

Turning customer feedback into a conversation

What's inside

| | |
|--|----|
| The proactive approach to responding to reviews | 2 |
| Why responding to customer feedback is important | 3 |
| Responding to negative reviews | 5 |
| Reading and responding to positive reviews | 8 |
| Responding to specific questions | 10 |
| Consider a comprehensive management platform | 11 |
| The bottom line | 12 |

The proactive approach to responding to reviews

Let's face it – no matter how cool your brand is, or how well-received your products may be, you're going to occasionally receive negative reviews. That's just a fact – especially if you're making a push towards a higher volume of reviews. You've probably heard (maybe even from us) something along the lines of, "Negative reviews can actually be a good thing." Believe it or not, this is true – so long as you're proactive about reading and responding to new reviews.

According to a UX study¹ by Baymard Institute, not all bad reviews are bad. A bad review may signal to shoppers that the product may not meet their needs. The study also observed that shoppers actively seek out negative reviews because subjects who saw only positive reviews through the first page of reviews on a product page speculated that the reviews may be fake. The presence of bad reviews creates authentic context for all reviews.

Regardless of sentiment, one thing is certain – brands need to be quick about reading and responding to new reviews as they come in. Up to 70% of dissatisfied customers will do business with a company again if their complaint is resolved. Even with reviews that are overwhelmingly positive, the job is not done – you should be engaging with satisfied customers just as often as ones who aren't.

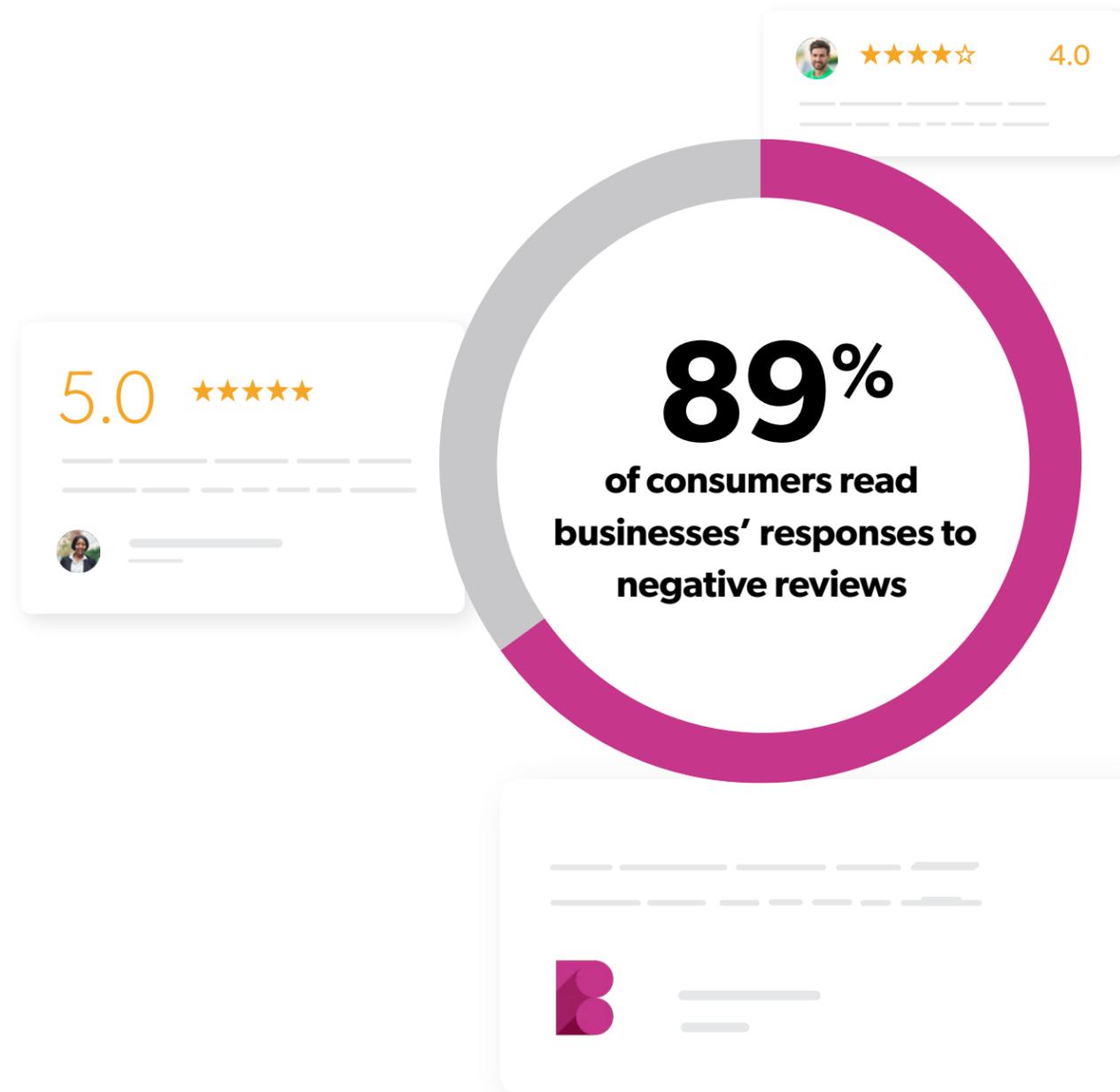
Why responding to customer feedback is important

