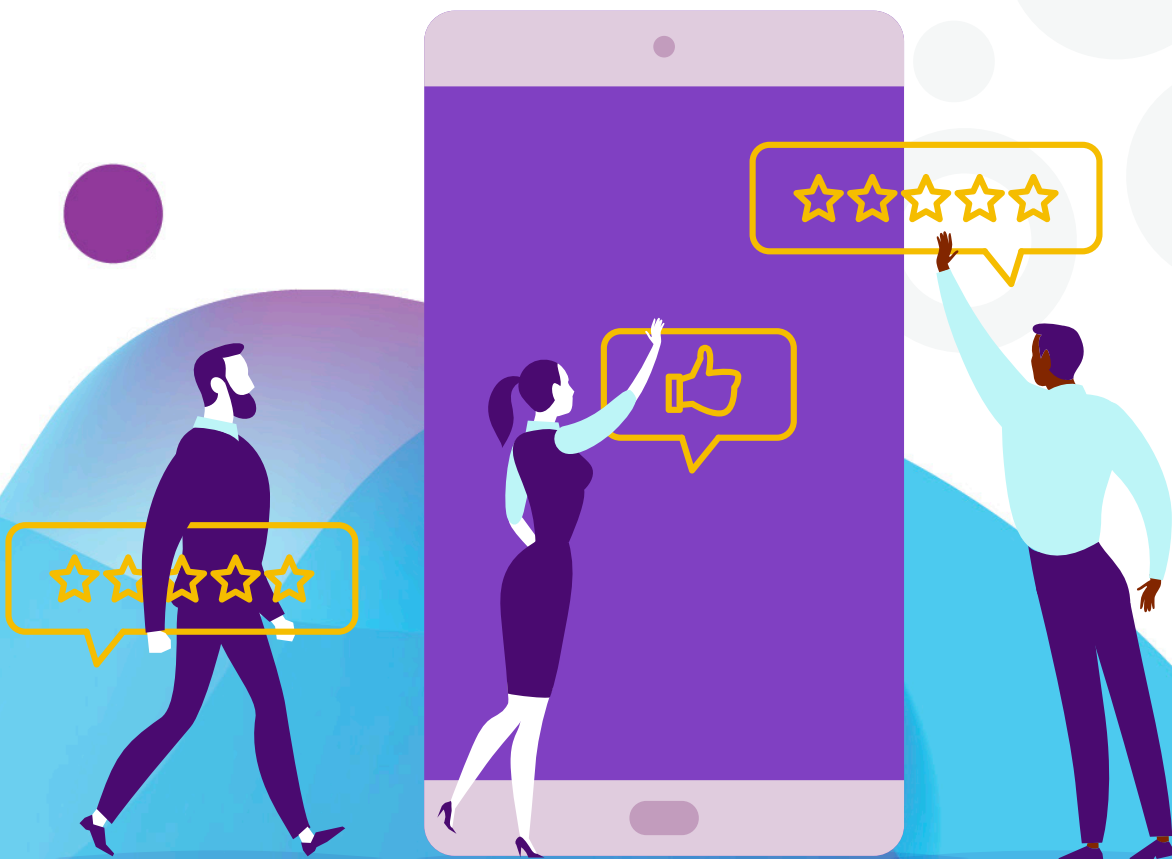




EVERYTHING A BUSINESS OWNER NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT GOOGLE REVIEWS





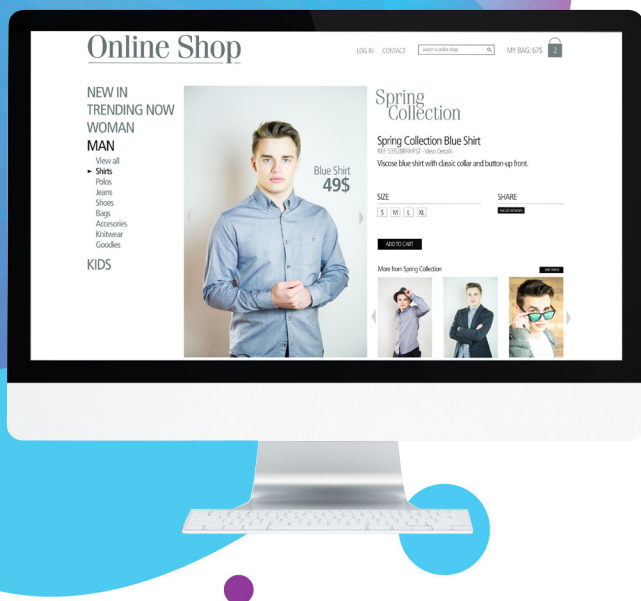
Modern consumers rely on online reviews. They post and read reviews for activities as varied as trying gourmet macaroni and cheese from a new eatery, getting a massage for the first time, and finding the right guitar teacher after months of searching.

