Why you should pay attention to user reviews

From Yelp to Google to TripAdvisor, user reviews can be found easily when you search online for anything, whether it be hotels, services, restaurants and so on. In our social media age, everyone is a critic and has a forum. People are keen to share their experiences, whether it be to warn others about bad service or to express great satisfaction at how a product works.

It's important for business owners (and for organizations) to pay attention to reviews. Here are four main reasons every business should be actively tracking and soliciting reviews:

1. User reviews identify weaknesses that businesses should address.

Essentially, reviews are customer satisfaction surveys. Perhaps it's because we've become passive-aggressive as a culture, but people are more likely to air their complaints to a third party. So instead of contacting management, people will go on Yelp and talk about their experience. For example, if you run a hotel, and every reviewer on TripAdvisor complains about the air conditioning, that tells you that you need to address the problem ASAP.

2. User reviews help businesses appear higher in search results.

Reviews are content, and the more fresh content, the better the search engines like it.

3. User reviews give businesses a specific reason to interact with customers.

Whether responding to a negative review or thanking a customer

for a positive one, a review gives a business a way to talk to customers beyond the initial interaction or transaction.

4. User reviews can tell businesses more about what customers consider important.

What people choose to highlight when reviewing a business can provide invaluable consumer insight. What types of things are most users praising or complaining about? What makes a user be enthusiastic about a business?

In sum:

Businesses that don’t track customer reviews are losing valuable insights about how they are perceived. Business that don’t respond to reviews are stating that what customers say doesn’t matter, and will miss the chance to improve.

How do you handle reviews? Have you designated a specific person or department to track reviews? Does that same person or department respond to reviews? Please let me know in the comments how your business or organization deals with reviews, and what you have learned (if anything) from them.