

CRISIS OR OPPORTUNITY? HOW TO HANDLE A BAD RESTAURANT REVIEW



By, Rob Zaleski, content marketing associate, Main Street Hub

Main Street Hub is the “do-it-for-you” marketing platform for local businesses. The company offers what it says is the only full-service social media management product that’s focused exclusively on local merchants at a price point they can afford. Main Street Hub seeks to help its clients attract more customers, extend their customer service through social media, grow revenue by spreading word of mouth and manage their online reputation on social media websites including Facebook, Twitter, Yelp, Google+, Foursquare and TripAdvisor.

Your restaurant is your heart and soul. You pour countless amounts of time, effort and thought into creating the right cuisine, the right atmosphere and the right experience for your customers. When the inevitable poor review comes your way, it’s difficult not to take it personally and go on the defensive. The intertwining of review sites like Yelp, Google+ and TripAdvisor with your restaurant’s visibility and reputation online makes it imperative that you handle these situations the right way. Here are a few tips to help you do just that.

1. **Breathe.** Don’t allow yourself any type of knee-jerk reaction to what someone has said in a review. No one wins arguing online. No one. Step away for a moment and do something else, then come back to the review. Approach it rationally. What are this customer’s main pain points? Is what they’re complaining about really the issue at hand or was there something else that exacerbated their situation?

You don’t have to address every single complaint, but zeroing in on what seems most important can take off the edge. If there’s something you should be apologizing for, make sure you genuinely do so. Even if their complaints aren’t based solely on something in the restaurant’s control, apologize for the fact that they had a poor experience. A sincere apology can completely turn a situation around.

2. A poor review isn't the end of the conversation—it's the beginning of one. Reaching out to someone in a positive and constructive way can make all the difference in their perception of your business. If you show them that you're listening and genuinely want to make things right, you can turn someone who might never have stepped foot in your restaurant again into a raving fan. For instance, in the below example, this customer's initial 1-star review ended with "I hope you step up your customer service for future patrons...myself NOT included." After one of our community managers responded to her on behalf of our client, she had this to say:

  Update - Yesterday

I would like to update my review regarding the customer service of this venue. After my less than glowing review about a phone conversation I had with a hostess. I would like to report that the owner of the restaurant contacted me and sincerely apologized for the bad experience. I would like to know more about this restaurant and what they could offer my party. Thanks for paying attention :)

She and her party of 12 ended up celebrating at this restaurant, and had a wonderful time.

3. Remember that you aren't simply replying to this one customer. Public replies on Yelp, Google+ and TripAdvisor can be seen by anyone, including potential customers checking you out for the first time. Do you want them to see a business owner acknowledging customers' good and bad experiences or a business owner arguing with customers?

At [Main Street Hub](#), we've seen people specifically point out that they chose a restaurant because they were impressed by the owner taking reviews seriously, and responding to customer feedback. Take the opportunity to calmly correct inaccuracies, thank people for coming by, even in poor reviews, and address grievances. This will show everyone that customer experience is top of mind for you and your business.

Adequate responsiveness, of course, takes time from what is already the very busy schedule that you maintain, especially if you receive numerous reviews. Though it's time well spent, if you need help keeping up with reviews, Main Street Hub's team knows how to handle them. We'll make sure your customers know you value their input — good or bad.