

DigitalMarketing**NOW**

A Breakthrough Guide for Small Business

Save Your REPUTATION

- How To Remove
Online Reviews

How To Write AMAZING BLOG CONTENT

(that keeps people
coming back
for more!)

Why LOCAL LISTINGS MATTER

Newsletter Marketing... More Important Than You Think



DIGITAL SAPIEN INTERACTIVE
INTERNET MARKETING EVOLVED

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Welcome To

Digital Marketing NOW

Thanks for checking out this issue of Digital Marketing NOW, your online marketing resource guide for small business. Each month we will be covering topics that resonate with local businesses just like yours.

Our goal is simple. We want to enable you to do big things online, and it all starts by breaking down the complexities of marketing your business online.

It doesn't matter if you're just starting out, or an established business owner in your local community, you can always benefit from increasing your brand's visibility online.

To your success,
Digital Marketing NOW
www.digitalsapien.com

Digital Sapien Interactive is a leading small business internet marketing service provider. We help small businesses connect with more customers online.

If you want to build your business, you need to market, it's that simple. But you can lose thousands of dollars if you don't know what you are doing. So we urge you to take action with some of the strategies we recommend.

For a more "hands off" approach, we offer affordable solutions and can deliver results. We hope you enjoy this issue of Digital Marketing NOW and feel free to reach out to us anytime.

WHEN SHOULD YOU **REMOVE REVIEWS?**

Not too long ago, business reviews were written by subject-matter experts and printed in well-known publications. In today's world, that's simply no longer the case. Nowadays your customers can easily voice their opinion and experience they had with your business online for the world to see.



But that's actually a good thing – and there are plenty of good reasons why your business should be listed on review sites. The first is that you get to add a link to your website which will boost your traffic - and secondly, people can also get some basic information about your business such as the name of your hours of operation, where it's located, your phone number and so on.

But most importantly it's the customer reviews on these review sites (they call them review sites for a reason!), that makes them so important, but it also can be a double-edged sword.

Positive reviews can do wonders for your business, as review websites are considered more credible than any form of advertising. But negative reviews can have disastrous consequences to your bottom line. The complaint can be serious enough to significantly derail your business. Like a report about seeing bed bugs in a hotel room or a cockroach in an entrée at a restaurant. What's really frustrating is when the report is not true and no merit at all.

But the question is, when should you remove reviews – reviews that make your business look bad?

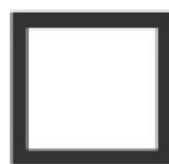
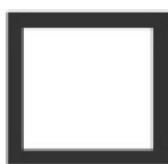


ADVANTAGES OF REMOVING NEGATIVE REVIEWS

Purging negative reviews can be a good thing. First of all, it limits the number of people who'll ever read them – keeping the damage to a minimum. After all, it's not unusual for a potential customer to reconsider their choice after reading just one negative review over a dozen positive ones.

Another benefit to removing negative reviews means that your average rating will go up. Studies show that a high customer rating means a potential increase of 55% in sales. According to Yelp, a restaurant with a 4-star rating is 63% more likely to be full at any given time than a restaurant with just a 3-star average rating. And a one-star increase in the average rating can bump up your revenue by 5 to 9 percent.

So it's blatantly obvious why anyone who runs a business would want to remove negative reviews.



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DISADVANTAGES OF REMOVING NEGATIVE REVIEWS

But these reasons alone for removing negative reviews doesn't mean you should necessarily do so. In fact, websites like Yelp, Facebook, and Google don't make it easy for you to remove negative reviews for one very simple reason— it damages the credibility of the site and the business

Removing reviews is to remove trust People trust review websites because they believe that by and large the reviews are honest and unbiased. To most people it's an obvious red flag if they only find positive reviews. There's got to be some contrast. You can't please everyone and consumers know that. They will become suspicious if all you have is raving reviews about your business.

In this way, negative reviews are helpful because almost 7 out of 10 consumers are more likely to trust the reviews when they see that there is both positive and negative reviews in the mix. In fact, it's been found that shoppers who read negative reviews are actually 67% more likely to convert than the average consumer.



**REMOVING
REVIEWS IS TO
REMOVE TRUST**

WHAT TO DO WHEN SLAPPED WITH NEGATIVE REVIEWS

First of all you need to understand that unless the review is inaccurate, a fake review, or violates the policy of the review website in question – you don't stand a very good chance of actually getting the review removed.

