



## **How to Protect Your Hotel's Online Reputation**

On a daily basis we often ask, "How should I respond to a negative online review"? As well as "Do I need to respond to positive reviews"? We have to accept both the positive and negative reviews. Though we love it when we get a positive review, we must equally embrace the negative review and seize the opportunity to improve.

The challenge that hoteliers face is that today guest feedback is no longer private. Hotel guests are writing about their experiences on social media and sites like [TripAdvisor](#) and [Expedia](#). It is a proven fact that prospective guests are reading these public reviews before they make their decision to book the selected hotel. I do when I travel. According to a [TripAdvisor](#) study, 93% of travelers say online reviews have an impact on their booking decisions.

According to a [TripAdvisor](#) study published September 2014, responding to both positive and negative reviews offers additional benefits: Hotels that respond to over 50% of their online reviews increase their likelihood of receiving a booking by 24%, compared to properties that did not respond to guest reviews. [Revinate](#), an online tracking tool says hoteliers should respond to at least 25% of positive reviews within 48 hours. This encourages loyalty with the traveler and in return they spread the good word in person to their friends and via social media channels about your hotel.

As an hotelier, it is always disheartening to receive negative feedback about your property. However, it is important to stay calm and take the following steps into account.

1. Do your research first. Check with your front office team for background information that will assist in your response. Determine if the customer a regular guest? Did they actually stay and when did they stay? All this information will help you formulate a response.
2. Check the guest's online social remarks on review sites, based on the severity of the review. Does this guest frequently do this? Be aware of scams to exploit the system.
3. It is imperative to respond to a review within 24 hours. This action will not leave the review exposed and unanswered online for prospective guests to see. Management responses should come from as high up in the organization as possible. The General Manager is best.
4. Always thank the guest for taking the time to write the review. Always spin the positive in the review with the apology on the negative remark. i.e: "We apologize you felt the guestroom was too small, we are glad you enjoyed the spa services." To avoid your hotel name appearing in future online searches, never use your hotel name in the negative response.
5. Always invite the reviewer back to stay again, and ask them to contact you prior to their arrival, so you can oversee their stay. Do not include your email address or contact number as these are not permitted and may delay your response being posted.

6. Place yourself in the reviewer's shoes and be sincere in your response. The majority of people just want to be heard and acknowledged. They understand that their stay may not be perfect. However, it is how hoteliers respond to an issue to resolve the situation that will be the deciding factor of them returning and spreading the good word about your hotel.
7. Have someone proofread your response to ensure it is well written, error free and on-brand.
8. Finally, if you've not already, consider investing in an online reputation management system, with the likes of [Revinate](#) or [TrustYou](#). This way you will not miss a guest review, responding is made easier and hoteliers can also monitor and benchmark against their competitor set.