The willingness to purchase a product with a negative review doubles² when seeing a brand's response, as opposed to seeing the negative review by itself. That said, responding to reviews in a proactive manner allows you to address customer issues as they occur, while also showing potential customers that you actually care.

It's important for brands to consider the actual audience here, which extends beyond the customer who left the review.

A staggering 89% percent of consumers³ read businesses' responses to negative reviews, so potential customers are certainly an audience to keep in mind. But it doesn't stop there.

Search engines have adopted reviews as a crucial part of their algorithms for determining how results are ranked. According to recent research⁴ done by Moz, online reviews account for over 10% of how Google (and other search engines) decide to rank results.



Q: *Is this perfume okay to use on sensitive skin?*



A: *Hi Ann! Yes, this perfume has been specially formulated with non irritants for sensitive skin! Hope that helps!*



By Michael, Brand Customer Care



Furthermore, brands especially need to think about how retailers value ratings and reviews, and subsequently their brands' responses to that content. The aggregate star-rating (volume and average) is a major factor for retailers when deciding which brands to stock on their shelves and across their online product categories. And as we mentioned earlier, retailers have limited shelf space, so they expect the brands they work with to be attentive toward customers who've taken the time to offer feedback.

Reviews aren't the only way for consumers to leave feedback. The Q&A section of a product page is becoming increasingly important, and engagement here can have a major impact on a brand's bottom line. A recent Bazaarvoice Social Analytics report saw a 98% average conversion lift when shoppers engaged in Q&A on major retail sites with brand answers.

Lastly, in terms of customer retention, responding to reviews is a key way for brands to establish a more personalized connection with customers. Even a small increase in customer retention can lead to a significant increase in a company's profitability, as customers are more likely to return if they know there are real humans behind your brand who care about the customer experience.

Responding to negative reviews

So, you get a negative review. Now what? The first thing to understand is that it's not the end of the world. Negative reviews are going to happen – what's important is how you respond.

When responding to negative feedback, think strategically about how you can turn a negative into a positive. This sometimes may seem easier said than done, but brands need to take that extra second to put themselves into their customers' shoes and remind themselves of who the audience is. Even if the negative review seems inaccurate or like it isn't a big deal, brands still need to respond and attempt to find a resolution. Responses should be authentic, should match the overall tone of the brand, and should align with the brand's customer service policies.