To start with, you need to keep an eye out for reviews - whether they are positive or negative. But if you can't spend the whole day manually monitoring these website, it's a good idea to consider using an online tool like reviewpush.com to help you monitor the sites automatically.

If you want a free alternative, setting up a Google Alert will pretty much do the same thing.

Once you have been alerted to a new review, it's best if you can respond to it right away, good or bad. When you respond to positive reviews, it shows that you're a gracious business owner who acknowledges the importance of your customers.

But when you are responding to negative reviews or complaints, you have several options. For example, if a customer felt your business fell short in some way then you should apologize and promise to do better.

But you can turn a negative into a positive while by taking responsibility but also emphasizing how you're going to do better next time to balance things out.

Or you can even engage with the customer and ask ideas from them. Apologize for any inconvenience caused and then ask if they have suggestions on how you can do things better.

Whatever you do, just be polite. The good thing about responding to negative reviews is that 33% of the reviews are amended and become a positive review instead when they get a response from business owners. So it's a win-win solution.

Negative reviews with inaccuracies or negative comments of your business that are flat out lies posted maliciously—often by competitors, or disgruntled ex-employees are the reviews that you'll have the best chances of getting removed – but there must be a legitimate reason.

HOW TO REMOVE REVIEWS

Each review site has its own rules and guidelines, but for most reputable sites you can't just remove a review simply because it says negative things about your shop. However, you can take a peek at the guidelines governing such reviews, and you can flag a negative review if you think it has violated a rule or guideline.

For other review sites, contact the website's webmaster, requesting them to remove the content, or at least indicate to Google that it shouldn't crawl or index the page. They will probably require a compelling reason to remove reviews, so back up your request with as much proof as possible.



Negative comments of your business that are flat out lies posted maliciously—often by competitors, or disgruntled ex-employees are the reviews that you'll have the best chances of getting removed - but there must be a legitimate reason.



Google allows you to flag material you think is inappropriate, which will then be reviewed and removed if deemed necessary.

Google's removes reviews if it is:

- » Advertising
- » Spam
- » Contains phone numbers or URLs
- » Off-topic
- » Contains offensive language
- » Poses a conflict of interest
- » Contains illegal content
- » Has copyrighted content in it
- » Sexually explicit material
- » Involves impersonation
- » Contains confidential content
- » Hate speech

If a review falls under into any of these categories, you can flag it and it will be checked out. Remember, the review needs to violate one of the offenses listed above and a low rating or no explanation for the rating is not a disqualifier.



Facebook follows a similar practice of reporting as Google; they explain inappropriate content that should be flagged in the Facebook Community Standards.

Facebook will remove posts that contain:

- » Violence or make threats
- » Self-harming information
- » Bullying and harassment
- » Hate speech
- » Graphic content
- » Sexually explicit content
- » Private content
- » Spam
- » Compromises security

To report a review to be removed on Facebook, follow these steps:

1. Go to the review and click in the top right
2. Click I don't like this review
3. Click Report and follow the on-screen instructions

Just like Google, Facebook will look into the post and determine if it should be removed based on the Community Standards.



Yelp is a bit trickier to maneuver. Unlike Google and Facebook, they don't tell you outright what qualifies a review for removal, but instead lay out what content it should not contain:

- » Threats, harassment, lewdness, hate speech and other displays of bigotry
- » Conflict of interests
- » Promotional content
- » Irrelevance
- » Privacy concerns
- » Intellectual property

When it comes to reporting content that does not follow Yelp's guide lines, things get more complicated. Depending on what guideline was not followed changes how it should be reported. More often than not, you can simply flag the post and follow up with a short explanation about why you flagged it.



Whether you plan to keep or dispute a negative review, your main priority should be to boost the trust of your customers. Remember, positive reviews can make them trust you, but the presence of negative reviews doesn't always mean that they will trust you less.

It may be better to simply respond to negative reviews in a proactive way than try to remove them. When you show to your customers that you value them by making every effort to give them a positive experience, then even bad reviews can be used to your advantage.

DO LOCAL LISTINGS REALLY MATTER?



The most popular trends in digital marketing today are social media and content marketing. This is quite understandable. After all, content marketing is the “white hat” SEO strategy that Google loves, while social media marketing takes advantage of the ongoing fascination of the masses for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

But these trends don’t necessarily mean you should just forget rudimentary marketing techniques such as the use of local listings. We’re not talking about the ancient printed Yellow Pages here. We’re talking about their online equivalent – Yelp, YP.com, Yahoo Local, etc.



