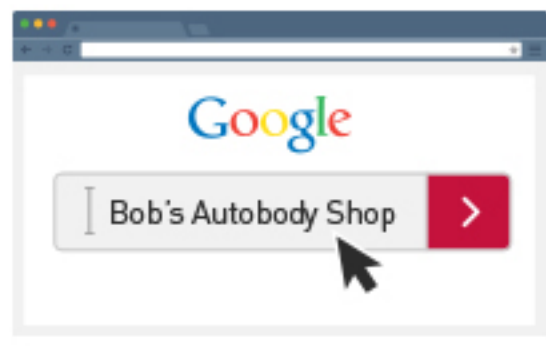


DUST OFF THE OLD CUSTOMER SUGGESTION BOX AND PUT IT TO WORK FOR YOU

Thanks to social media, people are sharing experiences like never before. They can write reviews on Yelp, swap stories on Facebook, and tell friends how it is on Twitter. The frustrating reality is you can't control the conversation. But, you can be a part of it. And you should be. Getting feedback through this modern-day suggestion box is critical to keeping customers happy and coming back. Follow these simple steps to take the 'scary' out of reviews and transform them into a benefit for your business.

Keep an eye on 'online'

Before you can join a conversation, you need to know what's being said. Thankfully, the Internet is overflowing with resources to help you do just that. Grab a coffee, get comfortable with your computer and see what people are saying about your shop.



START SEARCHING

Get the lay of the land by simply searching your business name. Read the reviews and commentary that people have posted about your shop. Then, take time to read what they're saying about your competitors in order to feel out where your business stands.



GET GOOGLE ALERTS

Powerful and free, this option is a go-to for seeing what's being said about you online. **Google Alerts** will notify you when your business is mentioned on the web. Alter the settings so you get an email once a day or once a week to keep up to date.



SET SOCIAL MEDIA ALERTS

Get notified when someone leaves a comment, sends a message, or tags your shop in a post by downloading the Twitter, Yelp and Facebook apps and turning notifications 'on.' With real time alerts straight to your phone, you can respond right away.

Follow one leader

Choose a qualified staff member to take charge. You wouldn't have a rookie employee be the face of your business in real life and you should maintain that mindset online. Many online review sites only allow one management response per review, so keep things simple and assign reviews as a job for one person.



Tammy H.
Flint, Michigan

"I can't believe there's no coffee in the waiting room"

★★★★☆

Bob's is my number one body shop, I've been coming here for years. But after this last visit, I was shocked that there's no joe in the waiting room. I need my coffee in the morning, especially for such an early appointment.

Tim Taylor, Service Manager at Bob's Auto Body Shop, responded to this review

Hi Tammy, thank you for your patronage and being such a loyal customer. We appreciate any feedback that you may have to make Bob's Auto Body Shop an even better shop for you. We do apologize for the lack of coffee during your visit. We were experiencing low pipe pressure and our engineer was hard at work repairing the water line to the coffee machine. Your satisfaction is of the upmost importance to us, the next time you're in, ask for Tim T. and your next inspection is on the house.



Tim T.
Bob's Auto Body Shop

WRITE RIGHT

Well-written responses make your shop look knowledgeable and on top of things. Make sure the employee in charge of reviews has decent writing and proofreading skills.

SPEAK WITH HUMBLE AUTHORITY

The harsh reality is not all reviews will be good. The employee in charge should have the authority to resolve complaints, such as offering a free follow-up service, without having to constantly check with higher-ups for approval.

STAY POSITIVE

Always make sure the person in charge of responses keeps a positive and upbeat attitude. Similar to in-person customer service, be conversational, genuine, and courteous when responding online.

Encourage suggestions

Unfortunately, many people post reviews when they're upset. Satisfied customers tend to drive away and back to their daily routines without second thought. Flip the script and get online reviews to work in your favor by encouraging happy customers to post happy reviews. Incentivize them to share and follow up by thanking patrons for their positive reviews.