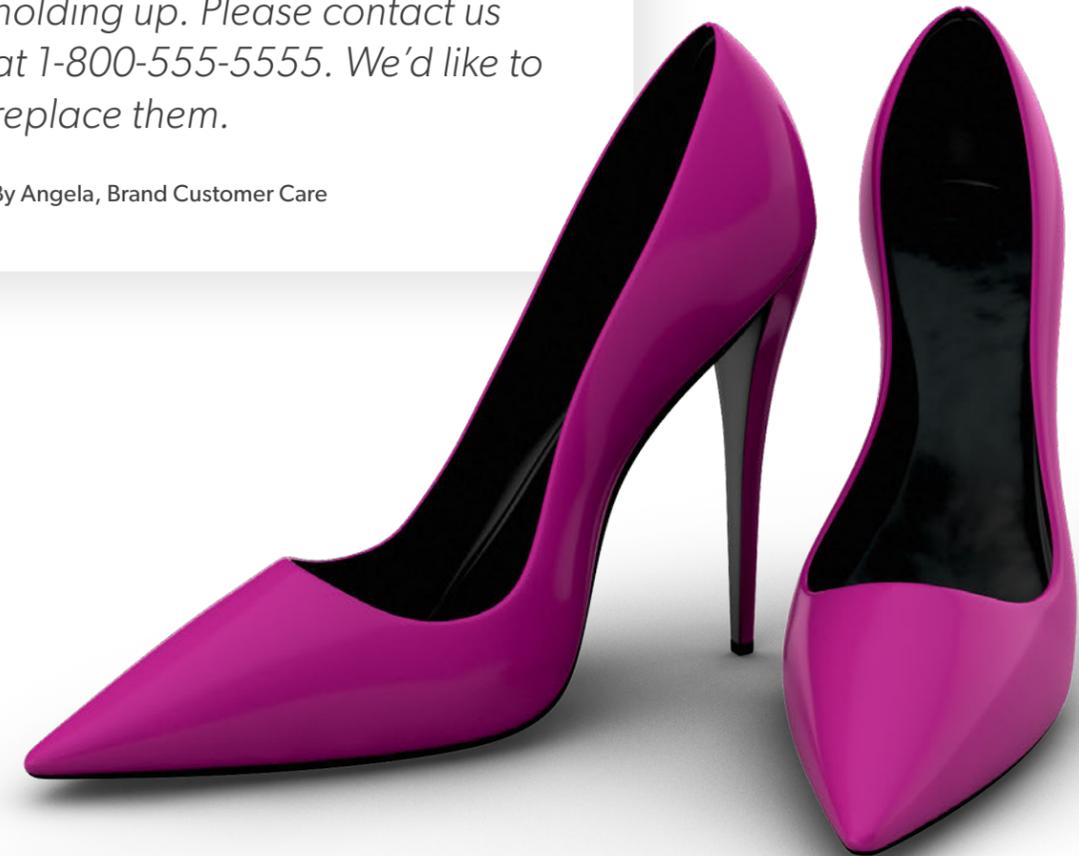


Poor quality. I bought these heels for my daughter and the sole has already worn out.

Hi Jean! We are very sorry to hear the heels you received are not holding up. Please contact us at 1-800-555-5555. We'd like to replace them.



By Angela, Brand Customer Care



Best practices to handle negative reviews:



BE SYMPATHETIC

Show customers that you understand frustration and make them feel like their opinion is valid.



HELP FUTURE SHOPPERS

Your response may have a major influence on future shoppers' purchase decisions, so treat your response as valuable information for a larger audience than just the person who left the review.



BE PERSONAL

Consumers appreciate authenticity, so avoid using cookie-cutter responses, or excerpts from your policy forms.



RESPOND QUICKLY

Be sure to respond to a negative review within 24-48 hours, as this will further demonstrate a sense of urgency on your part to resolve the issue.



CONTACT THE CUSTOMER BOTH ON AND OFFLINE

Going the extra mile to follow up with a complaint offline will show your customers that you are determined to make things right and will also allow for another opportunity to turn things around.

Let's look at a few examples of great responses that helped turn upset customers into loyal ones:

★★★★★ Dylan · 10 days ago

SIZES ARE OFF

I can concur with many others about the change in cut. My go-to size in these (which have been my favorites for years) is 36x34. First, the length came as 35" and I needed to get them tailored. Secondly, like many others have said, the rise is lower and the waist fit is snug for 36". I have purchased a lot of pants/shorts lately from other companies. The RLS were 36" and practically fell off and the TBs were 35" and totally comfy. The JAB pants at 36" and will preclude large lunches. But for the time being they look great.

