How to Respond to Negative Comments on Social Media

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Someone—an unhappy customer or disgruntled former customer—said something negative about your company on social media. It's out there, in public, for everyone to see. First off, take a deep breath. It can be frustrating and panic-inducing when someone says something negative, posts a rant, or writes a poor review. Sometimes people use strong language and/or profanity. When someone complains about you on social media, how you respond is primarily important for other people who read the post, not the original customer. It may be too late to save that relationship. Also, it's important to remember that although you have seen the post—and probably received an email notification about it—most of your other customers will never see it.

If someone says something negative about you on social media, we do not recommend deleting the post or blocking the person from your company page. Companies that delete customer posts or block people on social media are often taken to task for not providing an open forum for free speech. Deleting a post or blocking a person from a page is a step that should only be taken if posts use profanity, are threatening, or if the person has a history of abuse on your page.

INSTEAD OF DELETING OR BLOCKING, WE RECOMMEND ONE OF TWO APPROACHES:

1. **Respond quickly and professionally, offer to listen and make the issue right, and take the discussion offline.** This approach is probably best if their complaint is about a fixable service issue, like this: "I called ABC Telecom for service and they haven't gotten to me for three weeks! They stink!" In this case, you should:

   a. Respond calmly and professionally, ideally including the name of the CSR or staff member who is responding.

   b. Remember it's okay to apologize—you don't have to say the company has failed, but you can express sympathy for the customer's issue. "[Customer name], I'm sorry this has happened. I will be calling you immediately to see how we can help you. Thank you, Jane."

   c. After posting, call immediately. If you do not have the customer's contact information, your response should include a phone number or email address they can call and immediately reach someone who can help them—ideally, it should be the same person who is responding to the post. (You don't want an angry customer to feel they are being given the run-around.)

Responding in this way is helpful because, even if the original person does not accept your offer of help, it shows other people who read the thread that you tried your hardest to serve the person, and did not become defensive or upset. Note: if the customer replies to your post and is still angry, do not respond via social media (most likely you should not respond at all). You do not want to get into an argument in public view.

2. **Do not respond.** This is also an appropriate response the first time someone comments negatively, particularly if they are ranting, abusive, or making their complaint political in some way. For example: "I just read that ABC Telecom supports [such-and-such political cause]—they'll never get my business again!" or "Screw you, ABC Telecom! You suck! I hate you!" When a person is this angry, it is best not to respond. Nothing you say is going to appease them, and responding to a political comment can only create more problems. Often, your other customers will come to your defense, talking about their own positive experiences with you or telling the person he or she should not be so angry. Not responding shows that you are taking the high road and choosing to rise above the negativity.

We know this is a scary and upsetting time, and we hope these guidelines help. If there are other ways we can serve you, please let us know.

The Pivot Team