GO AHEAD AND ASK

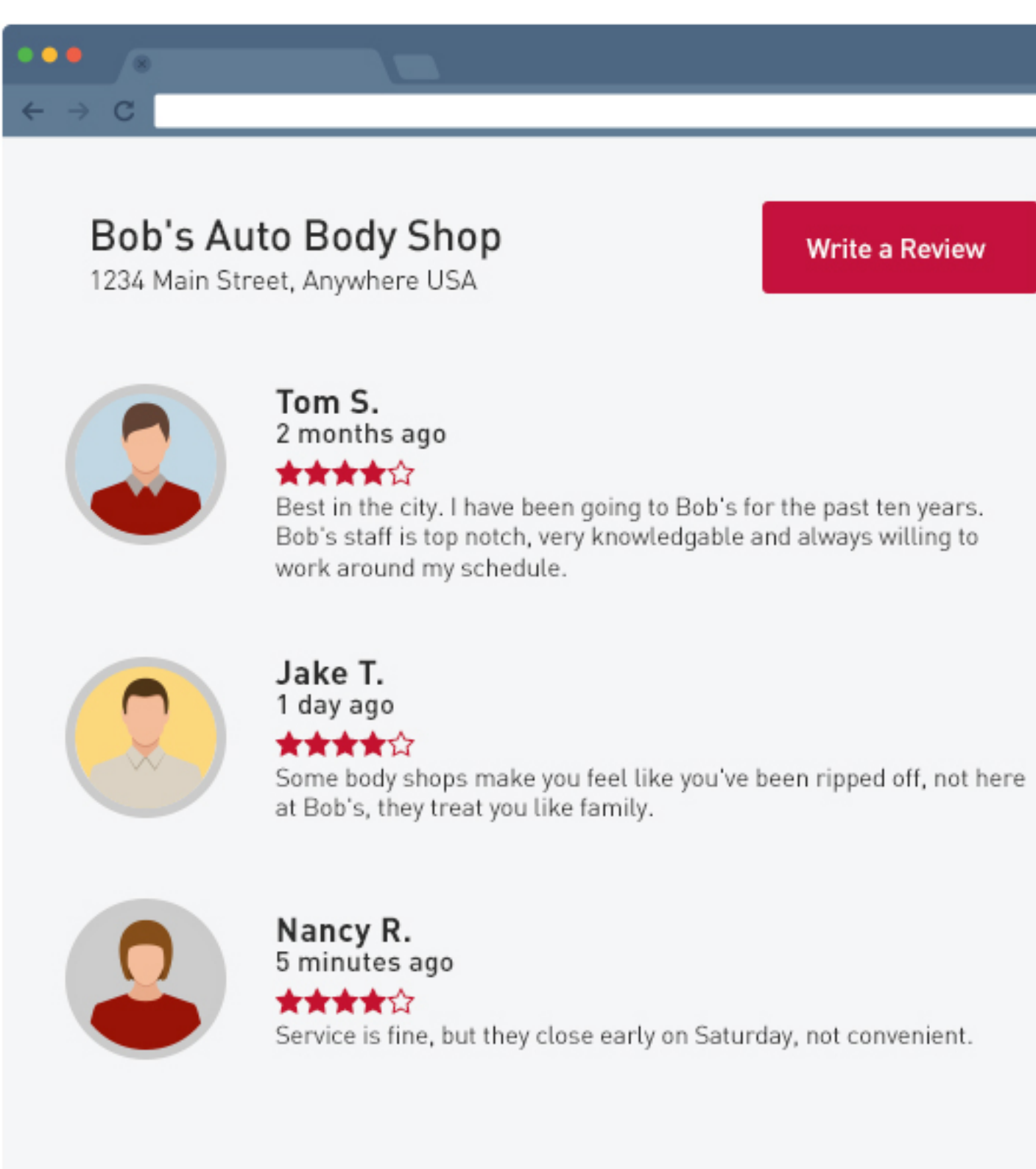
When you have an especially satisfied customer—you know the type: grinning and thanking you over and over—just ask them if they would be willing to post a review on Yelp, Google or Angie's List. Most are happy to do it.

ELICIT FEEDBACK ONLINE

Did a customer just visit your shop? Send them a follow-up email to make sure everything is going well and ask them to leave feedback.

REWARD REVIEWS

Sometimes even the most satisfied customers need a little incentive to post. Offer a monthly raffle or small coupon for anyone who reviews you online. Just make sure it's for all reviews and not just positive ones.



Be responsive to reviews

For better or for worse, all responses deserve a quick and timely response. While glowing reviews might make your day, don't cringe too hard at the bad. When potential customers see all perfect reviews on a site, the skeptic in them begins to creep out. In many ways, a sprinkling of bad reviews validates your business, and how you shop can show your genuine concern.

CLAIM YOUR YELP PAGE

Before you start replying to reviews, claim your business page. **Yelp** let's you respond as a business, rather than an individual, which comes off as more credible.

ACKNOWLEDGE EVERYONE

Good or bad, thank each reviewer for posting by commenting on their review. That lets them know you read it and care about what they think. And now the public knows you care too.

BE ON TIME

Don't let bad reviewers fester in their own frustration. Respond as soon as you can—ideally a few hours to a couple of days, at most.

HANDLE THE HATERS

Negative responses can quickly make you want to yell off the rooftops that the customer is wrong. But, they can also be great opportunities to address issues. To sway their bad experience in a more positive direction, offer a free service or a special coupon.

Give them something to talk about

Take some time to listen and learn from your customers. Feedback only helps to strengthen your business. Make your shop accessible online to current and potential customers and establish one person to take charge of your reviews. By staying courteous, responsive and helpful, customers will begin to include you in their conversation. Not only will you be giving them a great shop to talk about, but great service to talk with.