



New!



Gordon Dean

Exceptional service and really friendly folks. I highly recommend them for the job.

# How Do Customer Reviews Help SEO



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# Introduction

The customer journey today typically begins with an internet search, usually on a mobile device. With mobile search growing exponentially, it's not surprising that businesses are competing fiercely for a spot in Google's local pack on page 1 of search results. If you're a business owner and targeting your local audience, your online customer reviews can hold the key to hitting the coveted page 1 of search results.

As a matter of fact, online reviews account for 9.8%-13% of Google's search ranking factors. To succeed in this landscape, you, as a business owner, must:

- ① Proactively seek online reviews from your customers
- ② Respond to reviews and address customer concerns
- ③ Optimize your responses for search with keywords
- ④ Market reviews on your website and social media



## Why are customer reviews important for SEO?

Since customers find reviews important, search engines do too.

# A Gold Mine of User-Generated Content

Search engines aim to connect customers with relevant information as quickly as possible. Each subsequent search becomes more specific as the customer grows increasingly informed—by the time customers come across online reviews, they already know what product or service they want. They just need to find the best business to fulfill their need.

Search engine algorithms love fresh and regularly updated content. While blogging is a great starting point, it should not be a standalone strategy. You can create hundreds of articles about your products and services, but customers often view these as biased and sales-oriented, making your messages less effective. Customer reviews, on the other hand, provide fresh, organic, highly relevant user generated content for your business. They show search engines that your business is active and provide customers unbiased social proof that your business is the real deal.

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## Optimized With Long Tail Keywords

If you were to write search engine optimized content for your business or product, you'd start by searching for the most relevant keywords for your business and then you'd incorporate them into your content to make it discoverable. When writing reviews, your customers are likely to describe your products and services with the very same keywords and phrases. This means you're getting free, relevant content that's already optimized for search engines — and you don't have to do any work. We call this customer-driven marketing, and you can see why.

## A Great Way To Boost Social Engagement

Positive customer testimonials are some of the most powerful advertisements. An effective way to maximize the power of happy customer voices is by sharing your best reviews on your social media profiles. Not only will this grow your following and generate more leads; social media is an important SEO signal for search engines, and all mentions that your brand gets on social media from shared reviews can give your business a lot of traction. On top of this, your prospective customers who are following your social media channels may engage with these shared reviews, exposing your brand to their friends and family.

## Optimize your Google My Business listing.

If you have even one online review you can implement rich snippets. Rich snippets are areas of code on a website page that inform Google about its content. The code itself isn't visible to people viewing your page. Review rich snippets contain information specific to reviews like customer name, star rating and review text. Google reads this content in your HTML and uses it to generate stars beneath your listing in organic search results. This way you stand out amongst competitors in relevant search results. If you're somewhat tech-savvy, you can implement rich snippets yourself by manually adding schema markup to certain pages. You can also have a third party like BirdEye take care of it for you.

## Enhance your Google Adwords campaigns.

Reviews benefit paid search as well. Businesses with at least 150 reviews with an average rating of 3.5 stars and up can enable Google Seller Ratings. This is a Google extension that displays star ratings from your reviews below your Google Adwords ads. Seller Ratings not only make it easy for your customers to find you right at the top of search results — your ratings and reviews will help you stand out as the obvious choice<sup>1</sup>.

## Boost your conversion rate.

Customer reviews boost conversion rates and lower bounce rates. Since customers trust online reviews more than company posts, they are likely to spend more time on review pages reading content rather than skimming for facts in formal business articles. Further, reviews will prompt readers to explore your website to learn more about products and services mentioned by the reviewer. Longer time periods spent on your site with lower bounce rates leads to higher search engine rankings.

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1. <https://support.google.com/adwords/answer/2375474?hl=en>



## High Ratings = High Search Ranking

Search engine algorithms rank businesses according to the quality of services or products they offer. One way these algorithms understand the quality of your services is by looking at your average rating from customer reviews. The more sites you have reviews on, the better, as an array of sources proves relevance and authenticity to search engines. With all these testimonials posted in harmony across the web, customers help explain to both each other and Google what your company is. The higher your customers rate you – and the more sites they rate you on – the closer you are to that top spot in search results.