LOCAL LISTINGS AND SEO

For most people, SEO invariably means ranking highly in Google, because that's the search engine most people use. In the US, Google has 67.55% of the market, and its dominance is even more evident in mobile search, where it owns 87.1% of the searches. Google is also very popular among consumers of all types, because almost 6 out of 10 use it to look for a particular local business.

So it makes sense that you'll want to rank in Google searches for your keywords. But what most people don't realize however is that getting citations in on-line directories can help with your local SEO efforts.

In local listings, you're invariably allowed to place a link to your website. Which is good for your rankings. Local directories do this so people can get more info about your goods and services than

what's shown on their website. And when you have citations in numerous directories, you can expect that there will also be an increase the number of people who visit your website.

These directories are extremely popular, as Yelp alone gets about 80 million monthly visitors in the US. That means more people are exposed to your brand and your advertising, and potentially this can mean more sales for your business.

But here's where it gets interesting: since a large part of Google rankings depend on how many websites feature a link to your own website, when you have dozens or even a hundred citations in local directories, that's going to help your SEO considerably. After all, numerous quality websites linking to yours is good for SEO.



70% OF ALL INTERNET SEARCHES ARE FOR LOCAL BUSINESS



ACHIEVE GREATER VISIBILITY THROUGH LOCAL LISTINGS

The reason businesses spend an obscene amount of money on television commercials, newspaper and magazine print ads, and billboards is that they want to reach as many people as possible. That's pretty much a given.

That's also the point why you have a website in the first place. To be seen by potential customers. This is not a trivial marketing strategy, because 70% of all Internet searches are for local business. Now when you consider that as of last count Google gets almost 12 billion searches a month, it means 8.4 billion searches were primarily for local business.

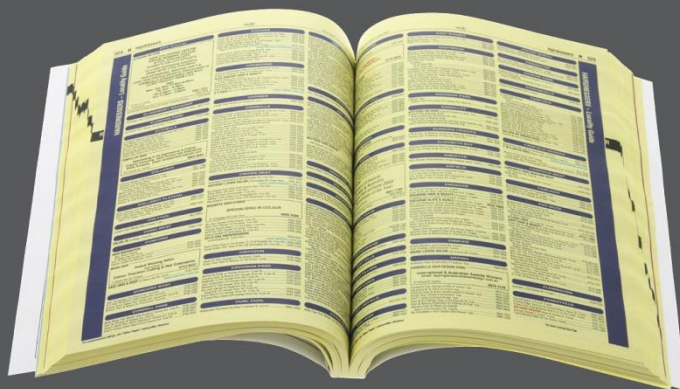
When you have your own website, it's like having a single number in a roulette wheel on which the ball can drop. But when you're listed in a local directory, it's like you get an additional number in the roulette wheel. You get more chances of being seen by your target audience. It's sort of like getting an additional magazine advertisement or billboard that can be seen by more and more potential customers.

The more local directories you join the more chances you have of being seen. So when your business is listed in a hundred different local directories, you have a hundred different ways through which a potential customer can find you.

LOCAL LISTINGS LET PEOPLE KNOW ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

Like the old Yellow Pages phone directories, local listing directories allow you to promote your business address and phone number in a profile so that they can display on their website. This alone will give you a leg up on your competitors if your business is listed on these sites and they are not.

Local Listings offer a lot more information and more chances to interact with customers than those big heavy phone books of the past.



LOCAL LISTINGS, REVIEWS & YOU

It's no secret that customer reviews can have a dramatic impact on your business. Word of mouth has always been a huge influence on buying decisions and customer reviews can make that decision easier. Almost 9 out of 10 people consider online reviews as trustworthy over recommendations from their friends. Now that's some serious influence!

But you should also know the importance of your own responses to reviews. You can thank positive reviewers and reinforce those warm & fuzzies between your business and that particular customer. This creates brand loyalty and super fans of your business.

You should respond to negative reviews by issuing an apology, offering an explanation, or by emphasizing your good points. Responding

to negative reviews can minimize the damage they can cause. There's also the chance that the reviewer may reconsider their negative review simply because you responded and showed them you care. Nearly a third of all negative reviews are updated to positive reviews just because somebody acknowledged their issue.

