

Risky Business: How to Handle a Bad Review

Tom Caffrey
Premier Software

A law firm receives a bad review. I am shocked, shocked!

No, not really. Even the best attorney can eventually receive a bad review. Incidentally, no reviews are perceived much the same as a bad review. A time may come when you find yourself in the following situation:

From: Attorney A
Date: ...
To: Attorney B
Subject: Urgent! Negative Review!!

Very important that we take care of this immediately. When you do a google search and enter terms "<Firm Name City, St>" a listing for our firm comes up as the first listing in the google search. In this listing, it says 1 review with only 2 stars out of 5!! Yikes!

What To Do With a Bad Review

Many lawyers are shocked when at some point they discover a poor review and a poor rating for their firm. Even before it happens, there are certain actions you should take. Doing so will work to your near and long term favor.

Increasingly, your clients are finding their way to Google and other third party sites to post a review. Each review describes the clients' experience with your firm and is categorized with 1 to 5 stars. This impacts the reputation of both the attorney and the firm (i.e. you and other attorneys from your firm).

Your first, best step is to use a review management service which either makes it easy for satisfied clients to provide their online reviews or directs an unsatisfied client to describe their issue and alert you privately. You can resolve an issue before it makes hits the internet.

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You Should Know

As of February 2017, Google changed how it assigns its coveted search result 'Star Rating'. Previously, a business would not have any star rating applied to their Google business listing, unless there were at least five or more Google reviews. That has changed.

Now, one review is all Google needs for calculating your Star Rating. The recent change means your Google listing may look very good or very bad depending on the review rating of a single review if that's all you have at that business location.

Google maintains a business profile, the knowledge panel, for each location of a business. One bad review originating from a second or third office location may well result in a poor location rating if that location has no other review or just a few.

Therefore, it is best to strive for multiple, 5-star reviews for each business location. Reviews acquired incrementally, over time and across multiple search sites, receive the better rankings.

How To Respond.

Don't Panic if you see one bad review. Simply respond appropriately as the business owner. Show concern but be your reply should be short and direct. Clear up any misunderstandings and offer a meeting to help resolve.

A review management system can alert you immediately as each new review appears. Reply to all reviews. Use your review management system dashboard to respond immediately, in the platform, to Google and Yelp.

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Many experts state that a bad review surrounded by a preponderance of good reviews will actually make all reviews more genuine and authentic. After all, no one is perfect and you can't please everyone. Responding shows that you are engaged and that you care.

You can gain a competitive advantage by responding as the business owner to all reviews, both good and bad. I can tell you after analyzing over 1000 online reviews of attorneys, only two percent of reviews get a response from the attorney business owner. Doing so is a signal to Google that you are actively engaged with your clients. Google clearly states that this will help your rankings.

Best Practices - How to Reply to Online Reviews

In the first example below we show a response to a negative review, an objection to high fees. This lawyer business owner uses the negative review *as an opportunity* to explain her commitment to quality, explaining why she can't just give a quick review for a low fee. The response explains her policy is to be thorough and to be accountable for her work which requires more time than a quick review of someone else's work product.

1 ★ on Avvo, Jul 08, 2013

Kimberly T Lee Law Offices — Kimberly T Lee Law Offices - Indian Wells, CA 

Anonymous

We had our initial trust done in Northern California and just needed to make some updates. We offered her the disc to make the changes and she said the laws had changed and she needed to re-do it completely for more than \$4000. Our old lawyer back home made all the changes and updates in accordance with all new laws for less than \$500.

Business response, Oct 28, 2016 01:10 PM (PST)

"While I am sorry that these prospective clients did not like the price we quoted, there is a reason for it. We are not a word-processing firm. If we were only to modify the original trust, we would be responsible and liable under our insurance for the entire document, including the original attorney's work. As a result, our office policy is to re-draft the trust according to our own standards and to stand behind it. We sincerely wish this couple the best and are happy that they found a solution that was more in their price range."



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The second example shows how to respond with a simple thank you for the clients 'kind comments'. What the client states in their unique and compelling words, would be perceived as self-serving if written by the attorney.

The satisfied client explains how they were rewarded by their lawyer's attention to detail and discovered '*glaring errors in the other person's work, errors that would have placed the validity of the Trust in question*'.



5 ★ on [Avvo](#), Jul 20, 2011

Kimberly T Lee Law Offices — Kimberly T Lee Law Offices · Indian Wells, CA



Jerry and Suzanne

We met with Kimberly several years ago when she offered to review our Trust, which had been written the year before by a Trust specialist. In no time at all she found glaring errors in the other person's work, errors that would have put the validity of the Trust in question. Kimberly re wrote the Trust properly for us with a level of detail that gave us total peace of mind. She has also been a valuable resource in reviewing other Trust related matters, in answering questions, in referring us to other professionals when needed. Because of her upbeat, fun-loving personality we actually enjoy going to see her. It's hard to believe that we actually look forward to seeing a n attorney. [« less](#)

Business response, Oct 28, 2016 01:10 PM (PST)

"Thank you for the kind comments! It's very much appreciated. Kimberly"



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Reply



Park

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Like the scene from Casablanca when Captain Louis Renault says 'I am shocked, shocked' https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjbPi00k_ME to discover that gambling was going on in "Rick's Café Américain", you really should not be surprised by an eventual bad review. You have something in common with the proprietor of Rick's Café, you attract a varied clientele and are involved at times with risky business.

Rick's Café didn't go out of business and neither will you, that is, provided you have built up a bank of goodwill. Goodwill in today's world is expressed in the form of great online reviews from your clients and from your peers. One bad review out of a total of one or two reviews is not good. One bad review in a group of 10, 20 or 100 good reviews, actually makes all the good reviews more authentic.

When people search online they are not looking for perfection, they are looking for humanity. One bad review simply shows that you're human.

All the Best,

Tom Caffrey

Premier Software

*Provider of Review Management Systems to Leading Estate
and Elder Law Attorneys and their Growing Law Firms
Give us a call, today. Free Business Scan and Trial Account*

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