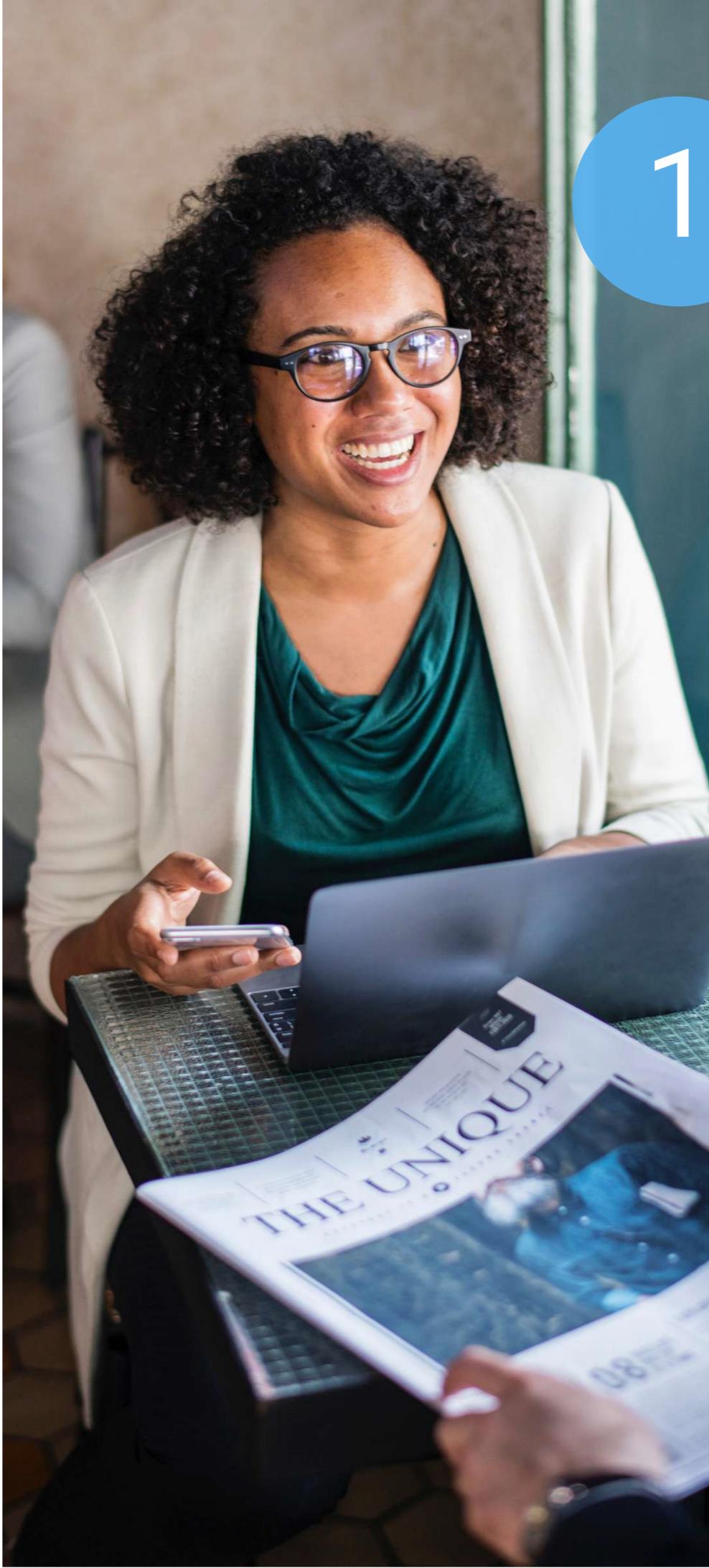


## How To Make The Most of Customer Reviews

You now know that customer reviews can help improve your business' search engine rank, driving more traffic to your website and getting you more customers. However, having a lot of positive reviews but not leveraging them will not do your business much good.

There are certain steps that you need to follow to make sure that positive reviews from your happy customers drive your brand's local search ranking and performance.

The next chapter covers some best practices to help you get started.



# 1

## Claim your listing on Google My Business.

If you want to get more customers, you need to be found on Google. If you want to be found on Google, it's imperative that you claim your business on Google and make sure all your business information is accurate and up-to-date always. A well-managed listing helps make your business relevant to search queries made by audiences in your vicinity.

Businesses that have a solid online reputation – which is based on strong reviews and rating – are most likely to rank on top of search results and even feature in Google Maps and the coveted Google Local 3 pack.

