



THE SMALL BUSINESS GROWTH TOOLKIT

PART 3 OF 4

The Ultimate Guide to 5-Star Reviews



Actionable strategies for growing your business



Request and Respond to Honest Feedback

Part 3 of The Small Business Growth Toolkit

Examples, scripts, and schedules are illustrative. They are not customer case studies, reported NBS results, or guarantees. Measure outcomes using your own data.

Invite Honest Feedback

Reviews give people a way to learn about your business and give your team feedback to act on. They do not guarantee a particular ranking, review count, or revenue increase.

Invite customers consistently after service, including those whose experience may have been negative. Do not select recipients based on a satisfaction survey or ask them to change or remove a review in exchange for a reward.

Google's guidance explains how to share a review link and respond to feedback. It prohibits incentives for reviews. Customers must sign into a Google Account to leave one.

Source: Google Business Profile Help, "Tips to get more reviews" - <https://support.google.com/business/answer/3474122> (checked October 7, 2026).

Choose an appropriate contact time, use a neutral invitation, and respect customer messaging preferences.

How to Ask for Reviews (Scripts That Work)

The In-Person Ask

"I'm so glad we could help you today! If you have a moment, we'd really appreciate a Google review. It helps other people find us, and honestly, we welcome honest feedback about your experience."

Key elements:

- Express genuine gratitude
- Explain why it matters
- Make it personal

The Text Message Ask

"Hi [Name]! Thanks for choosing [Company] today. We'd love to hear how we did! Mind leaving a quick review?"

[One-click Google review link]"

Key elements:

- Keep it short
- Make it easy (one click)
- Use a friendly tone

The Email Ask

Subject: Quick favor? (Takes 30 seconds)

Hi [Name],

Thank you for trusting us with [service]. We hope everything exceeded your expectations!

If you have 30 seconds, would you mind sharing your experience with a Google review? It helps other [homeowners/patients/customers] find us.

[Leave a Review ->]

Thanks so much,

[Your name]

Key elements:

- Specific subject line
- Reference their specific service
- Make the time commitment clear
- Single clear call-to-action

The Perfect Review Request Sequence

Here is a sample sequence to evaluate. Choose a frequency customers expect; a single request may be enough.

Day 1: The Initial Ask

Timing: 1-24 hours after service

Channel: The customer's preferred, permitted messaging channel

Message: Short, friendly, easy link

Day 3: The Follow-Up (If No Response)

Channel: Email

Message: Slightly longer, emphasize how much it helps

Day 7: The Final Ask (If Still No Response)

Channel: Text or Email

Message: Last chance, mention it takes just 30 seconds

Important: Stop asking after 3 attempts. Respect their time.

Sample Sequence

Day 1 (Text):

"Hi [Name]! Thanks for visiting [Company]. We'd love a quick Google review if you have a sec! [link]"

Day 3 (Email):

Subject: Did we do a good job?

"Hi [Name], just following up! We welcome an honest review of your experience at [Company]. [Button: Leave Review]"

Day 7 (Text):

"Last reminder! If you would like to share your experience, you can leave an honest review here: [link]"

Making Reviews Easy (Remove All Friction)

Every extra step loses customers. Make it as easy as possible:

1. Use Direct Review Links

Don't send customers to your Google Business page to figure it out. Send them directly to the review form.

How to get your direct Google review link:

- Search for your business on Google
- Click "Write a review"
- Copy the URL from your browser
- Use a URL shortener to make it clean

2. Mobile-First

Test your review link on a phone as well as a desktop.

3. Explain the Next Step

Google requires a signed-in Google Account to leave a review. Do not promise a login-free process. Test the direct link before sharing it.

Handling Negative Reviews

Negative reviews happen. How you respond matters more than the review itself.

