

Review Management for HVAC Businesses 101

Responding to reviews is an important part of an HVAC brand's reputation management. When it's a positive review, responding and showing gratitude reinforces the customer's positive feelings about your business while making them feel validated for leaving a glowing review. Consider the fact that the customer was so happy with your company that they took time out of their day to write a review. That's why it's essential to thank them.

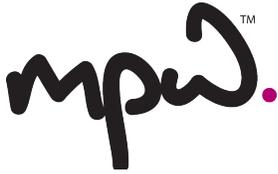
But when it's a negative review, we tend to have even more of a knee-jerk reaction to respond. It never feels good to have your HVAC brand's reputation challenged or attacked. Worse yet is if you feel the reviewer made a false or unfair accusation and that you now have to defend your reputation. While it's important to respond to a negative review as swiftly as possible, doing so without carefully planning what to say can inadvertently cause your reply to have a harsh or defensive tone that will position your brand in a negative light, causing more harm than good.

There are several essential things to consider when writing a response to a negative review about your HVAC business:

1. **Apologize.** Whether or not you accept blame, you can still offer an apology that the customer is dissatisfied.
2. **Get all of the facts.** Ask the customer to contact you so you can learn more about what happened to better understand how to address their issue.
3. **Personalize your message.** In your response, include the person's name (ex: Hi, John Doe. I'm sorry to hear about your experience...) and try to reference something specific about their review (ex: Hi, John Doe. I'm sorry to hear about your experience with your heat pump maintenance). This lets them know you didn't just copy and paste a response. But rather, you were paying attention to what they said.
4. **Take the conversation offline.** Regardless of the situation, you'll want to keep as many details offline as possible. Plus, if the situation escalates, you don't want that to be visible to the entire online world.
5. **Give contact information.** Include the name, phone, and email for a specific person they can contact. There's a chance they may have already tried to contact your company on a general level and felt they were ignored or written off for whatever reason, so if you tell them just to contact the company again, it'll likely aggravate them. Instead, giving them a specific name/number lets them feel like they're being taken seriously.

There are also a few common mistakes to avoid when responding to a negative review about your HVAC business:

1. **Don't get defensive.** This is tough because our natural response when we've been attacked is to defend ourselves. However, being defensive usually has the opposite



effect of what we intended. It makes us appear hostile, and it may even make you look “guiltier” – ever heard “thou doth protest too much?”

2. **Don't make accusations.** This is also a challenge if the reviewer has accused *you* of something. However, stooping to their level won't make your brand look any better, and it will likely anger the reviewer even more.
3. **Don't hide or delete reviews.** “But what if the reviewer was wrong? Shouldn't I get it offline as fast as possible?” The problem is, when we try to hide things, it usually backfires. With the internet, nothing is ever really gone. There's a chance the reviewer, or their friends/family, took a screenshot of what they wrote. Plus, if they figure out you've deleted their review, it may anger them further, so they leave *more* reviews. I once had a client who deleted a review and banned the original poster, but that reviewer then sent in friends to write the same thing. Think of it like stomping on one spider, only for three more spiders to appear.
 - a. *There are exceptions to this. If a reviewer uses profanity, slurs or other derogatory language, you are in the right to remove that. If they make threats, *don't delete it*. Immediately take a screenshot in case they remove it themselves, then contact the police.

The following is a great example of one of our HVAC clients who received a negative online review and reacted in an appropriate manner, which led to a very positive outcome.

John Betlem Heating and Cooling recently received a negative review on both Google and Facebook:

“I had a new furnace installed by John Betlem and the unit has broken every single year. It is still under warranty but they only cover parts. They want to charge me \$193 just to come out then \$230 per hour after that. I could easily spend \$750 just on labor to fix the furnace they installed. Due to their improper installation my modulating gas valve has water damage from rain water getting in the vent. They installed all of this including the vent. They claim it's not their fault they installed it improperly and I have to pay for labor. I have this unit serviced 2 times a year and it still breaks every year. Their technicians must not check anything because they never keep my furnace running. This furnace is only 4 years old. When they installed it they told me it was the best furnace they had. This thing belongs in the scrap heap. I feel with all these problems they should remove this furnace and install a system that doesn't break constantly. I think it's a lemon. I'm done giving them my money. I will call a real company to come out and repair my furnace and it's cheaper even though I have to buy the parts!”

MPW alerted the client to the review, and one of their employees personally and quickly responded, imploring the reviewer to give them a call:

“I am sorry you are having these problems with a **new furnace. Please call me** so I can see how I can help. If it was an installation issue, **we stand behind our work** and **we will get it**



corrected. Please call me at 585-271-8888.
Thanks, Kathy Betlem"

Here's what Kathy did right in her response:

1. She offered an apology.
2. She specifically addressed the reviewer's issue, so it was personalized and not "cookie cutter."
3. She didn't get defensive or make accusations.
4. She believed the reviewer.
5. She managed to assure the reviewer that they will correct this while still standing by how they do business: "We stand behind our work and we will get it corrected."
6. She provided a direct phone number and name of who to contact.

After this, the client got in contact with the customer and sent a technician to remedy the situation. Once the furnace issue was resolved, they set the customer up with a point of contact at John Betlem who would continue to follow up and make sure the furnace is still working well.

As a result, the reviewer went back to Google and Facebook and changed his reviews! This is the ideal outcome we hope for in these situations:

"Update: Originally, I wrote a review that did not recommend John Betlem heating and cooling, but I am changing that review to say I do recommend them. John Betlem sent a technician out to my house and repaired my furnace, so it is working. Steven Betlem reached out to me and they are making this situation right. The service technician who came to the house was very professional. I am not sure what the charge will be for labor because I haven't seen an invoice yet and I still need to modify the air vent so this doesn't happen again. Steven Betlem is going to have someone come out and look over my furnace to check it over to help prevent future issues. I am very satisfied with the level of service I am receiving now."

Long story short, all reviews deserve a well-thought-out response. If you're ever unsure how to respond to a view, reach out to us at MPW, and we'll be happy to help!