

HOW RESPONDING TO REVIEWS AFFECTS Your Bottom Line



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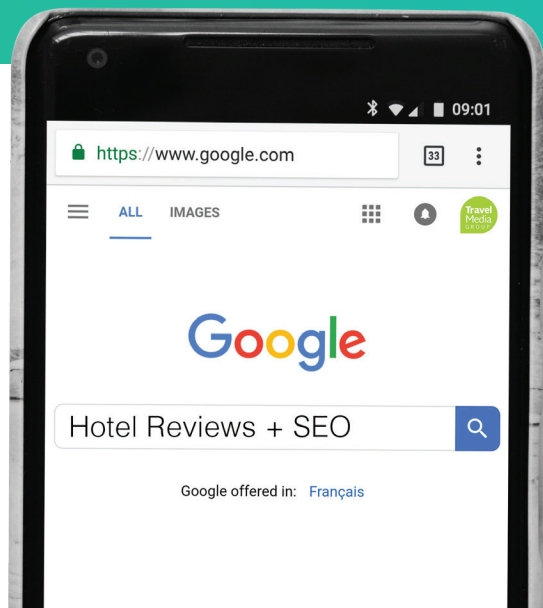
**84% of
people
trust
reviews.**

Hotel reviews and the star ratings that accompany them are extremely influential to future travelers. 9 out of 10 people check reviews before booking their stay, and 84% of people trust reviews as much as a personal recommendation¹.

While many hoteliers have begun to see the importance of responding to online reviews, many still aren't meeting the expectations of their customers. If you're giving cookie cutter copy-and-paste replies to every review, you're missing a huge opportunity to make review responses work for your hotel.

You've seen how online reviews can influence other travelers thinking about choosing your hotel. In this white paper, you'll learn other ways that review responses affect your occupancy and your bottom line.

REVIEW RESPONSES & SEO



Google confirmed at a whopping 15% of the signals that decide your position on the search engine results page (SERP) come from reviews and responses. The quantity, quality, and relevance of your reviews plus your unique responses impact how highly you rank against other competitors in your area.

What's more, the higher you rank, the more likely it is that a searcher will be clicking your hotel website link — not an OTA. That means that the more and better reviews you have that you're responding to, the higher you could be ranking for quality, direct traffic.

To get the most out of these ranking factors, it's important to set up review notifications for your hotel so you can respond as soon as possible. With reputation management, you can get an alert for each new review and assign responses to employees to reply or ask for more details.

Why does Google care about review responses?

Google's top factors for ranking a local business are trust and authority. Google wants to recommend the best businesses to their customers. In addition to relevance, this means that they want to show searches the places that are the most trusted by real people who have visited. By responding to reviews, you're showing that you care about what your customers have to say and that your business is active.

Best Practices for Improving SEO with Review Responses

When responding to reviews, it's a general best practice to repeat positive elements of your guest's comments. If they say "the rooms were clean," then the hotel response should include an element like "we're glad that you found our rooms clean and comfortable!"

You can take this concept one step further when thinking about SEO. Consider that every word used online about your hotel will be skimmed by Google to describe your hotel. If you have a review saying how happy they were that they could bring their dog, you may respond saying "We're glad you enjoyed our pet friendly hotel!" That way, you're reiterating to Google that you accept pets. So next time someone searches "pet friendly hotel" in your city, you'll be included in the list.

**"We're
glad you
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pet friendly
hotel!"**

REVIEW RESPONSES & LOYALTY



**The #1
reason
travelers
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quality.**

For businesses, keeping loyal customers coming back is the most cost-effective way of attracting customers. Return customers tend to spend more each year they stay with a hotel. Plus, the cost of bringing back a return customer is much lower than the cost of getting a new customer.² Most importantly for hotels, return guests who use loyalty programs are more likely to book directly through the hotel rather than a third party so they can get the most out of their loyalty programs.

The key to a customer becoming a repeat guest is all in the experience. In a study on hotel guest loyalty, Hospitality Net found that the #1 reason both business and leisure travelers are loyal to a hotel is quality.³ Quality includes factors like mattress firmness, room sound, and cleanliness - the same things you're probably used to seeing in online reviews.

Focus on Quality to Build Loyalty

It's especially important to respond to reviews that comment on aspects of room quality. For instance, if someone complains in a review that the room is loud, invite them to call and request a specific room that you know is quieter next time. Not only will that guest have an option should they return, but now other guests who might be on the fence because of that issue have a solution.

Attention to quality details like this in reviews can help you build loyalty in guests while attracting new customers. To find out which factors have the greatest impact on your online reputation, you can also use a sentiment analysis tool. With sentiment analysis, you'll be able to quantify how often different topics come up in positive and negative reviews so you can see your biggest strengths and the biggest areas for improvement.