Best Uses - Apparel Wear To Work, Date Night/Night Out, Casual Wear

Yes I recommend this product.

RESPONSE FROM JOS. A. BANK CLOTHIERS:

JAB Listens · Customer Service · 18 hours ago

We're so sorry that this product did not meet your expectations! We've listened to your feedback and have brought these Traveler Twill pants back in the original fit. They are now available in pleat front or flat front styles. Please look for items #21GD and #21GA. These original fit pants sit higher on the waist, has a roomier seat, and a straight leg for a more comfortable fit.




★★★★★

DOOS

LOCATION: SEATTLE, WA
 ATHLETIC TYPE: SWEATY GENERALIST
 AGE: 25-34
 BODY TYPE: CURVY

WHAT YOU LIKE
 stays up, feel great on

WHAT YOU DIDN'T LIKE
 pills, look old really fast

DECEMBER 4, 2018

AMAZING but a total let down

These pants are incredible - ish. They stay up nice and high, feel like you are wearing nothing but I have worn them 3 times and the whole inner thigh/crotch is pilled. Looks like I have had them for 10 years. Definitely not worth the money unfortunately.

RESPONSE FROM LULULEMON:
 Kieran, Guest Education Centre (GEC)
 December 4, 2018

Dear doos,

Thanks for reaching out and providing this feedback for us! We stand behind the quality of our product, and we want to ensure that you're in gear that is performing well for you. I hear that this is not the case and would like to work with you to create a resolution. Please keep an eye on your inbox as I'll be reaching out shortly to connect.

Robin Lynn
 August 24 at 11:13 AM · 🧑

After our recent problem with World's Best Zero Mess Cat litter causing infected paws in 2 of my cats, I wrote a review on the [chewy.com](https://www.chewy.com) website where I bought the litter. Today I got this email from them:

"Hi Robin,

Your review on the Zero Mess by World's Best Advanced Cat Litter made me want to get in touch with you! I'm sorry to hear to what happened to your furbabies after using the Zero Mess cat litter. I completely understand how you must feel and know that we're here for you in this time and to have something like this happen is truly discouraging. I hope that your furbaby is feeling better and I'm glad to hear that the new litter is working out better. In the meantime, I've processed a refund of \$57.90 to the card used in the purchase, and that should reflect back to your bank account in 3-5 business days.

I hope Jasper, Kato, Meow-Meow, Skye and Timothy are doing well. Be sure to give them some extra cuddles and chin scratches from us and we all hope they are feeling better soon.

If you have any questions, or if there's anything we can do, don't hesitate to reach out to us any time, day or night. We're always here for you.

Furry regards,
 Jacquelyn S.
 Customer Service
 Chewy"

What happened to my kitties was not Chewy's fault in any way, yet they gave me my money back. And that litter isn't cheap!

Ever since PetSmart bought Chewy last year, I fully expected that Chewy's legendary customer service would rapidly decline. This is proof it hasn't. And as long as they keep valuing their customers like this I'll buy all my pet supplies (and that's A LOT of pet supplies) from Chewy.



Reading and responding to positive reviews

This is just as important as responding to negative reviews, so long as you are being authentic. It can be easy to overlook positive feedback and just offer up a bunch of canned “Thank you” responses, but this can actually cause more damage than not saying anything at all. Reviews are the starting point of a conversation between two humans, so brands need to treat it as such.



Love these! They don't hurt my ears and the cord doesn't get tangled! The sound is incredible!



Hi James! Thank you for sharing your feedback. We are very happy to hear you love our headphones!



By Robin, Brand Customer Care



Best practices for responding to positive reviews:

MOST 5-STAR REVIEWS CAN BE LEFT ALONE

Rather than saying “Thank you, come again” for every 5-star review, let them be in order to avoid cluttering your review feed. Unless there’s specific feedback that you want to address in an authentic way, you can let these reviews stand on their own.

