

Living Up to Your Online Reputation

This week we talk with Jay Stover, founder and CEO of NYC business, Lockbusters, who knows that his reputation is everything.

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Behind the Review host and Yelp's Small Business Expert, Emily Washcovick, shares a look at this week's episode of the podcast.

Some businesses are centered around a great product. Others focus on dependability, reliability, and honesty. A great locksmith focuses on the latter. Jay Stover, founder and CEO of New York City business Lockbusters, knows that his reputation is everything. Many of the times he is called, he is talking to people at their most vulnerable state, so it requires a very specific and special skill set.

When it came to finding help in a moment of great need, our reviewer, Charlotte B., turned to Yelp. Charlotte entered her apartment to find that her superintendent had been coming and going from her apartment without permission, and she knew she had to take matters into her own hands.

Charlotte is just one example of the many situations that Jay finds his customers in. "People accidentally lose their keys, get locked out, leave their bag or jacket at a restaurant or bar, kick out a crazy ex, have a creepy super walk in—you know, all the ebb and flow of what happens in the city. I

appreciate people's caution. I see people in really volatile and vulnerable situations—sometimes after they'd been robbed, and in Charlotte's case, it was illegally entering her apartment."

Because of this, it's essential that Jay shows up for customers in the way they need but specifically in a way that holds up to his online reputation. "I need to come across as that person that lets them know, I'm here to help you. You hired me, you chose me because you read good things about me. There are literally a thousand other people you could have hired, right? So I already appreciate that. And you also hired me because you read about what other people have written about me. So there's an expectation there."

Reputation is essential for every business owner, but as we said earlier, the stakes are higher for business owners who rely on being trusted. Building a positive reputation is hard, let alone an exceptional one. You can't fake it—you need to put in the hard work, and from there, the reputation will follow. As a business owner, regardless of industry, think about how people came to find your business. Was it a referral from a friend or family member? Was it through great Yelp reviews? However they found you, make sure you deliver on the expectations that brought them to your business in the first place.

Let's take a quick look at some of the steps that Jay has taken to get where he is:

- **Communication:** We've heard it before, and we'll hear it again, but Jay prioritizes personalized communication. He immediately jumped on the "texting" bandwagon as soon as people started communicating via SMS. Smartphone technology completely changed his business. He's "lightning fast with email and people respond really well to that." In fact, Charlotte specifically looked to the Yelp feature that lets you know when a business

“responds quickly.”

- **Reliable price quotes:** Jay prides himself on his ability to stick to a quote. It’s something that customers can expect from him and something he knows many businesses—especially in his industry—don’t do. If and when there are unforeseen circumstances, Jay doesn’t charge additional fees. He instead asks that the additional cost incurred be donated to a local animal shelter, as a way to give back to his community.
- **Reconcile the problems:** Jay attributes his very few negative reviews to the fact that if there is a problem or a mistake is made, he has an open line of communication to hear about it, and he goes back to reconcile that. “I think people appreciate you coming back and fixing something—as much as they appreciate you getting it right the first time.”

Listen to the episode below to hear directly from Jay and Charlotte, and subscribe to *Behind the Review* for more from new business owners and reviewers every Thursday.

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