



**TASSIE TOURISM**

*masterclass*

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# TASSIE TOURISM

*masterclass*

## WEEK 9: PROTECTING YOUR REPUTATION

Presented by Sam Denmead

Responding to negative online reviews.  
Using online feedback effectively.



The customer  
is always right,  
right?

Not necessarily...

But the customer should always be  
heard



# CUSTOMER SERVICE IS THE NEW MARKETING

- Customer Service is now a spectator sport
- Everyone is now watching how you SERVE someone.





“Embrace complaints as the raw material for improvement ”  
(Jay Baer)

CRITICISMS ARE  
~~HARD TO TAKE~~  
USEFUL

- They help you find things you didn't even know were an issue and FIX them!
- We don't necessarily know what we're not good at
- We need our customers help to find this out
- Be open to feedback at all the touchpoints
- Be genuine in the request for feedback

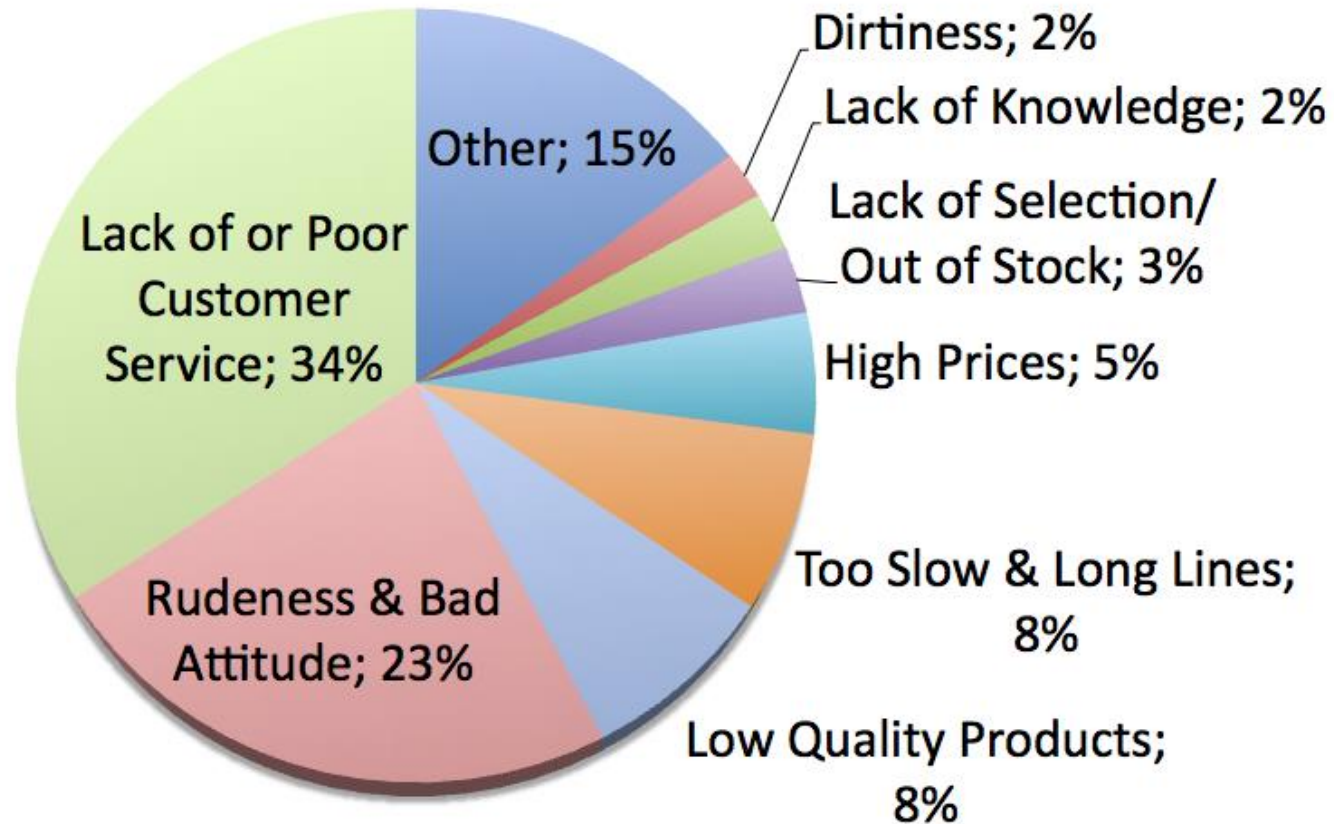




# What causes complaints?

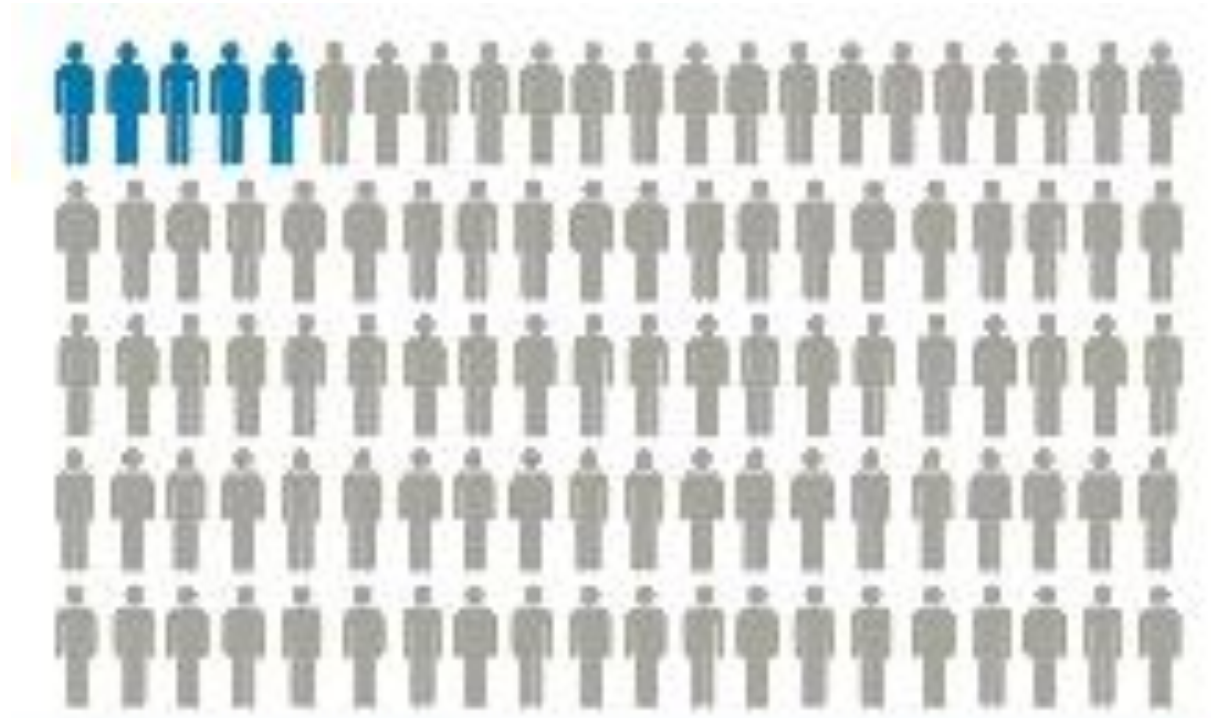


# What causes complaints?





Only 5% of dissatisfied customers will complain.



## RESPOND TO EVERY REVIEW

- Not just the ones you're most comfortable dealing with.
- NO response is a response, isn't it?
- No response shows "we care SO LITTLE about your opinion that we're happy to just ignore you and refuse to even acknowledge it."



## Management responses matter on TripAdvisor



88% of users say reviews impact their accommodation choices



80% of users believe a hotel that responds to reviews cares more about its guests



69% of users are less likely to book at a hotel that leaves aggressive/defensive management responses



60% of users would rather book at a hotel that responds to reviews

