

Putting You in Your Business



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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.

Small business owners pour their time, knowledge, and money into building a business and keeping it running, all while trying to increase their bottom line, hire great employees, and create an excellent customer experience.

With multiple priorities to juggle, it can be easy to leave out a crucial element of the business plan: the business owner themselves. When your business reflects more of you as a person—and not just an owner—you can humanize your business, improve the customer experience, and build brand loyalty.

An easy way to put your voice and personality into your business is through your responses to online reviews. When a

business owner takes the time to respond with an authentic voice, current and potential customers take notice. In fact, 88% of consumers are likely to use a business if they can see the business owner responds to their reviews, whether positive or critical.

Even when things go wrong, Alyssa Bayer, owner of Milk + Honey Spa in Austin, said that her review response matters more than a mistake made during the customer's experience.

"Things are going to go wrong. That's a given," she said. "What really matters is how the business responds when things go wrong. And that's what I think separates truly exceptional customer service from the average. Customers who've had the biggest customer service breakdown, a really horrific experience, when you have the opportunity to fix that and exceed their expectations, those customers are the ones that become the most loyal and fanatical."

Josh Campbell, owner of Rescue Air Heating and Cooling, agreed with Alyssa, making sure to also thank reviewers for their critical feedback.

"They want to voice this concern because it's not okay. And I'll listen to them, and I'll be like, I'm taking action on this. I'm going to build a better company. Every time, I thank them for the 1-star review. This is how I grow," he said.

It might not be your first instinct to thank a customer for a critical review, but according to Josh, reviewers often feel much better about their experience with his business after he responds, sometimes updating their reviews to be more positive because he engaged with them (not because he asked them to).

Another way to be front and center in your business is to remain in a service mindset, even when interactions with reviewers or customers get tough. Brian Batch, co-owner of Bird Bird Biscuit in Austin, likes to keep that attitude top of mind when working with customers.

“When you’re having a really hard interaction with a guest or someone on the team, if you can ask yourself, ‘how can I blow this person’s mind,’ that puts you in a place where you have the best opportunity to go through that situation to bring the best fruit,” he said.

“You’re thinking about serving that person. And when you’re in a service mindset, that’s the place where you’re not judging that person, and then you can navigate with clarity.”

Taking a moment to see the situation from your client’s perspective can prevent a defensive response (which can do more harm than not responding at all).

Because you won’t always be available, it’s crucial to hire employees who are passionate about your business and are willing to uphold the customer experience even in your absence.

Brandon Gardner, owner of SoCo Taphouse in San Angelo, Texas, makes a point to hire employees who love craft beer. It’s non-negotiable in his hiring practice because a bartender who is well versed in the beers on tap can personalize each interaction for every customer.

“We try to pick the people that love craft beer because if you come into the place and you wanna work there and you don’t love craft beer, you’re not gonna exactly have the greatest way of interacting with the bar regulars, talking about beer or giving them something good to drink,” he said.

This Behind the Review episode is chock-full of entrepreneurial advice that could benefit your business, including:

- **Employee training is key to an excellent customer experience.** You can’t always be there, so you’ll need to hire and train employees willing to believe in your mission and uphold your company’s processes and

policies.

- **Don't be afraid to put some of your personality, your life, and your outside passions into your business.** People appreciate authenticity, and that translates into good reviews and social media success.
 - **It's just as important to respond to positive reviews as it is to critical ones.** Make sure your responses are sincere. Creating various templated responses can help you get started.
 - **Hire slow, fire fast.** Your employees are often the face of your business, but hiring the wrong people can impact the entire team.
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