



Episode 7

How To Handle Negative Reviews





Mirjam: [00:00]

Today, we're going to talk about bad reviews, and everybody understands that a bad review is a little bit of a crisis. But you also will learn that getting no reviews is worse than getting a bad review. Plus, we're going to give you some actionable tips on how to handle your bad reviews. Let's dive into it.

Intro: [00:05]

Welcome to the Designer Discussions podcast. Tune in each week where we discuss marketing, branding, PR and business advice for design professionals.

Jason: [00:37]

Before we get into negative reviews. I just wanted to say on behalf of all of us, we appreciate all of our supporters because we had our launch last week and we out our own expectations. That was because of all of our followers and our supporters out there. There are two people I want to highlight. One is Charmaine Winter and her design master class group, and also Lindsey Paoli with design manager. And we want to say thank you from the bottom of our hearts. I was humbled by all the support, and I just want to start and say thank you.

Mirjam: [01:16]

Okay. So let talk about how to deal with bad reviews and what it can mean for your business. We have quite a few stats that Jason found online, so let's talk a little bit about about that as well. I found it very interesting that if you think about it, the vast majority of reviews that are out there are actually positive. So it is a numbers game. So don't be afraid of reviews because most of them are going to be positive, but there's going to be some negative ones sprinkle in and we just want to make sure that you know how to deal with them.



Jason: [01:57]

I'm going to just talk about some of the reviews I found on review tracker to start. 94% of consumers say that a bad review has convinced them to avoid a business. Again, 94%. So that's high. But if you also look at that, over 63% have not responded to any reviews. So if you are not responding to reviews, then you have no chance to let the end user or the consumer know what actually happened because you're only hearing one side of the story. And so this is why it's vital that you reply to negative reviews and over 45% said that if there was a response, they would have chosen that they've might have chosen the company anyway. So again, responding to reviews is vital because that helps the end user or the consumers see the other side of the story, because remember, no matter what it is, there's always two sides to every story that is so true.

Mirjam: [03:06]

I think if you only take away one thing from this episode, it is that it is absolutely crucial that you do respond to reviews, and this actually is true for positive ones, but even more so for negative ones. And I'd say, as a rule of thumb, try to respond within 24 to 48 hours max. The worst the review, the more critical it is that you respond quickly. So we're going to give you some pointers on how to go about that, because we all understand that it's a very emotional thing. If you open up Google or Facebook or wherever it may be and somebody is trashing you basically, and you feel like it's not justified. It's very difficult to take in. So when you read the review, take a few minutes. Take as long as you need to settle down and get your emotions under control. Don't do anything in the spur of the moment. That's the worst thing you can do because you don't want to take it personally. You want to take the emotion out of it because it's most likely more of a reflection on your clients or customers state of mind than it is on your service or your business.



Mirjam: [04:31]

This is what usually happens. So just keep that in mind and be appreciative of all feedback, whether it be good or bad, because there may be something that you can farm from. It, actually. But don't panic. Number one, don't panic. Remember that not all of reviews are bad and that they can actually help your business. If you have unhappy customers and you feel like you're nothing to hide, it's just about presenting yourself in the best light and helping the customer feel better because you do want to go above and beyond if you can. We're not saying that if the complaint or the criticism is completely unreasonable that you have to agree with, actually, you don't have to agree with it at all. You just have to acknowledge the position and the emotions of the person that's complaining that is Super Super important. Don't be defensive. Don't go in justifying what you did and trying to be right. It's not about being right. It's about making things right for the customer.

Maria: [05:49]

Mirjam, could you give me an example? So here's a situation. Say a company has an employee who was supposed to get back to a client by a certain amount of time and that client felt like they didn't either meet a timetable that was expected or an orientation anticipated. And then they leave a negative review about something like that. How would a company best be served answering a review like that?

Mirjam: [06:17]

This is actually something that happens a lot, and whether you're a small company or a solar printer or a big company, it doesn't matter. But you can choose how you respond. So you don't have to respond to the question directly. But it's what you can place your message with this customer, right? So you don't. It's like in politics, you know, they never answer the actual question that is asked. They just tell you what they want to tell you. You can use the exact same approach. And if you have employees and one of your employees is criticized, never single out to that person.



