



Negative Comment, Positive Response

By Efrain Ayala

Being part of an online community through social networking and blogging can be an extremely positive experience for any water treatment business, connecting with current and prospective customers to rate products and services. However, when negative feedback strikes, the news can travel fast.

It is important to pay close attention to online networks and popular industry forums in order to prepare a proper plan of action to quickly and effectively turn negatives into positives. Taking a proactive approach demonstrates that your business is responsive to customers and will minimize, if not eliminate, the impact of negative comments.

Addressing Constructive Criticism

There are several types of negative feedback. Constructive criticism or troubleshooting problems may seem like a setback at first, but they actually can be positive.

Responding to this type of comment demonstrates dedication to

your online following and customers. For example, if a comment is left on your Facebook page regarding a common question, share a link to a frequently asked questions page or a troubleshooting guide on your website. Address the commenter directly, displaying expertise and a willingness to help all online fans, prospective customers and current customers.

Dealing With Spam

Spam comments are typically posted by automated computer systems and are usually used to repeatedly post unwanted links to other websites. They can be a distraction from useful and more important aspects of a water treatment business. Delete spam

comments immediately and address complaints honestly, openly and with a friendly tone. Most social network users will feel more connected to a business if it responds by directly offering assistance or by just listening to their concerns.

Staying Positive

Always remember to keep the conversation positive when responding to negative feedback. By doing so, a business can avoid creating a negative image while creating a useful, not argumentative, conversation. Respond to problems and criticisms promptly and positively to build trust and relationships. Take immediate steps to correct any problems and let the customer know which actions will be taken to remedy any issues. Often this approach will turn a negative experience into a positive one for all online fans to see.

For example, after receiving negative feedback online, Dell took positive initiative by holding a customer advisory panel. The company invited one group of vocally dissatisfied

Figure 1. Types of Commenters and Ways to Respond

Type of Commenter	Best Response Practices
Information Seeker: Typically posts a frequently asked question or needs basic information.	Respond quickly and accurately and provide a resource that the commenter and other fans can reference. This demonstrates a dedication to resourcefulness and customer satisfaction.
Technical Troubles: Has a technical or mechanical question or problem.	Many times these comments are not about your product or service, but always show a genuine desire to help. Provide links to articles to help the user overcome technical or mechanical difficulties.
Trolls: These commenters are the most dangerous. They may post misinformation and use flagrant language to initiate an online argument.	Tread with caution: Warn users the language is not tolerated and if they continue, they will be removed from the page or group. Do not respond negatively. Remain positive and offer a number or e-mail address they can use as a measure to take the negative conversation off the website.

Figure 2. Types of Feedback and Ways to Respond

Type of Negative Feedback	What to Expect	How to Respond
Customer Problem	A stated problem with your product or service.	Take steps to fix the problem when possible. Notify the customer of these steps.
Constructive Criticism	A stated problem plus suggestions for improvement.	Whether you implement suggestions or not, always thank customers for their insight.
Spam	Automated comments meant to bait your company or customers.	It is best not to respond. Remove when necessary and as soon as possible.
General Rules: Always stay positive. Voice concern to make sure your customers feel heard and know you respect their feedback.		

Dealing with negative comments on social networking websites



online bloggers and social media members, as well as a group of its online evangelists who had positive experiences with Dell. They spent the day discussing issues, and Dell representatives took notes and promised to make changes. While this kind of response to online criticism is a grander gesture, Dell was able to avoid a negative image by responding to its customers' concerns.

Choosing a Response

It is important to catch negative feedback as soon as possible and identify the type of negative commenter. This means closely monitoring your business' online presence on social media sites like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook, as well as blogs and other online forums.

To ensure the best response, first identify the type of commenter. This practice allows businesses to react quickly and establish the best response for maximum positive impact. Figure 1 identifies three types of commenters and the best ways to respond to each.

To monitor your online reputation efficiently, utilize free and/or paid services online. Free services like Google Alerts and Social Mention help keep track of where a business is being discussed online through automated e-mail notifications. There are also a multitude of paid media monitoring websites like Radian6, which can provide an in-depth look at any business' reputation by analyzing the sentiment of posts and comments.

To respond in the best way possible, it is important to understand what kind of negative feedback you are receiving. Figure 2 identifies types of feedback and proper responses. *wqp*

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