The Response Formula

- Thank them (even if it's hard)
- Apologize for their experience (not necessarily admitting fault)
- Take it offline (offer to resolve privately)
- Keep it professional (no arguing publicly)

Sample Response

"Hi [Name], thank you for sharing your feedback. We're sorry your experience didn't meet expectations-that's not the standard we strive for. We'd love the chance to make this right. Please reach out to [email/phone] so we can discuss this directly. - [Your name]"

What NOT to Do

- Get defensive
- Argue publicly
- Blame the customer
- Ignore it completely
- Offer compensation publicly (attracts fake reviews)

The Silver Lining

Responding well to negative reviews actually builds trust. Potential customers see that you:

- Care about customer experience
- Take responsibility
- Try to make things right

A mix of feedback is normal. Focus on fair requests and useful responses rather than steering ratings.

Beyond Google: Where Else to Get Reviews

Industry-Specific Platforms

- Healthcare: Healthgrades, Zocdoc, Vitals
- Home Services: Angi, HomeAdvisor, Houzz
- Restaurants: Yelp, TripAdvisor, OpenTable
- Legal: Avvo, Martindale
- Automotive: DealerRater, CarGurus

Social Proof Alternatives

- Facebook recommendations
- LinkedIn testimonials (for B2B)
- Video testimonials
- Case studies

Prioritization

- Google (most visible, most trusted)
 - Industry-specific platform (where your customers look)
 - Facebook (social proof + visibility)
 - Your website (full control)
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Advanced: Leveraging Reviews for Marketing

Turn Reviews Into Content

"Don't just collect reviews-use them!"

- Quote reviews in emails
- Feature reviews on your website
- Share reviews on social media
- Include reviews in proposals

Review Response as Marketing

Your responses are public. Use them to:

- Highlight your values
- Address the specific feedback without a sales pitch
- Show personality
- Demonstrate customer care

Monitor Your Reputation

Set up alerts for:

- New Google reviews
- Brand mentions
- Competitor reviews (learn from their feedback)

Tools:

- Google Alerts
- ReviewTrackers
- Birdeye
- Podium

Track Feedback Without Promising a Ranking

Track invitations, published reviews, recurring themes, and response times. Review quantity and recency do not establish a guaranteed search position or level of business authority.

Use feedback to improve the service. Do not set a target that encourages fabricated, incentivized, or selectively requested reviews.

Automation: Review Generation on Autopilot

Assign someone to monitor requests and responses, even when reminders are automated.

Automated Review Request Flow

```
[Service Completed]
!
[CRM marks job as done]
!
[Wait 24 hours]
!
[Send review request text]
!
[If no response after 3 days -> send email]
!
[If no response after 7 days -> final text]
!
[Stop sequence]
```

What to Automate

- Initial review request
- Follow-up reminders
- Thank you when review is left
- Alert you to new reviews

What to Keep Manual

- Responses to reviews (personal touch)
- Handling negative feedback
- Special recognition for great reviews

Your 30-Day Review Action Plan

Week 1: Foundation

- [] Get your direct Google review link
- [] Write your review request scripts (text + email)
- [] Set up review alerts

Week 2: Launch

- ☐ Start asking every customer for reviews
- ☐ Apply the same invitation criteria regardless of expected rating
- ☐ Respond to any existing reviews you haven't addressed

Week 3: Automate

- ☐ Set up automated review request sequence
- ☐ Create follow-up reminders
- ☐ Test the full flow

Week 4: Optimize

- ☐ Review what's working (open rates, conversion rates)
- ☐ Adjust timing and messaging
- ☐ Expand to secondary platforms

Key Takeaways

- Reviews provide feedback. They do not guarantee revenue or search rankings.
- Invite honest feedback consistently. Do not select recipients by expected satisfaction.
- Timing matters. Ask after a customer can describe the service.
- Make it easy. One click, mobile-friendly, direct link.
- Respond to everything. Good responses to bad reviews build trust.
- Automate the ask. Consistency beats occasional bursts.

The Review Mindset Shift

Stop thinking of reviews as something you hope happens.

Start thinking of reviews as a core business process-as essential as sending invoices or confirming appointments.

Build the system. Let it run. Watch your reputation grow.

This guide is Part 3 of The Small Business Growth Toolkit from NBS. For more strategies and to see how NBS automates review generation, visit nbsscrm.com