



Using Online Reviews to Drive Operational Improvements.

How to use real guest feedback to make effective operational improvements in your restaurant.

Why reviews matter—and what you should do with them.

From managing inventory to combating the labor shortage and maintaining the high quality of service and atmosphere it takes to keep customers coming back, there's no shortage of tasks you face on any given day as a manager. And with so much going on, it's easy for operational issues to go unnoticed until they become a serious problem. But it doesn't have to be that way. By using online reviews to identify recurring trends in guest feedback, and hopping in the driver's seat when it comes to managing your reputation, it's easier than ever to isolate and prioritize your areas of improvement—be it your menu, staff performance, or operations.

Gone are the days of wasting marketing dollars on poorly performing campaigns and requesting feedback via postcards or online surveys. You can now access free feedback from real customers, with Google, Facebook, Tripadvisor, and Yelp.

And while the thought of online reviews may make you sweat, we challenge you to change how you look at them. Customer reviews, both positive and negative, can be one of your biggest free resources—enabling you to track trends and uncover real-time insights you can use to optimize efficiencies in your business.

With just the click of a button, you can quickly find out how guests perceive your food, what customers think of your new menu, and how your staff is performing.

And with SpotOn Review Management, it doesn't have to be a time-consuming chore. You can monitor reviews across all review sites, all in one place—saving you time and making it easy to identify trends.

Get started by claiming your pages and bringing them all together.

In most cases, review sites are free for you to use. And with thin industry profit margins and fierce competition, you can't afford not to use every free resource available to your advantage. Your customers are talking, why not join the conversation? Here's how.

Start by [claiming your business profiles](#) on sites like Yelp and Google. Whether you claim them or not, customers can research and review your unclaimed business pages, so it's important to take control of your image.

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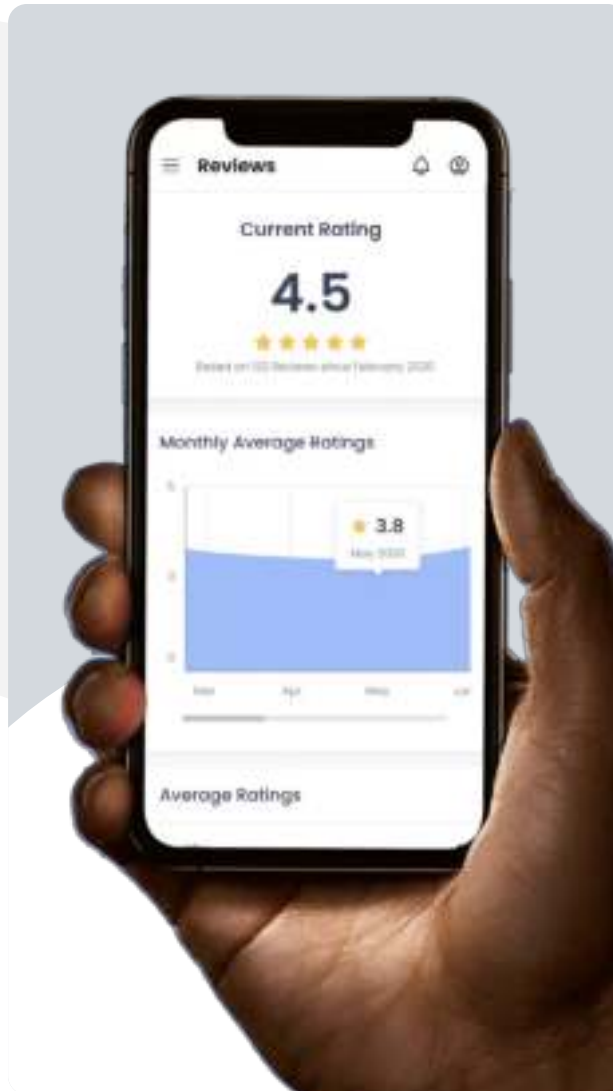


1. How to claim your pages:

- a. Make sure you have an email on hand.** If your business has been around a while, chances are there's already a profile and you'll need an email to claim it.
- b. Type in your business name and see what pops up on the review site.** If it's listed, click claim your business and follow the on-screen instructions.
- c. If your business isn't listed,** create a profile using each review site's instructions.
- d. Use your profiles to your advantage.** After you've claimed/created pages, [make sure the information listed is accurate](#) by adding up-to-date hours of operation, images, and more.
- e. Get into the habit of responding to reviews.** Responding to reviews, both positive and negative reviews, can help drive more traffic to your business.