CITATIONS ARE A GOOD THING- GO GRAB THEM

If you haven't done so yet, it's time to prioritize local your listings. Most local directories don't charge a thing, yet they can really make a difference in a multitude of ways. It doesn't take much time or effort to get your business listed and as a small business owner, capitalizing on cost effective resources to grow your business just makes good business sense.



NEWSLETTER MARKETING...

More Important Than You Think



These days, with social media all the rage, it's easy to overlook email marketing for your small business. After all, who uses **email** anymore? Turns out a lot of people do, in fact three times as many people as Facebook and Twitter users combined.

Yes, the inter-web is here to stay and businesses no longer have to rely on expensive advertising in newspapers, or pay thousands of dollars for a TV commercial. To a big degree, the internet has leveled the playing field for small business.

But there's one problem most business owners face with their website: *you need to give people a reason visit your site, and that's not exactly easy.*

Then you have to give them a reason to keep coming back.



And this is why newsletter marketing matters. Have you ever heard the phrase - "*The money is in the list?*" That is especially true for small business owners -whether you know it or not.

Getting a potential customer to visit your website is great, but it's even better if you can get them subscribed to your newsletter. With each new subscriber, you are building your "list" of potential and current customers.

With this list - you can literally create sales on demand because by opting in, these people have already demonstrated that they're interested what you have to say. Now, you don't have to wait for them to come to your website, you can reach out to them.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER MARKETING IS EASIER

The predecessor of newsletter marketing is direct marketing, which involved sending out actual printed materials like pamphlets, brochures, and catalogs through the mail. But what most businesses will tell you, sending email newsletters is so much better. Here's why:



- *It's more affordable.* You don't have to invest a lot of money sending out digital newsletters, because you don't have to print out anything. You don't have to spend precious man-hours stuffing these printed materials into envelopes. Printing and paying for postage is expensive too.
- *It's also more convenient.* In comparison to traditional newsletter marketing – email newsletters are easy to create, and take less time to reach more people.
- *It's easy to track your efforts.* With direct marketing, you know it's working when your sales spike up after launching a DM campaign. But if it doesn't work, you can't really pinpoint the exact reason.

But you can with free analytical tools inside your newsletter service dashboard. You can find out the percentage of emails that were opened, whether you used an effective headline or not and most importantly you can find out how many of your recipients clicked on your call to action.

- *Your newsletters are easy to share.* With printed materials like brochures, you can share them with only a handful of people – and that's if you're lucky.

But that's one reason why email newsletters are so great - subscribers share and forward your newsletters to their own contact list. So if you send something that your recipients will find a lot of value in email is the perfect medium to spread the word to their contacts.

NEWSLETTER TOPICS THAT GET CLICKS



Your newsletter should be helpful and offer value in some way – The main objective is to help your customer resolve a specific problem related to your industry and continue to engage them – so when the time comes, they come to you for a solution. Some good newsletter topic ideas to get you started include:



Company News

People like getting an inside look at your business (awards, nominations) and anything that happens inside your company (new employee, charitable event, etc)





●● ***You can announce special offers, discounts, new products or services.***

This is a tried and tested way boosting revenue in a low sales period!

●● ***Discuss the latest developments in your industry.***

Emails are essentially a relationship-building tool, and here you can establish yourself as an authority by providing updates about the latest developments, trends, and other news in your industry.

●● ***Reviews of Happy Clients.***

When you get a positive review from a customer, you need to share it in your newsletter. This helps to nurture your relationship with all your customers who have subscribed to your list and shines the spotlight on those who take the time to leave a review

●● ***Surveys & Feedback.***

It's critical to know how your customers feel about your products and services. Many times, it's just not possible to get feedback while they are in-store so newsletter surveys are a good way to get much needed feedback about your business.





● **You can give practical advice.**

The words “how to” are two of the most commonly “googled” words, so take advantage of it by answering questions that you think your customers are probably asking. You can provide tips or advice on ways to help them find new solutions to problems relate to your industry.

● **Enlisting volunteers for charity efforts.**

Many recipients are willing to help out, and it elevates your “good guy” reputation when you don’t always use your newsletter for promotional reasons.

All these things must adhere to two crucial rules:

(1) Rule 1 is that the info should be interesting for the reader.

(2) Rule 2 is that in some way or another, the info should make your business look better.

Of course, there are lots of other rules that pretty much go without saying - Your newsletter has to be readable, make sure that you don’t have any typos or obvious grammatical errors that will give readers the wrong impression. This is not something that you want to type up on the fly. The more effort you put into creating an awesome newsletter, the more you’ll get out of it.





