Do You Know What Consumers Are Saying About You Online?

By Michelle Seitzer

Think online reviews don't matter? Think again: 97% of consumers read online reviews for businesses last year, up from 90% in 2016, says the [2017 Local Consumer Review Survey](#) from BrightLocal (a search engine marketing firm).

So what kind of reviews would you want to read about your community? What would you say to get consumers through the door? How would you talk someone off your competitor's ledge?

Put yourself in your consumer's shoes: You've been caring for your mom since your father passed away. You're realizing your mom needs 24-7 support. You find a place only a few miles from her home. It looks perfect, but your heart sinks when you scroll down and read the reviews: "My mother was treated horribly here." "Neglected by staff." "Terrible food, small apartments."

What's Good About Bad Reviews?

Not many people would call the community for a tour after reading something like that.

But those negative reviews definitely get attention: a 2016 [Pew Research Center report](#) says 54% of Americans who read online reviews pay more attention to extremely negative reviews when trying to make decisions, while 43% pay more attention to extremely positive ones.

Let's be real: it's hard to compete online — not just with competitors, but with banner ads, pop ups, the 24-7 news cycle, and more. But if you're paying close attention to your online presence, monitoring feedback and responding quickly and professionally to any negative reviews you find, people will notice:

- 30% of people cited "responding to reviews" as the key to judging a local business, says the BrightLocal survey.

- 34% of Caring.com's senior care searchers said a community's response to an online review "lets them know that the business cares and is listening."

- Another 23% said that their ability to be influenced by the response would depend on what the business says.

Navigating the Minefields (& Mining the Good Stuff)

Getting bad reviews isn't the goal; getting noticed is. In fact, no reviews are actually worse than bad reviews. "Consumers are clicking on business listings with senior care reviews and skipping those without them — whether they're on a search engine page of listing results or researching in an online directory," says Denise Graab, Caring's Director of Industry Marketing.

Caring.com, a Senior Housing Forum partner, has been called "the Yelp of senior care," but better. Since choosing senior care is way more emotionally charged than picking a restaurant, Caring is all about helping you leverage those reviews: the good, the bad, and the ugly. They'll help you think outside the box too. In fact, a Caring.com partner, LiveWell Care, actually uses their positive reviews in their community sales process, and in staff orientation and training. LiveWell's strong reviews have also boosted their searchability on Caring.com.

Don't get skipped over. Don't let a bad review fester without a response. People are reading reviews, and they do make a difference. Let the world (wide web) know what great work you're doing inside the four walls your community: sign up for Caring.com's March 15th webinar, Senior Care Reviews: Make the Most of This Opportunity.