# ARE PEOPLE COMPLAINING MORE THESE DAYS?

- Complaints are happening in the public domain.
- People complain where they find it most convenient.
- And they will eventually expect a reply, every single time.

# DIFFERENT TYPES OF REVIEWS



# NONSENSE REVIEWS

- Don't take the bait, ignore it
- Likes and responses are ego boosting for the reviewer, don't encourage him



# FAKE REVIEWS

Three steps:

1. Try to have them removed (if you can prove they are fake)
2. Call them out (if you are certain they are fake)
3. Respond as if they are a valid complaint

# INCORRECT REVIEWS

- Politely direct responsibility for the mistake back to the reviewer
- Correct all incorrect facts about your business - even on 5-star reviews
- Be careful of trying the counter-attack
- Stick to facts. Avoid personal insults against the reviewer
- People will defend them if you come across as a bully
- Don't get into the habit of arguing about what's true



## OTHER TYPES OF REVIEWS

### Conflict of interest

- posted by a disgruntled ex-employee or competitor
- do not respond
- ask to have it removed

### Personal Attacks

- Usually not expressing upset, more like a person thinking they are in authority passing judgment.
- adopt humour and humility

# DON'T BUY THEM

- It's totally unethical
- Your customers will not be fooled
- They are so obvious when you read them, and this will backfire
- Put your energy into getting reviews from your actual customers





4 THINGS TO DO  
WHEN DEALING WITH AN  
UNHAPPY CUSTOMER



# 1. SHOW EMPATHY

- Empathy has the effect of putting you, the manager, on the same side as the reviewer.
- Empathy diffuses conflict... "I understand and get what you are experiencing" is the message.