AVOID UPSELLING HAPPY CUSTOMERS

There’s a time and a place for upselling, but it certainly isn’t as part of review responses. Don’t assume a happy customer will be immediately eager to buy from you again. This tactic can actually turn happy customers away.

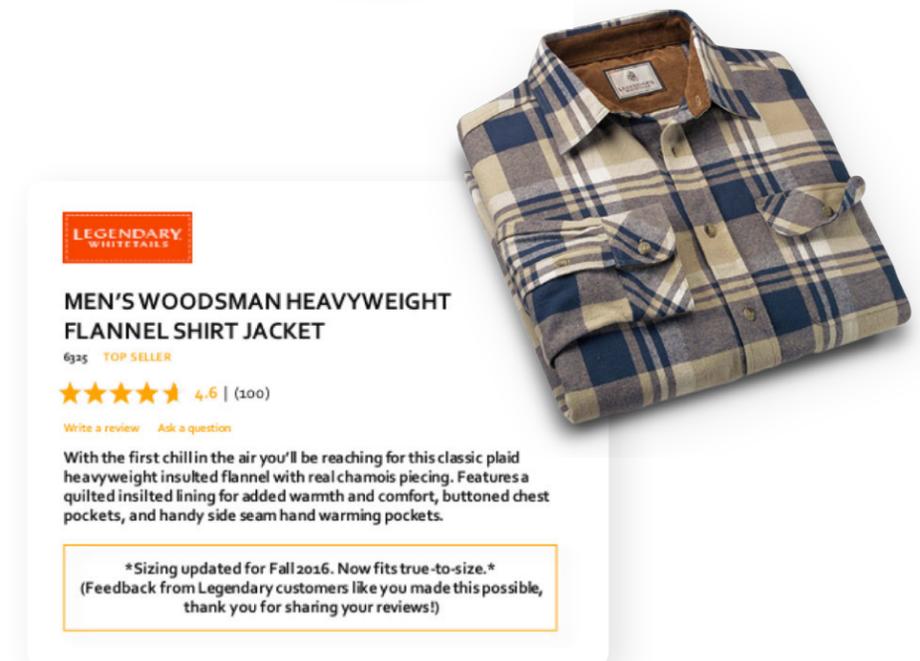
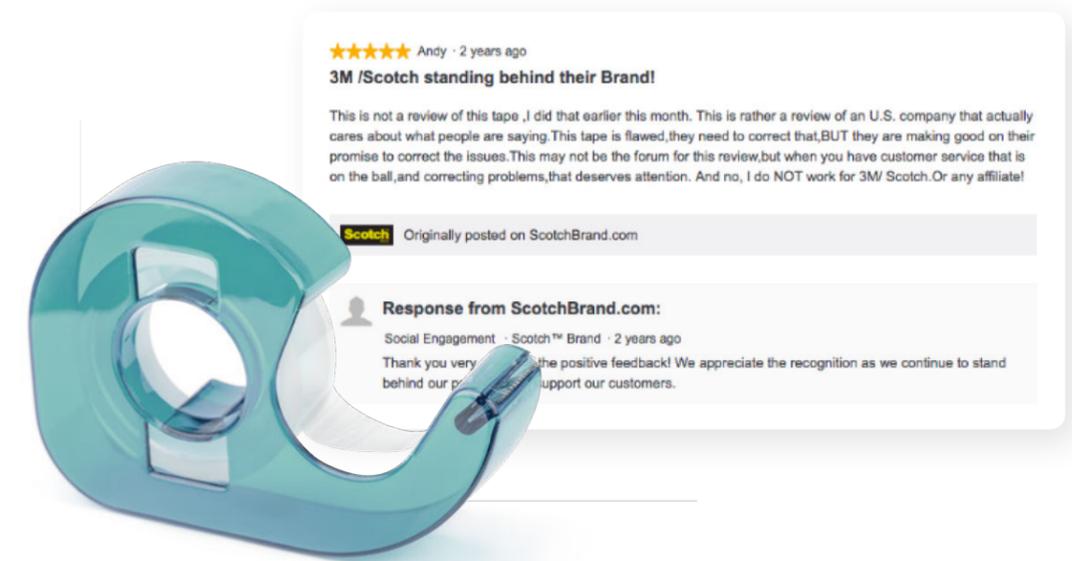
REMEMBER THE REAL AUDIENCE