Google is unquestionably the most popular online search engine, and its users epitomize this reliance on reviews. [64% of consumers look to Google for reviews before visiting a business](#), whether that business be a restaurant, a day spa, or a music studio.

These users are your potential customers. If 6 out of 10 consumers are scrolling through reviews on Google prior to stepping into a business, concerted effort should be taken to ensure these potential customers see positive reviews of your business.

Collecting such reviews can have a massive impact on your business's influence and reputation. When it comes to online reviews, even a little effort can go a long way. Unfortunately, many business owners don't know how to go about the process of collecting, managing, and sharing these reviews.

Weave is here to help. Our team has gathered several questions from business owners about Google reviews and we will answer them in the course of this eBook. Our goal is to provide a comprehensive guide to getting positive reviews for your business.



Things you can expect to learn about Google reviews in this eBook:

- Is Google My Business really worth it?
- How Google reviews benefit your business
- How to get reviews from your customers by:
 - 1 Providing an amazing customer experience
 - 2 Making reviews easy for customers
 - 3 Asking customers for reviews
- How to successfully manage your online reputation

Is Google My Business Worth the Effort?

Most businesses already have a website. Many also have social media profiles on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. So, business owners may ask themselves: "Do I really need Google My Business, too?"

If you feel this way, you're not alone. There are already countless things you need to do to maintain a visible online brand. Adding Google My Business on top of it all can seem excessive.

However, if you're trying to maximize your digital marketing efforts, [ignoring Google My Business is one of the biggest mistakes you can make](#).

Google My Business is a specialized tool that helps businesses improve their online visibility. Through this platform, businesses can significantly increase control over their online reputation.

Here are some of the unique benefits of Google My Business:

KEEP BUSINESS INFORMATION CURRENT

When people search for a business via Google, they want to know basic information, including a business's location, operating hours, modes of contact, and FAQ's. Keeping your GMB listing updated gives customers and potential customers all of this information at the click of a button.

IMPROVE SEARCH ENGINE PRESENCE

Having a fully completed Google My Business profile allows Google to gather more data about your business, which it then uses to match your business with potentially interested users. These matches make businesses [more relevant for Google searches](#) within specific geographic areas, improving the chances of securing a new customer.

GAIN INSIGHT INTO ONLINE PERFORMANCE

[Google My Business's analytics](#) provide some incredibly valuable data. Information including popular keywords, user demographics, user location, and user result interaction helps businesses tweak their marketing strategy and provide a better customer experience in the future.

SHARE BUSINESS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

[Posting from GMB](#) is as easy as posting on social media. These posts get pinned to a business's profile, allowing users to see important information right away. Popular post categories include limited offers, sales, and company announcements.

INCREASE TOTAL BOOKINGS

Service-based businesses like home cleaning, consultation, and healthcare base their success on how many appointments they schedule. Booking in the traditional ways (phone calls or emails) means missing out on a great opportunity to attract new customers.

[Google My Business allows businesses to accept online bookings straight from the search engine results page.](#)

COLLECT, MANAGE, AND RESPOND TO REVIEWS

Review management is perhaps the most useful feature of Google My Business Reviews. This eBook focuses on how to maximize your GMB profile for more positive reviews. We'll go more in-depth about this later.

THE COST OF GOOGLE MY BUSINESS

Google My Business is a completely free tool offered by the biggest search engine in the world. It's essential for any forward-thinking marketing strategy. With only a few hours of additional work each week, your business can achieve better visibility, happier customers, and stronger reputation.

How Google Reviews Benefit Your Business


Before we get into the details of collecting and responding to reviews, let's talk about their importance.

REVIEWS ATTRACT NEW CUSTOMERS

Many businesses spend money on developing new products, renovating their stores, and sprucing up their websites to attract new customers. These same businesses often underestimate the power of authentic reviews.