Mirjam: [07:01]

Always go back to your message that you have as a brand and as a business and how you go about answering customer queries and customer issues. Don't ever single out that person. If there is an issue with the person, you can deal with that offline, it's between the person and you or the HR, it's within the HR area of your business. Do not ever air your dirty laundry in public, but that doesn't mean that you can't address the issue. You always want to acknowledge and honestly. Oftentimes an apology goes a long way and you don't have to apologize for doing something wrong. You just apologize for the experience that the customer has had. Those are two very different things, but that's how you go about it. You would say something like we are so sorry that you had to wait longer than expected. Our policy generally is to get back to our customers within 24 to 48 hours. We are sorry that didn't happen. In this case. Please send us a message. If there are open issues that we can deal with, we're happy to help and we'll do our best to resolve your problems right away. Something along those lines. But don't mention the employee, especially if the call the employee out by name. It can reflect very badly on you with current employees, because if they see that you turn against a current or former employee in a public space that's not going to inspire trust for them and loyalty to work for you.

Maria: [08:43]

Excellent. Thank you. Jason, so you had mentioned that there are fake reviews, sometimes that show up for people in our industry. And I know I've seen those before. So can you tell us a little bit about those?



Jason: [08:56]

Fake reviews happen more often than not, and more often than people think. And there are a couple of reasons why one is your competition. As you grow in the industry, what will happen? You will have competitors that may actually write a review or have someone they know write a review. And I've seen that with our own clients. And Mirjam, she had actually talked about having some time to cool off because we actually had a client that received a fake review and they were rated. I won't say the exact words because this is a G rated podcast, but let's just say that they use a lot of choice words, in essence, to say, I don't know who this is. They never worked on a project of mine. I don't know why they're writing for me. And so what happens is you may have competition or what we've also seen maybe an ex lover that you may have dealt with in the past that wants to hurt your business. So we've seen some of these.

Mirjam: [10:06]

Like a soap opera?

Jason: [10:08]

Yeah. You'll be surprised. You'll be surprised. I'm going to actually have in the notes. I have examples of how we had our clients respond. But just as an example, you want to take the high level approach you want to first you want ask Mirjam said, take some time to cool off because you do not want to do an immediate response, because nine times out of ten, that's not going to be the best response that you want to have the public see. So they wrote something along the lines. Like I said, I'll have the actual wording in the notes, but they said something along the lines of thank you for your review. We appreciate the feedback and we like to respond to all reviews that we have received. And as you can see, we have a lot of five star reviews. So us receiving a one star review is out of the ordinary. And in our records we do not show having worked on the project that you're referencing. If you can respond here with your name or number, if you can reach out to us so we could get to the bottom of the issue, we'll be happy to resolve the because we take client feedback to the utmost importance. So something along those lines in it.

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Jason: [11:57]

And like I said, I'll have the actual response in the notes, but how you respond helps and also just on my end, I'm very high with the trip advisor, so not last year, but I usually travel a lot, and whenever I travel, I write a review. So I'm really high up in the awards for TripAdvisor. So when I write a review, it's actually seen. So this was about five years ago, I took a trip to Denver and I stayed at a hotel that was not the best. So I wrote a review. The owners of the hotel reached out to me and they asked me what was the issues. We went over them. And then when I went back a few months later, they resolved every issue. So instead of asking me to take the review down, they actually asked me to write another review on how they resolve the issue. That review had over 150 views and it helped them out over having a negative review. And I took it down. But I showed how they resolve the issue and a lot of the clients that they had after that because they reached out to me about a year later saying how that review has helped them because the end user or the consumer saw how they resolve issues number one, and they loved that. So responding to reviews negative or positive is vital because it shows the end user or the prospect that you care about what happens.



Maria: [12:57]

From my personal experience, I was using a platform to get referrals for projects one season and I had no reviews and I would send out responses to people that were looking for a designer for a project, and I was getting no responses. Nobody was interested in me, and I didn't know why. And then luckily, one day I got one of these like blanketed fake negative reviews. And I was so devastated and Mirjam is right. It is a freaking crisis. Your heart is pounding. You're freaking out. You're like, I don't even know who this person is. It's just someone else's views. And what other interior designer is going to give a negative review? I mean, like, that's just weird. And I look back at it. And I am so grateful every day for a bad experience because what happened was I immediately responded to it, questioning, who is it? How was it that I had never shown up to an appointment that was scheduled and that I was a no show or whatever it was was very it was not very fancy or anything. And then what happened was I immediately reached out to all of my friends and family. Anyone. I have done free design work for anyone who's ever asked me a design question. People who know I come out of the woodwork to help them, and I produce results for them, and I forced them all to write me very lengthy, nice, good reviews because they knew I was panicked and they knew I was really upset. So what happened was I got flooded with all of these positive reviews that were very in depth and really covered who I was as a person talked about, my character, talked about what I was capable of accomplishing, and I had so many that were new that after that, everyone hired me. It didn't have to do with how I responded or what my rates were. It had everything to do with how other people spoke about me. And so I just want everyone to know that even if you're staring down a negative review online and you want to go home and crack open a bottle of wine to try to deal with it, the first thing you should do is think maybe this could work for the best. And because I have no reviews, this is going to be my catalyst for these positive reviews that will be business changing.