You’re responding to customers, but your responses should also provide value to potential customers who are reading these reviews, as well as retailers who may be keeping an eye on how you respond in this space.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR VALUABLE FEEDBACK

Positive reviews may very well contain hidden gems in terms of valuable feedback. Make sure you are combing through all reviews, both positive and negative, for this type of information. Plus, customers who are happy with their experience and also willing to offer good feedback make excellent candidates for your next **sampling campaign**.

Here are a couple examples of effective responses to positive reviews:



Q: Is this shampoo for dry hair?



A: Hi Lee! Yes, this shampoo is specifically hydrating. It's infused with antioxidant-rich argan oil and replenishing vitamins to nourish hair.



By Jorge, Brand Customer Care



Responding to specific questions

Consumers nowadays are fully enabled to ask specific questions before making a purchase, as a Q&A section of the product page has become an industry standard. Over 47% of shoppers⁵ read Q&As when deciding between two products, so brands need to be on high alert for these inquiries (and should respond within two business days). Potential customers who are asking questions are likely towards the end of their respective buying journeys and may just need clarification on something specific.

Answering questions on public Q&A forums can also increase the efficiency of your customer support organization. Among products with even one answered question, **brands see a 28% decrease** in product-related customer contacts, and this number goes up exponentially with each additional answered question.

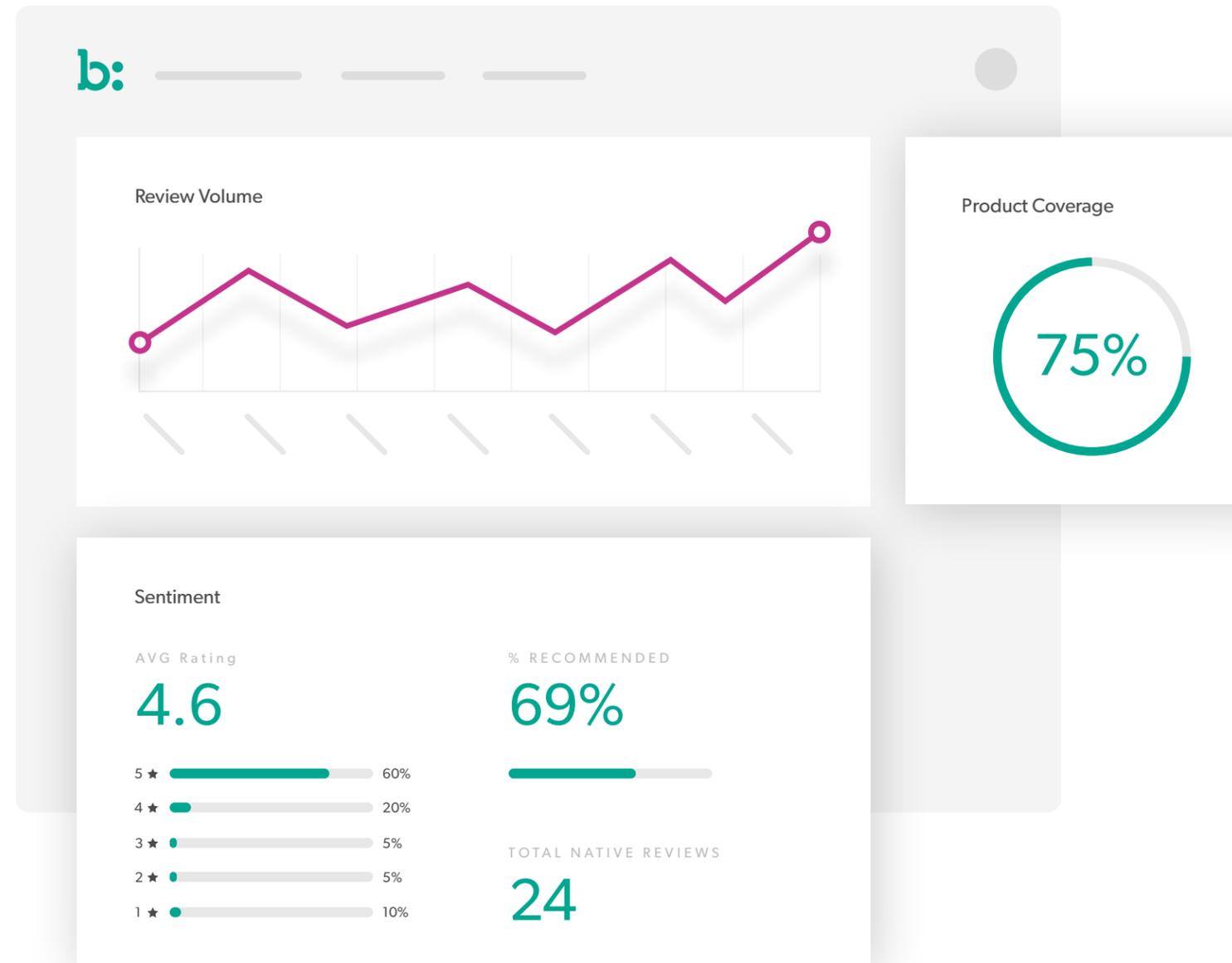
With this in mind, it's important to be thorough, and make the consumer feel like you put a lot of time and effort into finding an acceptable answer for them. Also, be sure to avoid using external links – the last thing you want to do is drive a potential customer away from the product page.