Reviews Reach a Wide Audience

Reviews build something money can't buy: trust. By reading reviews, potential customers have the opportunity to listen to real customers talk about their real experiences, and what they read influences their decisions and behavior more than you think.



More than 90% of consumers read online reviews before making a purchasing decision. Reviews often give potential customers their first impression of a business, and it's vital to make

that first impression count. A 4 or 5-star rating isn't a guarantee that customers will buy a product, but a 1 or 2-star rating is often a guarantee that they won't.

REVIEWS PROMOTE ONLINE VISIBILITY

With the right search engine optimization (SEO) practices, businesses can influence their search engine ranking and achieve a higher position on the results page. A high quantity of reviews signals to Google's algorithm that a business is authentic and trustworthy.

Reviews have an added pull when users are searching for a business nearby. Businesses can be featured in Google Search's local pack of the three or four results relevant to the user. More reviews equal more chances for Google to recommend your business over your competition.

A business's review quantity, actual rating, relevant keywords, and other factors associated with search engine optimization are all vital aspects of a business's local ranking.

REVIEWS IMPROVE YOUR BUSINESS

An underrated benefit of getting reviews from customers is gaining insight into what actually matters to them. In particular, negative reviews help identify a business's strengths and weaknesses.

Whether it's slow customer service or a design flaw in a new product, customer feedback provides the opportunity to come up with solutions that address customer concerns directly.

Taking concrete steps to improve your business reduces negative feedback in the long run. Additionally, listening to customers shows genuine concern for customers and generates good faith with them.

REVIEWS INCREASE SALES

When businesses make an effort to cultivate their online presence, collect reviews on Google My Business, and build relationships with their customers, they see a higher return on their investment.

Positive reviews encourage click-throughs. Once customers enter a business's website, there is much better likelihood that they will convert into an actual paying customer. This sales funnel is a necessity in the contemporary marketplace.

High-ranking reviews mean more traffic to both online and physical addresses. More traffic also means more opportunities to convert that traffic into sales.

Research proves that reviews can influence real-world purchasing behavior.

A 2011 study conducted by Harvard discovered that an increase in rating of just one star could result in a revenue increase of up to 9%.

Now that we've established the necessity of Google reviews, let's look at how to get them from customers.



How to Get Google Reviews from Your Customers



STEP 1: PROVIDING AN AMAZING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE.

Long before customers submit a review, they have their first interaction with a business. Everything a company does, down to the smallest detail, has value, purpose and ultimately plays into the customer experience.

Building trust and reliability from that first interaction is key to collecting positive reviews in the future. A [Values Institute study about business reputations](#) said these five values increase feelings of trust and reliability in a brand:

- Ability to perform
- Concern for consumers, employees and community
- Connection in value systems
- Consistency and dependability of product or service
- Sincerity

Not surprisingly, negative reviews almost always have to do with failure in one or more of these values. Performing at a high level, showing concern for customers, establishing common values, displaying consistency, and manifesting sincerity all create the sort of trust that leads to positive reviews down the line.

With reliability still on the mind, there are a few more ways to control the consistency of your business's online presence. In addition to asking satisfied customers to write a review, consider doing the following:

- Making sure all company information is updated on review websites

- Having customer service easily accessible on the company website
- Responding to customers across your various social media platforms, even to their complaints. In the case of complaints, allow a few days to pass for an unhappy customer to cool down before responding.
- Using [Google Alerts](#) to help with reputation management and review management
- Utilizing your website to showcase testimonials, awards, and press from other media sources
- Being open about your company's foundation and history. Vulnerability and honesty create a human connection that helps customers trust your business.



STEP 2: MAKING REVIEWS EASY FOR CUSTOMERS

No matter how amazing a customer's experience, there's always an inverse correlation between the number of reviews gathered and the difficulty a customer faces when leaving a review.

If customers have to jump through multiple hoops by signing up for an account and filling out a 10-page questionnaire before posting their thoughts, they're going to be discouraged from writing one at all.

Businesses should make the process of leaving a review as simple as possible. The fewer the steps taken in writing a review, the better.

Find a Review Software that Automates the Process

In an ideal world, everyone would have automated review software that allows customers to easily provide feedback by way of Google reviews.