REVIEW RESPONSES & CUSTOMER SERVICE

Responding to a guest review is really the last part of a guest's stay, bringing it to a close. Reviews are closely linked to customer service, as they often discuss issues and suggestions for your business. Whether it's something you could have solved during the stay or not, your response to the reviews shows how you treat customer service in general. Plus, reviews are your last chance to fix an issue or provide an excellent experience.

89% of potential customers read the business responses to online reviews.⁴ Prospective guests aren't just looking to see what you say, but also how you say it. Are you defensive about criticism? Do you blame the guests for not coming to you sooner?



**Travelers are
62% more
likely to book
a hotel that
responds to
reviews.**

How to Increase Customer Satisfaction with Review Responses

In most consumer industries, you can really fix a customer's complaint by replacing a product or providing a refund. In hotels, you can't undo the stay or change the past. So how can you help? At the end of the day, hotels are in the hospitality industry, and your guests just want to know you care.

According to research by TripAdvisor, 77% of travelers believe that hotels that respond to reviews care more about their guests.⁵ And, travelers are 62% more likely to book a hotel that responds to reviews than a similar one that doesn't. Responding to reviews is a chance to complete the guest experience and attract future travelers.

REVIEW RESPONSES & YOUR BOTTOM LINE



**Above all,
responding
to reviews
shows that
you care.**

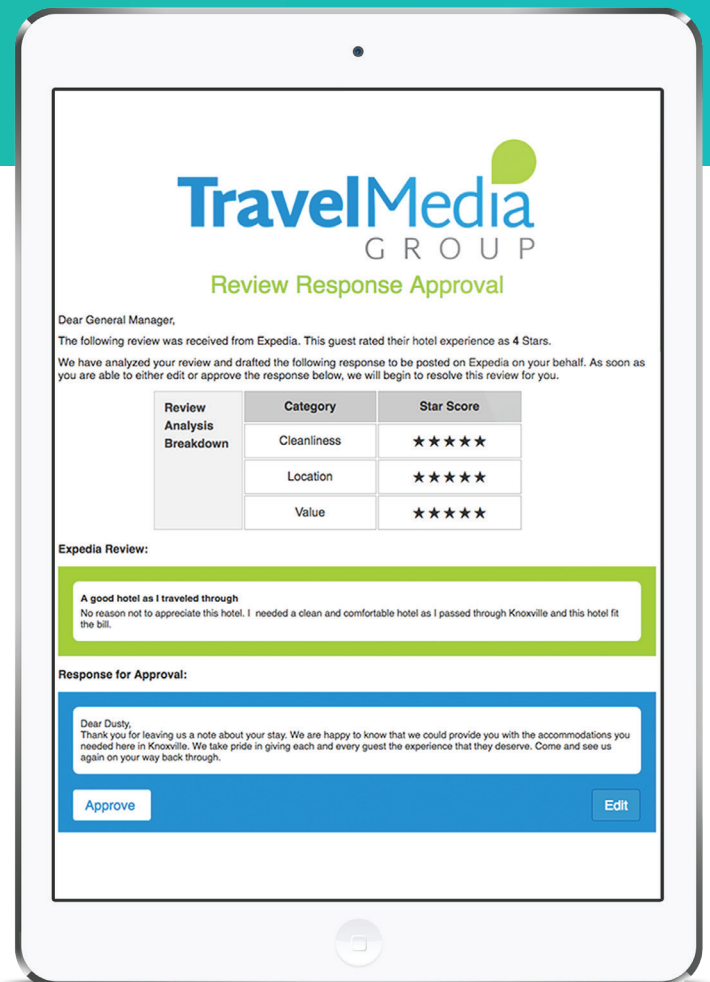
While review responses are most well known for influencing travelers, they also serve to increase occupancy at your hotel in other ways. Review responses are good for SEO and can increase your ranking on local search. They can increase loyalty, leading to return customers that cost you less to book. And, responses give your guests and potential guests an idea of your personality and how you handle issues at your hotel. Above all, responding to reviews shows that you care.

For the best return on the time investment you spend on responding to reviews, follow these guidelines:

- ✓ Set up alerts so that you never miss a review
- ✓ Respond to every review your hotel gets
- ✓ Repeat keywords in your review responses
- ✓ Identify areas you can improve from review topics
- ✓ Provide caring and thoughtful replies to your guests

RESPOND & RESOLVE™ FROM TMG CAN HELP Your Bottom Line

You don't have to go at it alone. With a reputation management platform, you can encourage guests to leave reviews, helping boost all of these benefits. With Travel Media Group, you'll also get review alerts, sentiment analysis, and the chance to outsource responses to a professional writer so every review gets a reply.



Learn more at <http://trvl.media/respond> today!

Sources:

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