How to Write Amazing Blog Content

(That Keeps People Coming Back)

By now, you've probably heard the phrase that "Content is King" right? Throughout all of the algorithm updates Google has released over the last six years – one thing has never changed. Google loves to index fresh content.

Content Marketing is an amazing strategy to find and engage with loyal customers – and it's only increasing in popularity because 90% of customers prefer to learn about a brand through content vs ads.

But simply knowing that you need excellent content is one thing – actually creating it is a whole other thing altogether.

Just recently, Google made an appeal to website owners regarding their use of SEO techniques. What the search engine giant essentially said was that these techniques are not the most important considerations for ranking highly in the search results.

The most important factor is that website owners

offer relevant and quality info to their readers. If you do that, Google will reward you with better rankings in their search engine.

This has given rise to the term content marketing, which is simply a new name for a very old concept. By publishing interesting and engaging content for your website visitors, which converts a percentage of them into regular visitors while at the same time, attracting new ones too.

The ultimate purpose of content marketing is to get your visitors to do something that you want them to do. Such as to sign up for your newsletter or visit your brick and mortar location, and buy your products & services.

But that begs the question: what is "interesting" content?

A lot of people get it all wrong when it comes to blog content. Too much self-promotion is the fastest way to get a reader to click the back button so what should you feature instead?

Choose Topics That Interest Your Readers

What you post all depends on your business industry. Ask yourself what your website is about. And then put yourself in your reader's shoes. What content would they find useful?

Here are some suggestions for your topics:

1. **"How to" articles.** If you sell products, you can write articles on how to use these products, or how to take care of them.

If you offer services of some kind, you could write about how to get the most out of the service you provide or preventative maintenance to avoid it from happening again

Another idea is to create a buying guide. These are practical tips that many consumers and customers will find useful. And they also establish your authority in your industry.

2. **List-type articles.** Most people love lists. Publishing articles like "the top 3 most energy efficient double pane windows" or "most popular hair styles of the season for women in their 20's" etc. You can also publish the top ten worst lists, just to give you some ideas.

Check out many of the list-type articles online, and you'll notice that they also generate a lot of comments. Some comments may offer suggestions as to which items were left out from the list, (which gives you valuable insight) while others agree with your choices.

CONTENT MARKETING



What's undeniable is that these lists can attract a lot of active interest – which is a good thing.

3. **Head-to-head comparisons.** A lot of car magazines pit one car against another car in its comparison reviews, and you can do the same thing with your own products or services. This offers a tangible demonstration of how your business is better than your competitors.

The trick here is to pick a suitable match for your comparison, and then emphasize the ways in which your business is better.

4. **Answer Common FAQs** – Do you find that customers ask the same question over and over? Then it makes sense to create a blog that answers it.

Instead of repeatedly having to explain it, you can post a link to your blog post on your social networks and direct customers there for other great information too.



5. **Video Posts**, also referred to as “vlogs”– Do you own a smartphone or video camera? Consider starting your own “how to” series on topics in your industry. Post your videos to a dedicated YouTube channel, add them to your written blog posts, and promote them through your social media channels.

Know Your Audience

The best way to engage your audience is to know who your audience is and what type of profile they have. By knowing their profile and having an idea of who your visitors are in your head, you can create content that they would find interesting even if the topic isn't directly linked to your products or services.

The tone of your blog content matters too. It's not just what you say... It's how you say it. For

some businesses, like a landscaping service for example – a casual “write as you speak” tone might work best. Giving tips on how to get a greener lawn should probably be written in a more “neighborly advice” tone.

But for other industries like legal services a more professional tone will likely be more appropriate – but again it all depends on your audience.

There's an exception to this rule, however. For many smaller businesses, where you are the "face" of your own business it's also important that your readers get a sense of who you are.

In this circumstance you're aiming for a more "intimate" relationship with your blog so people can identify with you easier – which will help to build your personal brand.

Final Notes

Blog articles are not purely words. Graphics and images will help illustrate your message better. Also, consistency is critical. Updating your blog regularly has a multitude of benefits – including better SEO rankings.

Don't be afraid to delegate – you don't have to write ALL of your content yourself. Guest bloggers or even your employees can contribute articles. A blog that is not updated often will eventually lose its readership.

There's many ingredients to creating amazing content for your blog. Hopefully by implementing some of these suggestions you can create a content recipe for a successful blog that has your visitors coming back for more!



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