This software can send requests to everyone who interacts with a business or only those customers known to have had an amazing experience. Sending an automated review request to customers after they've completed a transaction means reaching them at the time when they're most likely to leave a review.

Review requests make leaving a review simple and easy for your customer. Usually, the request includes a link that they just have to click on. They are then redirected to the Google My Business reviews page, where they can leave a review in just a few minutes.

Teach Customers How to Write a Review

While generally less successful, it's still possible to [effectively generate new reviews](#) by educating customers on how to write business reviews. Below are some steps to share with customers as part of educating them on leaving reviews.

Let's start at the ground level. There are two devices from which to leave reviews: computers or smartphones. The process is different for each device, and customers need a Google account regardless of device.

Write a Google Review from a Computer

- 1 Log into your Google account and search for the business you want to review.
- 2 Find the reviews area (next to the star rating in your

search results, or under the business's name in the Google search sidebar) and click on the blue font that says, "WRITE A REVIEW."

- 3 Rate the business from 1 to 5 stars (the greater numbers indicate a positive experience), write about your experience, and click "POST" when you're done.

Write a Google Review from a Smartphone Browser

- 1 In your smartphone's browser, go to Google's main webpage and search for the business you're going to review.
- 2 The right side of the results page pulls up the business. Scroll down to the "WRITE A REVIEW" button and click on it.
- 3 Select the star rating that correlates with your experience, include a few details about it, and click "POST" when you're satisfied with your review.

Write a Review from the Google Maps App

- 1 In the Google Maps app on your phone, search for the business that you want to review.
- 2 Maps will return a result with a map that includes a banner at the bottom about the business. Click that banner.
- 3 Scroll down in the window that pops up until you get to the reviews section. You will see five stars unpopulated with your profile picture above them. Click on the number of stars you would like to leave for the business and proceed to write about your experience.

4 Click "POST" to leave the review.

Writing a review is a simple process, even for older or more technologically challenged customers. Teaching customers how to write a review is one thing, however, and encouraging them to write them is another. Businesses need to get used to asking for reviews, which brings us to step three.



STEP 3: ASKING CUSTOMERS FOR REVIEWS

Surprisingly, [71% of consumers would actually leave a review](#) if a business just asked. Unfortunately, 30% of consumers have never been asked to leave a review.

It's obvious that businesses aren't taking advantage of their customers' [willingness to leave reviews](#), mostly because they didn't know to ask in the first place. This step is where most business owners struggle but asking for reviews can be incredibly simple.

Phrases like, "Hey [customer name], would you be willing to leave a review about your experience?" or "Did you like the product you bought? Maybe you could leave us a review!" can be effective and are certainly much better than not asking at all.

However, to get the best possible response rate possible, there are some psychological aspects to consider when putting together a review script.

Ask Customers for a Favor

If customers have had a [good experience with a business](#), they're usually more than happy to pay it back through a positive review. Framing a review request

as a favor lessens customers' feeling of obligation. Interestingly enough, this makes them more likely to comply with your request!

Studies show that providing support to others actually makes people happier. Asking for a favor not only demonstrates trust in customers, but also grants them the opportunity to provide support to you and your business.

Remind Customers About Their Good Experience

Reminding customers that they enjoyed their experience invokes good thoughts and memories. When they remember how much they like certain products or services, their reviews tend to skew positive.

A reminder also gives customers the chance to let you know if their experience was different than your perception of it. Corresponding with customers through email or text is another great opportunity to listen to complaints, address concerns, and resolve issues without the impact of a negative rating.

Give Customers Reasons to Write a Review

The desire to leave a good review occurs at a level far deeper in the customer's psyche than many realize. A good customer experience is frequently not enough to motivate them to contribute.

A study performed by a Harvard professor in 1978 reveals the power of the word "because", and consequently why giving the reason for a request raises the chance of a customer leaving a positive review.

Participants were tasked to try and cut in front of someone in a line to use a copy machine.

The first group asked, "Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine?"

The second group would ask, "Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine, because I have to make copies?"

The third group would ask, "Excuse me, I have 5 pages. May I use the Xerox machine, because I'm in a rush?"

The success rate of the first group was 60%. The success rate of the second group, although they said almost exactly the same thing except with an additional reason, was an astounding 93%.