Jason: [15:20]

I just like to add on to that, Maria. She did mean force. She mean act nicely, because what happens is I hear a lot of this in reviews because we do review management. The search engines do not like for you to strong arm a client into a review. They want you to act nicely because they want it to be natural. So make sure for all of our clients. We emphasize this to all of our clients when we work with a client that does not have any reviews. One of the first things we do is saying as we ask for their book of business, and we say, who are the clients that you have worked with that are ecstatic about the work that you've done for them. We reach out to them first and ask them for a review, and if they're open to it, we ask them for a video review because video reviews in hand even more, because when you can have it on video, you can now have that on your website because that's a review and a testimonial. And you can also use that in your marketing as well. So asking for reviews is vital. The more reviews you have, it offsets if and when you have a negative review.

Mirjam: [16:36]

You know, one way I like to ask for reviews, or I like it when people ask me that way, I can you leave an honest review. So if you ask the people that you know, like you and you ask them for an honest review, obviously, it's going to be a positive review, but you don't ask for that. No, you just ask for their honest opinion. And I really like that. I wanted to go back briefly to taking bad reviews down or how to resolve them, and I don't think we've mentioned it, but taking a bad review down is always a bad idea. Now you do have to respond to it on the platform where it came into. Hopefully, if there's an issue to be resolved, you can take it offline and resolve it offline. But you do want to go back to the platform and make some kind of note that shows that you have taken care of the customer. That is really, really important.

**Jason: [17:40]**

And adding on to that, you said it's a bad idea, but also it's not easy to do because we've had to deal with that. Taking a review down from the search engines is like pulling teeth. So first of all, you have to explain why the review is either unreal, fake or bad, and you have to head through a process to explain why the review needs to be taken down. And even when you head through all of the steps, there's no guarantee that they will take that review down. So responding is your best answer. And if it's a fake review, you have a little more leeway for them to take it down. But even at that point, there's no guarantee that review will ever come down. But you can offset that by having a lot of good reviews and be responding to the negative review or fake review in a professional manner.

Maria: [18:40]

I think that's an excellent point. I also briefly want to touch on how bad reviews can actually help you find more of your ideal customers because, like in Maria's example, if somebody leaves a review about your app that criticizes the fact that it doesn't do something like design fancy pools that it's not designed to do. It actually gives you an opportunity to clarify what you're your product or service really is and who it's for. So you can turn it into a positive and explain to other people who read it why this review really is unfounded, and everybody will understand that so that can work in your favor. And people will say, oh, I'm designing a kitchen, so this can actually work for me because it's not a pool. There's a lot of opportunity to include information and your answers that are not just directed at the person who's leaving the review, but it's a message that you want to share with everybody who may be looking at the reviews and adding on to that that can help you.



Jason: [19:52]

We were talking about Maria and the app, but that can also pertain to an interior designer and their services. So they may leave a review saying you didn't do XYZ, and you can explain that's not a part of our services, but we will take that into consideration when we upgrade or we enhance the services. So now the end user knows that you're listening to them. Now they're more apt to either reverse the review and say something nice or others on the outside see that and say they may not do XYZ, but they're open to how they respond to their customers, clients and consumers.

Mirjam: [20:28]

In the show notes, there is also going to be the verbiage that Jason had referred to that can help you respond to negative reviews, plus an action plan that can help you really get ready for when the bad review does happen to you and your business. Yes, I hope that some of these explanations that we have given help you understand that bad reviews are really nothing to be afraid of. They're a natural part of doing business, and everybody is going to get one or two or three of them at some point in their career, and we're hoping that some of these tips are going to help you deal with it with a little bit more ease when it does happen to you, which we don't wish it upon anybody, but we've all had the experience and you probably will too. So if you have any questions about this, you can definitely reach out to us on all the platforms that we are on.

Outro: [21:30]

I hope you enjoyed this episode of Designer Discussions. What was your takeaway care to share your thoughts and tag Jason, Maria, and Maria on social media? You can find them on all platforms at DesignerDiscussions.com. Don't forget to like subscribe and leave a review or comment for this episode from wherever you are listening.



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