Here's how you can claim your listing on Google My Business:

**Step 1:** Go to <https://www.google.com/business/> and either sign in or create a Google business account.

**Step 2:** Once you've logged in, enter your business information in the box provided.

**Step 3:** Now you must verify with Google that the business you're trying to claim is actually yours. A verification code will be mailed to you within one to two weeks, and after you enter the code into your account you're all set! You can start managing your local business information on Google.

However, if you've used Google Local, Google+ Pages Dashboard, or Google Places for Business, your account has already been automatically upgraded to Google My Business, so you don't need to take additional steps to claim it.

## 2

# Make sure your information is consistent everywhere.

A lot of great reviews won't help you if they're associated with the wrong business listing. Local listings are the third most influential factor in search engine rankings. Customers who find you on Google may want to connect with you to learn more about your services or even book an appointment. This is why it's extremely important for you to ensure that your business' NAP (Name, Address, Phone) data is consistent. Everywhere. This includes not only your Google My Business listing, but also any review sites, social channels, and business directories your company is listed on.

Consistent business information proves to Google that your company is legit; if your NAP even slightly varies from site to site, your search ranking may be negatively impacted. Consistent information across all channels, along with positive reviews, holds the key to SEO success. Additionally, you should enrich your listings with reviews, photos, menus, hours of operation, and other enhanced content to drive more click-throughs and conversions.





# 3

## Regularly collect new customer reviews.

Review volume and ratings are only two of the “review signals” that Google takes into account for its rankings. Recency of reviews is another factor. According to research, 77% of consumers believe reviews older than 3 months are not relevant and don’t consider them while choosing a business. Additionally, just 4% of customers would consider a review that is older than a year while making a decision. New reviews not only boost your page’s activity, they also are considered more relevant to customers browsing your page<sup>2</sup>.

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2. <https://www.brightlocal.com/learn/local-consumer-review-survey/>



# 4

## Promote great reviews on your website.

Google favors websites that regularly update their pages with fresh content. However, as a business owner you most likely don't have the time to regularly update your website with quality content. Rather than trying to keep your page active all by yourself, a more efficient and effective way is to add new customer reviews to your website. You can do this manually by copying / pasting, but several tools allow you to easily add a live review feed to your company site, and even let you select the reviews you want displayed. These tools also ensure that Google doesn't consider these reviews "duplicates" and penalize them in search results.

Apart from giving search engines what they love, online reviews on your website also encourage user interaction and build confidence in shoppers, increasing the likelihood that visitors become new customers.



# 5

## Use customer reviews as analytical tools.

Your customers are likely to include keywords to define your products and services when writing a review. For example, a dentist might optimize his practice's listing with keywords like "root canal treatment". However, if patients are writing "RCT" instead of "root canal treatment" in their reviews, chances are that they're searching with the same keyword too. In this case, the dentist should consider switching to "RCT" on the page description and content.

With this simple adjustment you can improve your search relevance and ranking. On top of this, you can even refer to your online reviews to get a more accurate picture of your customer experience and their sentiment. Remember, Google values businesses that have a lot of happy customers.

A woman with long brown hair and glasses is sitting at a desk, looking down at a laptop. She is wearing a striped shirt and has earbuds in. On the desk in front of her is a newspaper. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# 6

## Optimize your response for search.

For the most part, what your customers write about your business isn't in your control. However, how you respond to them is, and your responses can add another dimension to your SEO strategy. A clever SEO hack is drafting a response that is optimized with keywords. This not only lets your customers know that you're listening to them, but also creates fresh, SEO-optimized content for Google to crawl and index.