## 2. BE HUMBLE

- Don't be defensive
- Don't take it personally
- Allow them to be upset
- Allow them to be heard
- Be kind



# Listen

- A customer you ignore is a customer you're going to lose
- Simply the fact of saying "we hear you" and listening is a good start.
- Haters are not your problem, ignoring them is



### 3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

- Take responsibility by accepting the knock on the chin
- Gather all the facts
- Tell them what you're going to do about it



## 4. ACT WITH SPEED

- Speed matters. Faster = caring
- Try to reply within 1 hour. You will DELIGHT everyone - they will not be expecting this
- We have to find a way to get faster



**40%** of customers who complain in social media



expect a reply in

**60** minutes.



**5** hours!



The average response time from businesses is

# THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Stars	Star Label	
1	Bad	
1.5	Bad	
2	Poor	
2.5	Poor	
3	Average	
3.5	Average	
4	Great	
4.5	Excellent	
5	Excellent	



# RESPONDING TO POSITIVE REVIEWS



- Show gratitude – thank them!
- Reinforce the positive elements of the review for the spectators
- Someone has taken the time to thank you for their experience, the least you can do is acknowledge them
- Invite them to return



*Hello Shibumi365,  
Thank you for sharing your feedback regarding your stay! I am glad that we were able accommodate a room move for you. Also, thank you for the kind words regarding the breakfast. We are continually trying to improve the variety and quality of food items that we offer. Thank you for staying at the EastWest Hotel and we hope that you will consider us for your next business trip!*

*Sincerely,*

*Matthew Smith*

*Front Office Manager, EastWest Hotel*

## RESPONDING TO POSITIVE REVIEWS – without comments



- Same as previous advice, but a bit shorter.
- Eg. *Thanks so much for your 5 stars, it means the world to us that you rated us so highly. We'd love to host you again next time you're in Bicheno.*

## RESPONDING TO POSITIVE REVIEWS – without comments



- Follow previous advice but make your response a bit shorter and ask for clarification.
- Eg. *Thanks so much for taking the time to review us so highly, feedback is so important to ensure we're doing a great job. Please feel free to email ..... with your suggestions for how we can achieve 5 stars on your next visit.*

## TIP: SHARE GREAT REVIEWS

- Be proud that you received a glowing review
- Ask the reviewer if they would mind if you shared
- Use this review (as an image or text) on your website, social media AND even in your OTA listings



## RESPONDING TO AVERAGE REVIEWS – without comments



- Thank and genuinely seek feedback.
- Eg. *Thanks so much for taking the time to review us, feedback is so important to ensure we're doing a great job. Clearly we didn't hit the mark with your recent visit and we'd love to improve our service for next time. Please feel free to email ..... with your suggestions for how we can better deliver the outstanding service we're so proud of usually.*

# RESPONDING TO NEGATIVE REVIEWS



Follow these guidelines:

- Take a breath, talk to your team
- Engage only twice
- Emotion first, information second
- Gather your facts before replying
- Set the record straight
- Don't go on the defensive
- Thank them for their time
- Tell them what you're going to do



# 14 words to NEVER USE

- Fault
- Policy
- Blame
- Department
- Our
- Misunderstanding
- If
- But
- Per
- Just
- Try
- Consider
- Seems
- Apparently





*Dear Rob,*

*As the manager of the "insert name here", I am deeply upset to hear of the poor experience you've had at our restaurant.*

*I really get what a frustrating experience this was for you. You were not well taken care of, by any stretch of the imagination. If I had received the service you have described, I'd be very upset as well.*

*Obviously we are not doing a good enough job training our servers as your review indicates service that is no where near what we consider to be our standards.*

*I shared your review with all my staff and we went through everything that I find unacceptable so that the service you experience never happens again.*

*We would love to have you come back and give us another chance to show our true colors.*

*Thank you very much for taking the time to leave a thorough review, I welcome all feedback as hearing from our customers is the best way we can improve our business.*

*Simon Smith*

*General Manager*

## MAKE A PLAN FOR WRITING RESPONSES

- Is it part of a trend or a one-off?
- Fix the problem
- Respond as fast as you can
- Respond from highest level of management
- Use their name
- Try not to cut and paste from previous responses
- Empathise and apologise
- Invite them back
- Invite other guests to review you

## DON'T LET THEM LEAVE ANGRY

- Ask an impartial staff member/manager to handle it
- Listen to them, hear their side of the story – let them vent
- Try to make it right before they leave and avoid the bad review altogether
- Kill them with kindness and turn it around again
- You might win a loyal customer and advocate for life!



AND FINALLY...

- Service that exceeds your customers expectations wins you new customers for free.
- It's the cheapest form of marketing you'll ever do
- Customer service IS the new marketing



# THANK YOU

Presented by Sam Denmead  
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Tourism Industry Council Tasmania