For more step-by-step directions on how to do this on Facebook, Google, Yelp, and Trip Advisor, click below to check out our article on how to claim your pages on popular review sites.

[How to claim your business pages](#)



2. How to access all your reviews in one place.

Claiming your business profiles on the major sites is a great first step, but who has time to log into each of those pages on a daily basis? Instead, take advantage of the [Review Management tools](#) within the SpotOn Dashboard. This will enable you to see all of your reviews in one place, identify trends over time, and click over directly to the review sites to respond to customers, as needed. Plus, every time a new review comes in, you'll receive an alert, so you can respond and make changes as necessary.



If you're already a SpotOn client, simply log into your [SpotOn Dashboard](#), and choose Reviews from the main menu.

If you aren't yet using SpotOn, [click here](#) to talk to our restaurant technology experts and get a personalized demonstration.

Your strategy for identifying issues & improving operations.

Identify trends in your business.

Now that you've got all your reviews in one place, it's time to dig into the data. Read through all of your reviews and look for any common themes that stick out—both positive and negative. These themes can not only help you pinpoint what is and isn't working, but can also help you make small changes that lead to operational efficiencies, better staff retention, and stronger guest relationships.

Here are some examples of red flags to look for in customer reviews:

What the guest commented on	What you can do
Cleanliness	Assess your cleaning procedures and schedules; consider hiring an outside cleaning crew to improve cleanliness and be more cost effective.
Time spent waiting for check	Add handhelds or scan and pay QR codes so guests can order and pay when they're ready.
Noise volume	Make sure you have a set policy for background music volume; explore adding padding to seating, placing carpet or rugs on hard floors, or adding baffling to unadorned walls to reduce sound levels.
Service/server feedback	Provide more training, hire more staff, or reassign sections to different staff members; enable servers to take orders and payments at the table with handhelds .
Takeout / to-go ordering difficulty	Are you taking orders by phone? Relying on 3rd party delivery apps? Consider moving online ordering and delivery in-house so you can better control the customer experience, use order pacing to ensure your kitchen can keep up, and cut costs.
Takeout / to-go food quality (e.g., is it cold/soggy?)	Trim your takeout menu to include only items that travel well, and explore better take-out packaging.
Order accuracy	Eliminate input errors with restaurant tech like handhelds and kitchen display screens (KDS) that send orders directly from the table to the kitchen.
Wait times	Use a digital reservation and waitlist platform to manage tables more efficiently and provide guests accurate wait times; give guests a way to order drinks or view the menu while they wait.
Slow service	Review your POS reporting to identify when your restaurant is busiest and slowest. Then use that data to schedule your staff—add more servers during peak times and less when things are slow.

Operate more efficiently.

Take the complaints about poor delivery experiences or long wait times and use SpotOn to turn them into things guests love. For instance, if you have a lot of complaints about food arriving cold from third-party providers, use [SpotOn Order](#) to bring your online ordering and delivery in-house. Or, if guests are tired of being given inaccurate wait times, turn to [SpotOn Reserve](#) for easy digital reservations and waitlisting. Alternatively, you could introduce handhelds or scan and pay with QR codes.

Retain staff.

If you're seeing a lot of praise in online reviews for certain staff members but aren't properly celebrating them, now's the time. When guests love their local bartender or waitress, they come back. Not only that, with record numbers of employed Americans, it's important to keep your best staff happy and fulfilled so they stay at your restaurant. Celebrating them doesn't have to be monetary, though it does certainly help. Consider rewarding these outstanding staff members with opportunities to move up, manage, and train other staff so they feel more valued and invested in your restaurant, or simply give them something fun like a gift card.

Every piece of feedback you receive is an opportunity to run your business better.

Build guest relationships.

Guests turn to review sites to share their experiences and feel heard. Use this fact to your advantage.

If a guest complains about their food being burnt or a staff member being rude to them, respond to their comment with how you've remedied the solution and use [SpotOn Marketing](#) to entice them back in with a discount or a free dessert. This shows them that you care about their dining experience and are accountable for your restaurant—all things diners look for.

Don't forget your competitors.