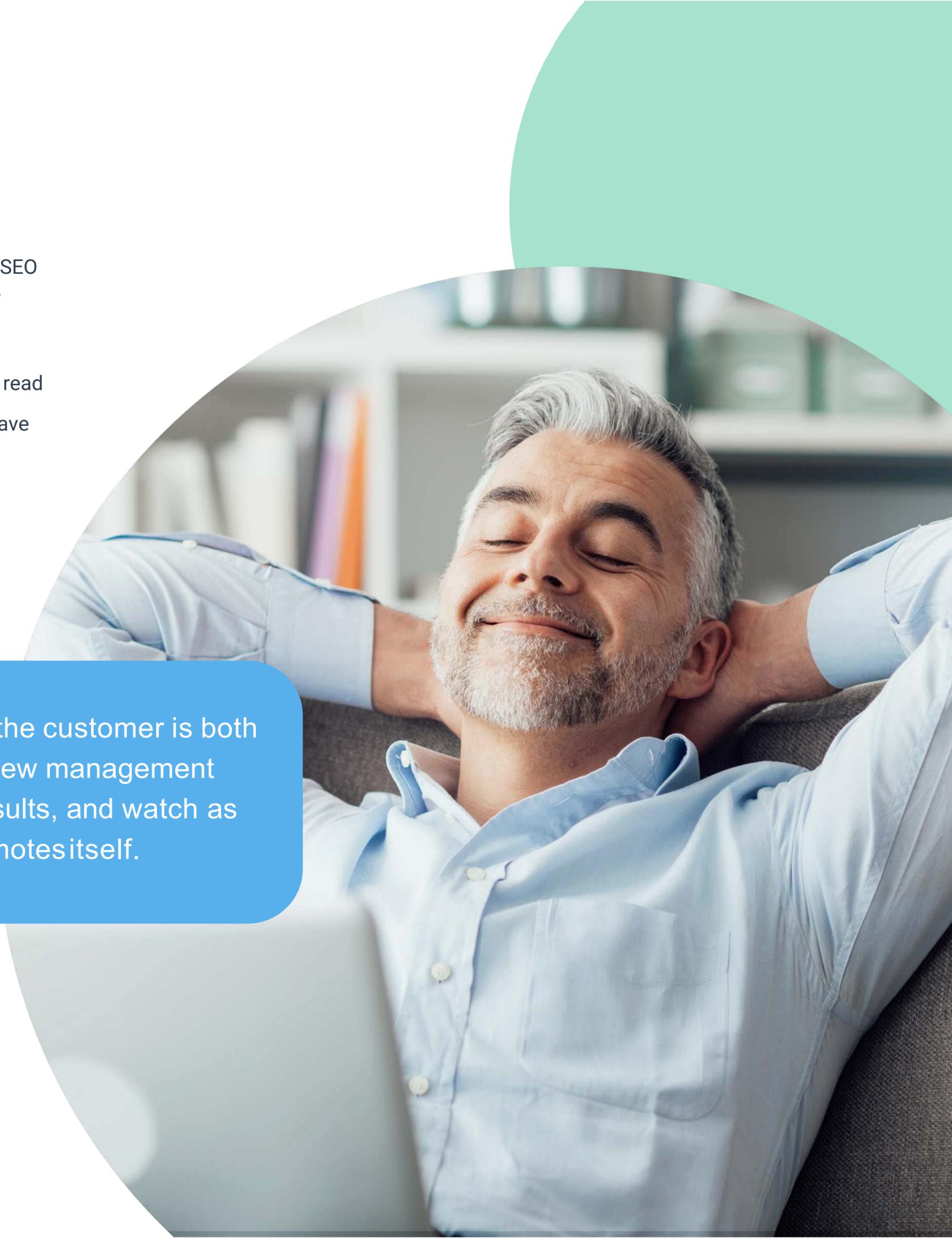
What reviews should you respond to? If possible, all of them -- but most business owners don't have time for this. Responding to positive reviews is important, but responding to negative reviews is critical and should be your top priority. Remember, when customers post negative reviews, they believe their complaint is valid whether it truly is or not. This means even if they aren't in the right, something led them to believe they were. Identify what this something is, for perception and reality frequently blur, and enough misconceptions from other customers can lead to a negative business reputation. In your response, clear up any misunderstandings to prevent any future confusion from potential customers.

By doing this, you'll improve your chances of getting new positive reviews, which will improve your business' search engine rank even further.

# Conclusion

The simple reason why customer reviews are an important SEO signal is because customers tend to trust the experience of fellow consumers more than business parlance and advertisements. As more than 90% of American customers read online reviews, it's fair to assure that Google's algorithms have assigned an important value to them.

A brand identity fueled by the voice of the customer is both powerful and sustainable. Amp up review management efforts, launch to the top of search results, and watch as your positive business reputation promotes itself.



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## Find out more

See how Clinic Builder can help your business get new reviews and get new customers with one easy solution.

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