So, you’ve received a negative customer review. Don’t panic! Even the most trustworthy businesses have complaints from time to time. The important thing is to make sure you take this golden opportunity to turn a negative into a lasting positive.

Stay calm
Remember that a customer complaint is actually a gift and an opportunity to improve your business. Handling an online complaint well can actually work very well in your favour.

Humanize yourself and your company
Remind the customer, and future readers, that you are a human being, a busy entrepreneur who is doing his/her best to stay on top – and that sometimes things unfortunately slip through the cracks.

Listen
Use the social Web to listen for complaints made directly to you and indirectly about you. Search your company name on Twitter, and actively review your Facebook page and blog and any forums in your industry. Pay attention to every site online where people might be talking about you, so you can find each and every complaint and make sure none of them go ignored.

Apologize
Here is your chance for the company to shine. Look at the complaint as a gift, a moment to show off how responsive you are and how much you care about your customers. Everyone makes mistakes. Customers understand that. They just want you to fix it when you screw up. It really doesn’t matter who’s right or wrong; it matters how your customer feels. So say, “I’m sorry” (which is much more personal and better than “I apologize” or “Our apologies”), validate the customer, and vow to resolve the issue privately. This de-escalates the issue while still telling your customer (and anyone else watching) that you care.

Solve the problem
It’s important to say “I’m sorry,” but unless you can solve the problem, it won’t matter. Make sure you have a customer-centric organization that can resolve the problem, no matter what. Give the customer her money back. Give her a free month or two. Surprise and delight her with something awesome. No matter what, make sure you can leave the customer satisfied or, better yet, thrilled.

Thank the customer
Remember, the complaint really is a gift. It’s an opportunity to fix a problem, learn how to improve, and show the world watching how much you care about your customers. So genuinely thank your customer for hanging in there with you. This will make him or her feel heard and assure that despite the initial cause for complaint, you’re optimizing your chances of keeping him or her a customer for a long time to come.

Follow Through and Follow Up
Make a promise? Keep it! Make a note of touching base with the customer a few weeks after solving the problem to make sure everything is still going well and if you can offer any further assistance.

When you follow these simple rules, you can turn an angry customer into a fan for life. More important, you can turn a potential online reputation issue into a marketing opportunity.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact us at the coordinates below.

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