experience with others by leaving us a review online? Your feedback is valuable for us to keep improving, and it helps other homeowners find reliable services like ours. Here's a card with instructions on how to leave a review. Thanks a lot for your support!

Script 2: In-Person Follow-up

Technician: Hey [Customer's Name], I just wanted to say thanks for choosing our services. We really appreciate your business. By the way, if you have a moment, we'd love it if you could share your experience online with others. It helps us improve our services and lets other folks know about our quality work. Here's a card with all the details on how to leave a review. Thanks again for your support!

FAQs

What if someone posts a review that isn't for my business, not from a current customer, or spam?
Flag or report fake reviews to Google. Provide evidence and details about why you believe the review is fraudulent. Google takes steps to verify the authenticity of reviews. Pro tip: if you are a Coalmarch customer, we can help you report fake reviews.

Do Google reviews impact my business's search engine ranking?
Yes, positive reviews can contribute to better search rankings. Google considers factors like review quantity, quality and the overall sentiment of reviews when determining search results.

When is the best time to ask for reviews?
When your customers are the happiest! Lawn care businesses need to double down on review generation when lawns are looking their absolute best. Pest control businesses should aim for after-service or when customers are beginning to see products working!

Can I buy reviews?
It's not a good idea to pay for reviews. You might see a short-term spike, but the long-term repercussions could be extremely bad for your business. Buying reviews is against Google's terms of service and could even result in your Google Business Profile getting suspended. Earning positive reviews is the better way to go – both ethically and from a business growth perspective.

Should I respond to every Google review?
Yes. A quick, honest response to every review, positive and negative, shows that your business values customer feedback and is actively engaged in providing excellent service. Google considers interaction and engagement when ranking search results, and responding to reviews is a form of user-generated content that can positively impact your online visibility.

FAQs Contd.

Are negative reviews bad?
Everything is good in moderation. While we don't want negative reviews that will cause you to stand out amongst your competitors in a bad way, a bad review here and there is totally fine for your business image. It's expected and realistic that businesses cannot be perfect 100% of the time. Having a five-star rating with hundreds of reviews in and of itself is a red flag! Some customers even look to see just how a business responds to negative reviews.

What's the best way to respond to negative Google reviews?
Respond professionally, acknowledge the issue, apologize for any inconvenience and offer a solution or steps to address the concern. Avoid being defensive or confrontational.

Is there anything else I can do about a negative review after I respond?
Yes! Customer service doesn't end with a bad review. Solving the customer's problem can allow you to request that the customer change their review if they're satisfied with the service. Be mindful that it's all about time and place for when this is appropriate. You must ensure the customer is happy with how the situation turned out and feels good about your business/customer relationship.

How can my business deal with a surge in negative reviews?
Investigate the root causes, address any systemic issues and respond to each review thoughtfully. Demonstrate a commitment to resolving concerns and improving services

READY TO START GROWING?

Partner with the experts at Coalmarch. From compelling, optimized websites to dynamic digital marketing programs to effective print marketing and more, we will work with you to create a marketing strategy designed for your growth.

CLICK TO GET STARTED NOW!