Consider a comprehensive management platform

Consumers certainly have plenty of options when it comes to voicing their opinions. Efficiently being able to manage reviews that come through multiple retail sites and channels can seem tricky. We recommend having at least one team member completely dedicated to managing customer feedback.

On top of that, it may be beneficial to use a centralized portal, so you can quickly manage all customer feedback in one place.

[Bazaarvoice Connections](#), for example, enable brands to engage directly with customers about their products on retail sites.



The bottom line

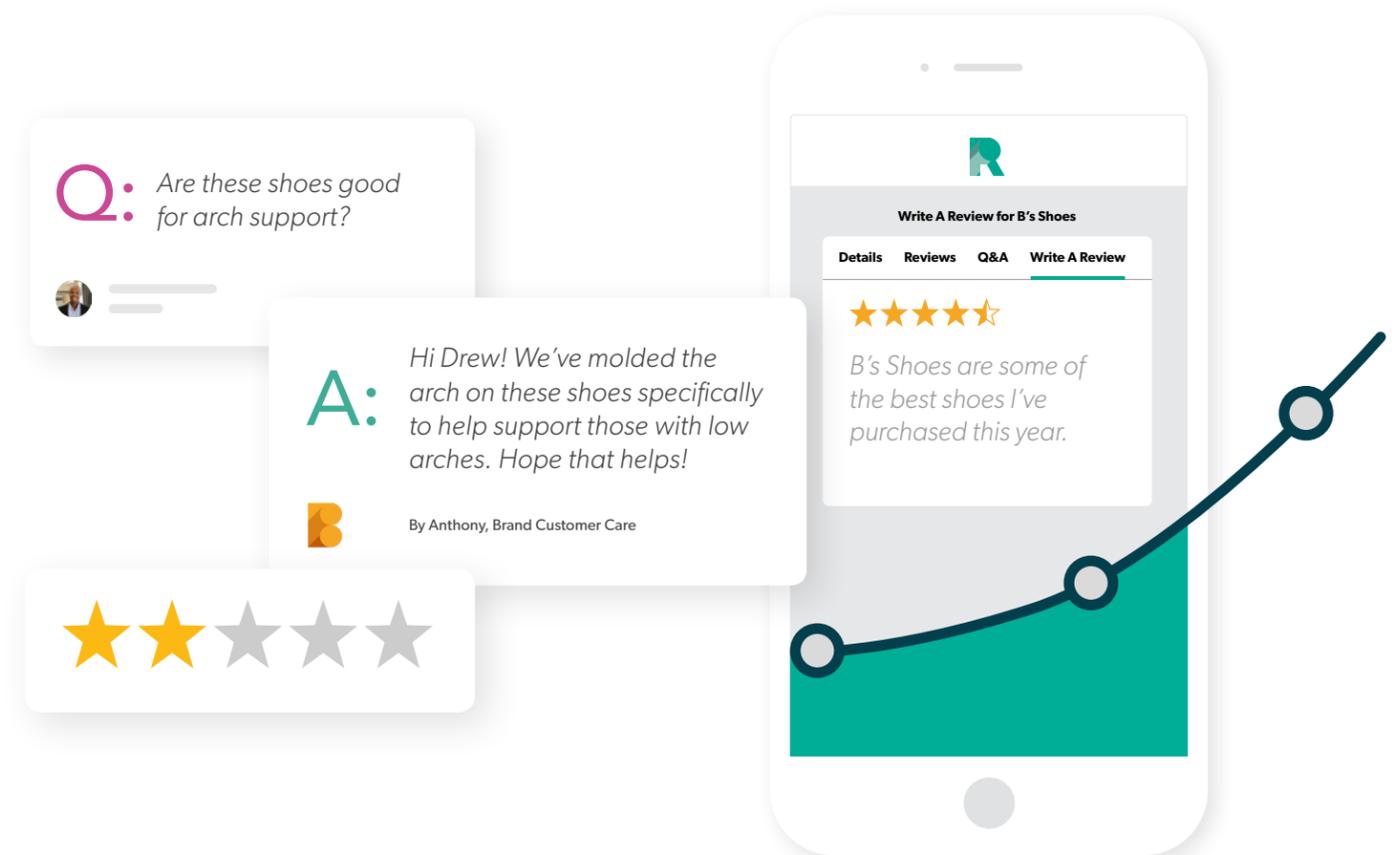
The reviews you collect and leverage act as the voice of your brand, and are being seen by more than potential customers (think retailers and even search engines like Google). It's critical to interact with ratings and reviews, to not only build relationships with existing customers who took the time to offer feedback, but to show potential customers that you're actively listening to your customers and care about your brand's reputation.

Negative reviews are going to happen, so be professional about how you respond by taking the extra time to put yourself in the customer's shoes, and formulating a thoughtful response that thoroughly addresses the issue(s) at hand.

Responding to positive reviews is equally as important, but refrain from cookie-cutter "thank you!" responses, as well as ones that sound too marketing-y.

The best way to tackle managing customer feedback and questions is to enlist members of your team who are fully dedicated to this area of your business – don't treat it as a spare-time activity. You may also want to consider using a centralized platform that allows you to manage customer feedback all in one place.

By interacting with your customers in a proactive, timely, and thoughtful manner, you'll better connect with them and gain not only more conversions, but more control over how your brand is being presented in the marketplace. Conversations around your brand are happening with or without you, so you may as well get involved.



Ready to get started with a ratings and reviews program? **Talk to us** – we can help.

References

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About Bazaarvoice

Bazaarvoice connects brands and retailers to consumers, so that every shopping experience feels personal. From search and discovery to purchase and advocacy, Bazaarvoice's solutions reach in-market shoppers, personalize their experiences, and give them the confidence to buy. Each month in the Bazaarvoice Network, more than one billion consumers view and share authentic content including reviews, questions and answers, and social photos across 6,000 brand and retail websites. Across the network, Bazaarvoice captures billions of shopper signals monthly — data that powers high-efficiency digital advertising and personalization with unmatched relevance.

Founded in 2005, Bazaarvoice is headquartered in Austin, Texas with offices in North America, Europe, and Australia. For more information, visit www.bazaarvoice.com.



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