Unsurprisingly, the third group the highest success rate. What's surprising is that their success rate, despite a seemingly more convincing reason, was 94%, only marginally higher than the second group's. Clearly, giving someone a reason for a request increases your success rate, no matter the reason.

So, when you're asking for a review, be sure to include a reason—any reason at all. "Because we would love to hear your thoughts" or "because we care about what you think of our business" may just be a few extra words, but they're words that go a long way in improving your review collection rate.

Thank Customers for Their Willingness

When it comes to customer service, gratitude is always a good idea. In a cold email response study, response rates increased dramatically when gratitude was expressed in advance. This format works well with the other tips we've listed, such as framing your request as a "favor".

Combine Tips for a Powerful Review Request

Now, let's see how these tips work together to increase review generation rates. You're welcome to copy this script or tweak it to fit your business's unique needs.

"Hey _____ [customer name], thanks for coming in today! I was wondering if you could do me a favor?"

Customer responds affirmatively

"Did you have a good experience with us today?"

Customer responds affirmatively

"Good, I'm glad to hear that! Would you mind writing a



review about your experience? Because it really helps other customers make the decision to come here."

Customer responds affirmatively

"Thanks! We really appreciate you being willing to do that! In a few moments you'll get a review request from our office. You can just follow the link that we send you. It makes everything really simple!"

Happy customers are likely to reciprocate positivity if only they're asked. By making the process simple and introducing a little bit of psychology into the equation, you're well on your way to acquiring a sizable bank of positive reviews.

When to Ask for Reviews

Technically, there are no hard and fast rules about when to ask customers to leave a review. Businesses can send review requests to old customers or to recent customers within minutes of their purchase. A "late" review request is better than no review request at all, but review collection is optimized by getting the timing right.

The best time to ask for reviews depends largely on the type of business.

If the business sells products, it's best to ask after the customer receives the item and has had some time to try it out. If the business is service-oriented, then it's best to ask immediately after the service has been completed.

What do both of these have in common? The best time to ask is when the experience is fresh in your customer's mind.

How to Successfully Manage Your Online Reputation

Online customer reviews, for better or worse, are an inescapable part of doing business in the modern world. Bad reviews will find their way into your reputation, because even the best businesses have an off day.

Sometimes negative reviews are warranted due to simple mistakes or unmet expectations.

At other times, they're completely unfounded. These include reviews for another business that were accidentally left on your profile, fake reviews from people who have never purchased from your business, or reviews meant to harm and ruin your reputation.

These situations call for reputation management services. Reputation management has everything to do with helping customers find the right reviews in the right places. It also helps businesses gain more control over how the public perceives their brand.

Google is one of the best places to display good reviews about your business. Getting good reviews on Google can give you a big head start in the process of managing your online reputation.

SHOULD YOU INCENTIVIZE CUSTOMERS TO WRITE REVIEWS?

It makes surface-level sense that more people would be willing to leave a review in exchange for a free item or a discount code, but you should think twice about incentivizing customer reviews.

Offering incentives for reviews is unethical and against the terms of service for virtually every review platform available. Rewards are seen as bribes that influence customer reviews. Rewarding customers for reviews calls into question not only the honesty and integrity of your reviews, but of your company as a whole.

However, asking satisfied customers to leave a review is certainly not unethical. In fact, 89% of [consumers are willing to leave reviews](#), but only 7% have reported being asked to do so.

So, don't be shy! Ask customers to leave a review and make the process an easy one.

While offering an incentive might increase your success in getting Google reviews, apart from being unethical, it can also come back to bite you. Take this review for example:

It can be tempting to incentivize good reviews in a competitive online environment but abiding by Google's

terms of service is definitely a better route in the long run. By collecting reviews ethically, you create a more sustainable strategy for reputation management and avoid costly penalties.



IS REMOVING A GOOGLE REVIEW POSSIBLE?

[There isn't an easy way to get a Google review removed](#). In fact, removing a review isn't possible unless the review violates Google's policy, such as spam, content that is fake/illegal/explicit/offensive/dangerous, and even content that is off topic.

In that case, you can flag a review, and have it assessed by Google, although the ultimate removal of the policy-violating review is notoriously difficult to complete. Your best bet is to get as many people as possible to flag the review, but that is still not a guarantee.

Sometimes, the best strategy with fake reviews is to respond by saying that you don't have a record of them as a customer and to keep pushing good online reviews to the top in order to bury the bad ones.