It may feel like you're the only one getting constructive feedback, but you're not alone. Your competition is being judged just as harshly by customers as your restaurant. If you're looking to get a leg up on the competition, do exactly what you're doing for your restaurant with your competitors and use that feedback to your advantage. Do customers love the [loyalty program](#) they have or [QR codes](#) they're using? Explore adding them to your operation. This free competitive intel can help you run your business better while beating your competition. For more information, check out this helpful article, [Why You Should Be Reading Your Competitors' Negative Reviews](#).



Responding to reviews.

Now that you've got a good understanding about how reviews work and why they matter, it's time to discuss **how and when to respond**. We recommend creating a routine you can stick to. If you run a breakfast joint, schedule time every afternoon to monitor and respond to reviews. Alternatively, if you manage a bar or nightclub, carve out time every morning to do the same.



Try it out.

Here's the scene: It's July, you're in the middle of a busy dinner shift and you get a notification that you've received a new review. You click over to your dashboard and see the reviews on the next page.

- 1. Prepare for the worst but hope for the best.** Positive feedback can help you identify what you're doing well, and negative reviews can help you establish credibility and authenticity on online review sites, as well as identify areas for improvement.
- 2. Look at the day and time the review was written** and when they were last in your restaurant. This can help you pinpoint who was working, so you can celebrate a staff member who did a good job or talk to a staff member who may need some additional guidance.
- 3. Consider responding at a later time.** Diners may write about their experience immediately after they leave your restaurant or the next week, so we recommend waiting 24 hours to respond to most reviews to ensure you don't have a knee jerk reaction to their feedback. Because the only thing worse than negative feedback is a catty response.
- 4. Respond with a solution.** Whether the feedback you receive is positive or negative, be sure to respond.
 - If the feedback is positive, thank them for sharing their experience and tell them you hope to see them again.
 - If the feedback is negative, thank them for speaking up, let them know you hear them, and tell them how you plan to resolve their issue.
- 5. Handle serious matters in private.** If a customer makes a serious complaint, apologize publicly in the comment below the review, and ask the customer to please call or email you directly, or use the direct message feature within the review platform. This will allow you to further investigate the complaint and personally make amends with the guest without inviting them to air additional dirty laundry on a public site.

[Get more tips on addressing negative reviews](#)

Use these examples for reference.

Check out those stars.
This person had a positive experience.

This review was written recently.
You have time to respond.

2 stars. They definitely had a less than stellar experience. Make sure you're in a good headspace before responding.

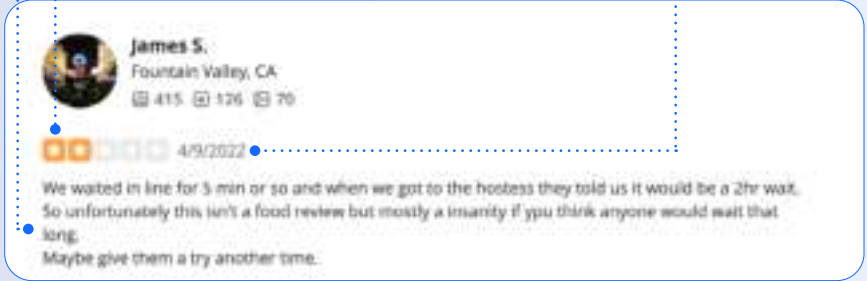
Older review. This comment was written in April and is a few months old—try to respond sooner than later.

Your staff member Nick is mentioned specifically. Be sure to give him a shoutout at the next staff meeting and note the feedback in his file.

He also made great recommendations. By retaining him, you're providing a better guest experience—way to go!



Pinpoint the topic. This customer is unhappy with an ambiguous wait time. Track this feedback. If it's a common theme, consider adding digital reservations and waitlisting so guests can get in line and view their wait from their phones.



Pro tip: Use SpotOn Marketing and/or Loyalty to automatically request positive feedback. When you send an offer or special reward through your SpotOn Dashboard, SpotOn will automatically send a message encouraging your customers to leave reviews after they redeem their deal, helping you earn more positive reviews.

What now?

Are you ready to take control back from reviews sites and use guest feedback to fix small issues before they become big problems? You won't regret it. Simply follow the instructions above to claim your profiles, connect them to your dashboard, manage reviews, and continually make your restaurant the best it can be.

Talk to an expert.

Get technology designed for managers. Technology that can streamline the desk work so you can get back to chatting with tables, checking in on regulars, and supporting your staff.

[Get your free demo](#)



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