Fake reviews aside, real negative reviews happen, but they shouldn't be ignored or feared.

While businesses should always aim for 5-star reviews, [studies have shown that the optimal review rating falls between 4.2 and 4.5](#). Why? Because consumers love a high rating, but they don't trust "perfection".

A slightly less-than-perfect rating demonstrates to customers that your reviews are authentic.

Businesses should respond to negative reviews.

The top two sources for reviews are Google and Facebook. Fortunately, these platforms make it easy to communicate with your customers.



Responding to negative reviews not only impacts the individual customer who left the review, but also establishes a clear narrative for those researching your business. Responses from the company make a measurable difference: 45% of consumers are more likely to [visit a business that responds to negative reviews](#).

Responding communicates your company's willingness to listen, its care for its customers, and the desire to build goodwill. Improve the perception on-lookers have of you by responding to negative reviews.

RESPONDING TO GOOGLE REVIEWS

One of the most useful skills you can pick up from this guide is how to properly respond to Google reviews. This section is split into both "positive" and "negative" reviews, and how to go about replying to them.

First, let's go into some standard best practices, no matter what kind of review you are responding to.

- Yes, people can see your replies. That's why it's important to always maintain a level of politeness and professionalism online.
- Always respond in a timely manner. Most people expect a reply to their review within 7 days, but a turnaround time of 24 hours or less is best.
- You don't have to reply to every single review. Focus on reviews that add value for that particular customer and for your customer base at large.

- Keep your replies short. Sometimes the situation calls for a longer response. Use your discernment to determine whether a response requires additional follow-up via direct message, an email, or a phone call. Move your correspondence to another platform more suitable for long-form communication if necessary.
- Whether the review is positive or negative, show gratitude to the reviewer for taking the time to leave their honest feedback.
- The goal is to create a community feel, so canned or automatic responses aren't ideal. Your messages can follow a template to save you some time, but try to make them sound as authentic or human as possible.
- Use your real name when dealing with customers. It creates a higher sense of transparency and accountability with your customers. Don't hide behind the brand.

Be patient as reviews come in, and don't be tempted by people offering reviews for pay.

Note that once a customer has submitted a review, it might take a few days for it to show up under your business in Google.

Positive Reviews

Congratulations! You got a positive review. What do you do now?

Many businesses make the common mistake of ignoring positive reviews. However, it's very important to build relationships with your customers, especially when they're satisfied. This inspires loyalty and makes them more likely to continue doing business with you.

Make it clear how much you appreciate their positive feedback. You can also use this space to add value by recommending other services or informing them of changes and promotions, but be careful of “over-selling”.

Negative Reviews

We can't stress this enough: bad reviews are a fact of life. Instead of dwelling on negativity, use it to gain insight into your customers and help improve the customer experience.

Here are some tried-and-true damage control tips for handling a bad review:

- Don't take it personally. The customer had a bad experience, but that doesn't mean that you are a bad business. Don't narrow your focus on one or two bad reviews, especially when you have tons of positive reviews.
- Always meet negativity with positivity. Remember that your response can be seen by others and could provide clarification to other customers. Being defensive doesn't change minds or encourage critics to edit their review. It only furthers a negative impression of you.
- Be proactive. Reach out to customers who have left negative reviews and try to resolve their issues. Investigate and validate their claims in depth.
- Apologize for your mistakes, but don't take responsibility for things out of your control. If it's something you can fix, provide the real concrete steps you are taking to fix it in the present and to prevent it from happening again in the future.

Using Weave to Get More Google My Business Reviews

A well-established Weave dental office in Oklahoma City was able to increase its new patient flow by 324% in a two-year period. This office was consistently seeing around 17 new patients per month for several years, and with less than 10 online reviews saw a plateau in their active patient base.

Then the office signed up for Weave and activated Auto-Text Reviews. They are now seeing 76 new patients a month and have over 200 online reviews.

Rika Markel of West Side Family Dental Group says, “Weave has made all the difference in our dental practices. Weave is easy-to-use for recalls and confirmations, and, most importantly, the review feature helped us to get on the first page of Google.”

Now that you know how Google reviews benefits your business, how to get reviews from customers, and how to manage your online reputation, it's time to [use Weave to make the right impression with your business.](#)





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